



NEWS RELEASE | FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Coral Gables Philanthropy Comes Together for Camp Mahachee Restoration

*The PARKnership Fund at Coral Gables Community Foundation
and the Coral Gables Garden Club investment ensures
“S’more” Girl Scouts will grow up to love camping and playing
in The City Beautiful’s tropical hardwood hammock on Old Cutler Road*

CORAL GABLES, FL (June 2, 2022) – A new generation of Girl Scouts will enjoy a greatly enhanced Camp Mahachee soon, as a partnership led by the PARKnership Fund at the Coral Gables Community Foundation, the Coral Gables Garden Club, the Kerdyk and Withers families and Mayor Vince Lago supports a major renewal and renovation at Camp Mahachee along Old Cutler Road in Coral Gables.

In 2023, Camp Mahachee will turn 75, and Girl Scouts of Tropical Florida will celebrate its Centennial. The property was purchased in 1945 with funds from cookie sales. With time, the hardwood hammock at the entrance has become overrun with invasive species, and this initiative aims to provide for removal and replacement with native trees. The camp features shelters, meeting space, cabins and a hardwood hammock, and is used for all kinds of youth activities.

The entrance area – more than an acre of lush tropical green – is infested with sewer vine, which has a characteristic, skunk-like odor. The Camp Mahachee Entrance Restoration Project begins with the tedious – and stinky – hand removal of such non-native plants and adds entrance signage. Commencement of the first phase is urgent before summer rains give the sewer vine the opportunity to increase the amount of forest it blankets.

Next, equally important, the work in the second phase aims to restore the hardwood hammock with the planting of 2,000 tropical native-species saplings that promote bird and

wildlife habitat. A third and final phase, expected in early 2023, promises a new Pollinator Garden.

The leadership of the Coral Gables Garden Club inspired the collaboration for important initial funding for the project, which now totals more than \$50,000 and will grow further when the PARKnership Fund opens a community-wide fundraising campaign to support Phases two and three of the project. The seed funders for this project include Vice Mayor Emeritus and Realtor Bill Kerdyk, Jr. and wife Lynn; the Coral Gables Garden Club; Mayor Vince Lago; fourth generation Miamian Chip Withers; and the Coral Gables Community Foundation.

“The Coral Gables Garden Club is so grateful that Bill and Lynn Kerdyk brought this project to our attention. We all are committed to teaching the young girls of our community the value of planting species to support a native habitat,” said Susan Rodriguez, club president. “The Garden Club has several important conservation projects and this restoration project at Camp Mahachee is one that is very meaningful to our club. We can contribute to restoring land to its native habitat and give the girls of Miami-Dade County an opportunity to experience the native flora and fauna of South Florida in a natural setting. This special initiative is extremely popular with our membership as so many of our members were Girl Scouts and attended programs at Camp Mahachee dating back to the 1950s. Camp Mahachee is and always will be a treasure in The City Beautiful and to our club.”

Realtor and Coral Gables Vice Mayor Emeritus Bill Kerdyk, Jr. had visited Camp Mahachee this winter and came away shocked at the seemingly impenetrable overgrowth; he promptly called Coral Gables Community Foundation President Mary Snow to suggest that the PARKnership Fund could be used for such a challenge. He was especially quick to credit the Garden Club for its generosity and other donors including Mayor Lago and Chip Withers. Kerdyk said, “My daughters enjoyed this camp when they were Girl Scouts, and kids from all over Miami-Dade County should be able to camp, learn and play on this beautiful piece of property put back in its natural form. I really want to see the community take an interest and help push this project to completion.”

HOW YOU CAN HELP

You can join a community-wide fundraising campaign supporting The PARKnership Fund at the Coral Gables Community Foundation which will fund phases two and three. Make your fully tax-deductible gift to the PARKnership Fund now at this page:

<https://gablesfoundation.org/funds/parknership>. Also, the Girl Scouts of Tropical Florida will be calling on individuals and groups to join for workdays and educational opportunities for all ages at Camp Mahachee.

ABOUT GIRL SCOUTS OF TROPICAL FLORIDA

Since 1923 the Girl Scouts of Tropical Florida have been fostering the values of service and leadership for girls in Miami-Dade County. Girl Scouts is currently serving 2,500 girls ages 5-17 across every zip code in Miami-Dade and the Keys. Media contacts are Public Relations Manager Andi Phillips Lopez (andi.phillips@outlook.com) and Director of Marketing and Communications Ana Mantica (amantica@girlscoutsfl.org). Learn more at <https://girlscoutsfl.org>.

ABOUT THE PARKNERSHIP FUND

The PARKnership Fund is a public/private partnership to purchase, renovate and create open, green spaces for Coral Gables. It was created in 1997 by Bill Kerdyk Jr, owner of Kerdyk Real Estate. PARKnership, a charitable fund at the Coral Gables Community Foundation, has been a force behind several important renovations of the Coral Gables greenspace and waterways since then.

ABOUT THE CORAL GABLES GARDEN CLUB

Since the year of incorporation of the City Beautiful in 1925, the Coral Gables Garden Club has been committed to civic improvement through community beautification projects. The Club supports the community by their conservation, civic, and beautification efforts but also contributes by awarding scholarships to college students studying in the fields of the natural sciences. More at <http://coralgablesgardenclub.org>.

ABOUT THE CORAL GABLES COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Led by community leaders, the Coral Gables Community Foundation works to improve the quality of life for those who live, work, learn and play in the City Beautiful. The Foundation has been at the forefront of the evolving needs of Coral Gables by effectively bringing together beneficiaries and benefactors to fund programs with the greatest impact and benefit to “The City Beautiful.” Established in 1991, the Coral Gables Community Foundation, through its discretionary, donor-advised, and scholarship funds, awarded over \$11 million to worthy causes. For more information, please visit gablesfoundation.org.

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MEDIA CONTACTS

- Girl Scouts of Tropical Florida: PR Manager Andi Phillips Lopez, andi.phillips@outlook.com, and Director of Marketing and Communications Ana Mantica, amantica@girlscoutsfl.org.
- Coral Gables Garden Club: Director of Communications Tara Auclair, Tara.auclair@gmail.com.
- Coral Gables Community Foundation: Marketing and Program Manager Robertson Adams, robertson@gablesfoundation.org.