

# WEEDON QUARTERLY.®



## Leading the Way: Trail Signs!

Thanks to the talent and efforts of 4 amazing volunteers (who choose to stay anonymous) we are in the process of installing 17 additional trail signs. Now ALL intersections have clear directions. Designed to blend with the original rustic trail signs, the new signs are being placed at intersections that either had no directional signs to begin with or at intersections where the previous signs were not as clear as needed. The talents, skills, time, and energy of the volunteers who put countless hours into the planning and development of the signs is wonderful. We are enormously thankful to each of them!

### Owl Gourd



### Florida Tea Towel



Photos by Bill Fehring

## History Center Gift Shop Welcomes All

Looking for something special that also helps support the Weedon Island Preserve? If so, the History Center gift shop, managed by the Friends, is continually enhancing its inventory choices to meet the needs of adults and children. It's reasonable price points from \$2 children items to \$69 decorated gourds covers, you'll find it. Open during the History Center's hours (Thursday—Saturday 9-4 and Sundays from 11-4, plan on stopping in the next time you're at the Preserve.

### What's New...

- The Friends of Weedon Island have received a grant in support of our educational programming from REI, the nation's leading retailer of outdoor adventure equipment and clothing. THANK YOU REI!
- The popular Gopher Weedon Trail Run is a GO of Saturday, October 29! We couldn't be more thrilled. In August registration info will be out.
- The History Center will be getting a major update next winter. The design team is working closely with County staff and the Friends to assure the update is in line with the Preserve's history and visitor needs.
- As part of the upgrade, the Friends will be funding and leading the development of a professional mural at the East entrance to the building.
- The Friends have added a Corporate Membership option to encourage local businesses to support the Friends efforts.



Newly arrived students gathering prior to the start of their Weedon adventure.

## School Field Trips Return to Weedon

After a long, two years + Covid related “hold,” Friends is thrilled to report that once more full day field trips for elementary students are back! Designed to introduce 5th graders attending Title 1 schools, these field trips are often the first time many students have an opportunity to engage in a “natural” Florida environment. The Friends fund the full cost of the students experience, including transportation to the Preserve and the cost of the tours led by Sensing Nature, Pinellas County’s premier environmental education company. The day’s curriculum has three components, including an interpretive hike on Weedon’s trails, an interpretive exhibit hall experience, and a classroom archeological experience. Pre March 2020, Friends brought about 800-900 students annually to the Preserve for the

experience. Our goal is to continue with the trips this fall and actually exceed that number next school year.

In addition to field trips, Friends has funded 30+ scholarships for summer camps—often going to students who were introduced to the Preserve via a field-trip. Although a lack of sufficient staffing at the History Center prevented the Preserve from offering summer camps this year, we continue to advocate for increased staffing moving forward and certainly hope that camps will then be offered next summer.

Engaging students with our environment and cultural history at an early age is part of our mission and student field trips an summer camp scholarships are essential to us meeting our goals. And you, our members, make it happen!



Archeologist Phylis Kolianos e discussing artifacts in AWIARE/lab

## *Go Archeology Exciting, Informative, and Fun*

The Sunday, May 22 event, *Go Archeology*, was our initial venture into Friends members only events with our sister Preserve at Brooker Creek, and it met just about all our goals. While cancellations (hmmm—possibly led by a Lightning game...they better win :) reduced our attendance, the 35 folks who attended reported being super pleased.

The afternoon event started with a meet and greet (that included amazing refreshments provided by Friends board member Michelle Goldstein), followed by introductions, a viewing of *Gulf Islanders: The Weedon Island Story* on “the Big Screen,” and a presentation by Dr. Bob Austin. Finally, participants walked to the AWIARE lab, located behind the History Center in the maintenance area, where attendees viewed and discussed artifacts from the current dig that is underway on the Preserve property.

Thanks so much to Bob for his presentation and the opportunity to visit the AWAIRE lab. It was a super start for our “Friends members only” programming and we certainly look forward to future events. Stay tuned....