Celebrating Our Water Heritage in Sarasota County

Bringing Sarasota’s Past to the Present

Thursday, Jan. 28, 2016
Mildred Sainer Pavilion
New College of Florida

“Why are oral histories important? They’re our past. They’re our future, and they’re what tie it all together.”

-- Paula Benshoff, Naturalist, Myakka River State Park and former oral history subject

**Partnership**
These oral histories were created in a collaborative project involving New College of Florida students, who also served as interns at Sarasota County Government.

**Acknowledgments**
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Meet the 2016 Water Oral History Participants

Dr. Ed James: Dr. James has been a steadfast advocate for improvements in the Newtown community and has inspired others through his work. He has been the producer and host of the "Black Almanac" television program for 38 years and was a writer and associate producer of the television program “Positively Black.” Dr. James also worked as a columnist and governmental reporter for the Sarasota Journal and the New York Post.

Laurel Kaiser: Kaiser was born in Sarasota where she has lived all of her life. In her 20s, she fell in love with the sport of windsurfing. Since the late 1980s, Kaiser has taught windsurfing and kiteboarding to Sarasota residents and visitors alike. She is an advocate for environmental awareness and water access, and is passionate about encouraging others to enjoy the water.

Shelia Cassandra Hammond Atkins: Atkins was born in Manatee County in 1952 but has lived in Sarasota County for most of her life. Her parents were employed by Ralph and Ellen Caples. She grew up in the Newtown community, where she attended high school during integration. She currently works as a paraprofessional aide at Alta Vista Elementary. Atkins and her husband, former Sarasota mayor Fredd “Glossie” Atkins, still live in the Newtown area.

Wade Harvin, Jr.: Harvin was born in Crescent City, Fla., and moved to Sarasota in 1940 when he was 5 years old. He was one of the first black bankers in Sarasota and brought Salvation Army bell-ringing to the Newtown community. He has lived in both the Newtown and Overtown communities, and he attends Bethlehem Baptist Church, which is the oldest African-American church in Sarasota.

Meet the Students

Haley Jordan: Haley is a second-year student studying political science at New College of Florida. Haley was raised in Castle Rock, Colorado and moved to Florida in 2014 to begin her college career. Haley is interested in humanities and writes fiction in her spare time.

Jordan Kearschner: Jordan is a fourth-year history student at New College of Florida. She is currently writing her thesis on American and Soviet airwomen in World War II. Jordan's interest in going into public history post-graduation led her to the Water Oral History Project.

Kaylie Stokes: Kaylie is in her fourth-year as a social sciences student at New College of Florida. She is currently working on her thesis - an oral history project on the Boca Grande community - which developed out of her Water Oral History project in 2014.

Flannery French: Flannery is a third-year anthropology and gender studies student at New College of Florida. Flannery is interested in learning about oral history because it is a unique way of telling a story through in-depth interaction with one person.