



Environmental Learning Center
Annual Report 2018 - 2019





Our Mission

Our mission is to educate, inspire and empower all people to be active stewards of the environment and their own well-being.

Our Vision

The ELC is an attractive destination for people of all ages to frequently return to for adventure, learning and wellness. Our visitors will experience and appreciate the benefits of immersion in nature, understand the value of a healthy environment and be inspired to create a sustainable world.

What We Offer

- Environmental Programs
- Field Trips and Camps
- Interactive Exhibits
- Aquarium & Touch Tank
- Wellness Programs
- All-Terrain Wheelchairs
- Kayak & Paddle Board Rentals
- STEAM Programs (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts & Math)
- See Through Canoes
- Facility Rentals
- Community Events
- Pontoon Boat Tours
- Canoe Tours
- Walking Tours
- Over 2.5 Miles of Trails

The ELC fosters community awareness, appreciation and concern for the environment. We promote the use of 21st century knowledge and skills to make informed decisions, solve current environmental problems and prevent new ones.

Not only do we educate people about these issues, we empower people to be a part of the solution. ***Because everyone deserves a healthy planet.***

*We need nature.
Nature needs us.*

Our Team

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A Letter from our Executive Director



Having just celebrated my one year anniversary as the new leader of the Environmental Learning Center (ELC), I am often asked how I am enjoying the role. I gratefully reply that I am over the moon to be able to spend my time and skills furthering this absolutely critical mission. In my mind, there is no more important issue locally or globally than the health of our irreplaceable ecosystems. Everyone deserves a healthy planet.

We live in a day where we fear red tide, blue green algal blooms, and our prized beaches being closed due to elevated levels of bacteria.

Those fishing in our Indian River Lagoon no longer feel comfortable eating their catch. We hear fewer birds chirping, and we aren't seeing as many butterflies in our yards. We can choose a better path. If you are reading this, then I believe you have chosen to walk this path with us and I congratulate and thank you.

Nature is resilient and will return to a state of health if we commit now to key changes in our behavior. I am honored to be working alongside so many who are passionate about our natural resources, a vanguard who have come together to take action, giving of their time, talent and treasure to be part of the solution. We can equip ourselves to be a force for nature, turning the tide and creating a healthy future for our environment, ourselves and future generations. The choices we make over the next decade will be key in determining the future health of our land and water, which is directly tied to our own personal health.

We urge folks to "Get Outside and Play!" ~ Connecting with nature eases societal pressures, allowing us to remember and value more important things like relationships, sharing and community. Natural Rx ~ Time spent amid plants and animals in the earth elements has a powerful, complex effect on human well-being. It reduces anger, fear, stress, depression, blood pressure, feelings of overwhelm and disconnect, heart rate and muscle tension. It improves our immune system, energy levels, memory, mood, mental health, feelings of connection, sense of purpose, peace, gratitude and clarity. We breathe deeper, love better, think more clearly and feel happier!

Almost 40 years ago, visionaries like George Bunnell, Holly Dill, Maggie Bowman, the Pelican Island Audubon Society, our County Commissioners and School Board Members recognized the unique natural resources we were privileged to enjoy. They initiated a partnership to use this special lagoon parcel to create a campus where people of all ages could spend time in the "Real" Florida.

A Letter from our Executive Director

We have a grand vision to grow the ELC to the next level, to make it a premier destination for environmental learning and adventure. We strive to surround our guests with the wonders of nature, deepening their commitment to the preservation of our natural world, and in the process enhancing their own personal balance and wellness. We would love each of you to think of the ELC as an extension of your own backyard, a place you come to unwind, explore and picnic with friends; a unique place to hold your corporate retreats, weddings and parties; and the place you turn to for holistic self care through yoga, qigong, meditation, and wellness classes.

We have a vast array of onsite and outreach programs for children and adults of every age. In the past 30 years we have followed the progress of some of our participants and are proud to say we have strong Eco-Warriors in the professional world whose trajectory we can trace back to their childhood years spent in STEM/nature immersion programs at the ELC. We work seven days a week to empower people to go forth and serve as the protectors of our natural resources in their own way. We want to be one of your primary vehicles for learning interesting things about the natural world we live in, and how we can live harmoniously with it. We view ourselves as the bridge between science and the general public, distilling 21st century knowledge down to choices that we can each make in our everyday lives to be part of the solution. For yes, while humans have caused the problems, humans are also the answer!

We are busily making campus-wide improvements and are so excited about the plans for our new Education and Event Pavilion. This state of the art facility will be a game-changer for the ELC in terms of offerings for the community. Hopefully, when you read this annual report next year, we will be fully utilizing this amazing addition to our campus, due to be completed in Winter 2020-21. Next on the horizon is our FUN (Families Unplug in Nature) Zone, an outdoor wild, native play area designed to foster creativity and risk taking.

Thank you for your investment in our collective future. If you or someone you know is looking to be more connected in any way with our important work, please call me on my cell 772-532-0587 or email me at barb@discoverelc.org. Keep an eye on the ELC because you will be seeing a lot of exciting new events, partnerships, programs and developments - all designed to help you UNPLUG, DISCOVER and CONNECT.

Now is the time. You are the answer! Together we can restore health to our vital ecosystems.

Yours in service,



OUR ANNUAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

HIGHLIGHTING MANY OF THE WINS IN OUR
PURPOSE-DRIVEN MISSION

Looking Back at 2019



14,529
Visitors



1,963
Pontoon Boat
Passengers



1,673
Educator Run
Program Hours



396
New Members



444
Maggie Bowman Fund
Scholarship Beneficiaries



3,291
Educational Program
Participants Served



Volunteers

"We strongly believe that education is the key to preserving and enjoying our beautiful Indian River Lagoon. We brought our own children when they were young and happily share the legacy of the ELC with others as volunteers today." *Volunteers Walter & Patty Garrard*

You Can Make a Difference!

Some Volunteer Opportunities Include:

- Aquaria Touch Tank & Discovery Station Docent
- Campus Maintenance/Gardening
- Roving Nature Guide
- Pontoon Boat Guide
- Greeter
- **And more!**



\$275,814
Total Value of
Volunteer Service



10,846
Hours Volunteered

Want to become a volunteer?

Email volunteer@discoverelc.org, call (772) 589-5050 ext. 107 or fill out our online application at DiscoverELC.org/volunteer

Financial Statement

Fiscal Year July 1, 2018- June 30, 2019

Revenue

Contributions	\$819,597
Special Events	\$198,570
Programs	\$150,166
Other	\$52,297
Investment Gain	\$176,841
Total Revenue	\$1,397,471

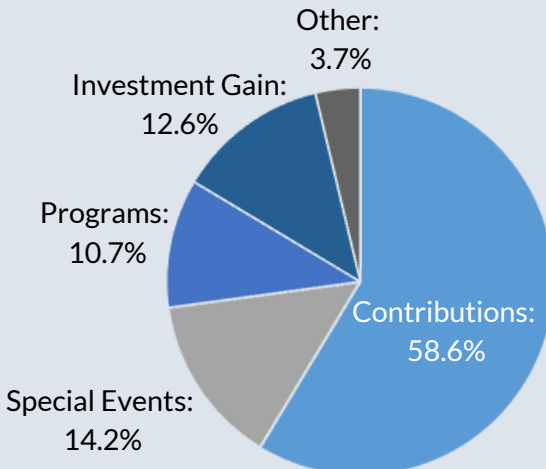
Expenses

Program Services	
Educational Programs	\$931,950
Support Services	
Management and General	\$194,514
Resource Development	\$210,093
Total Expenses	\$1,336,557

Net Assets

Beginning of the Year	\$6,667,832
Change in Net Assets	\$60,914
End of the Year	\$6,728,746

Breaking Down the Revenue

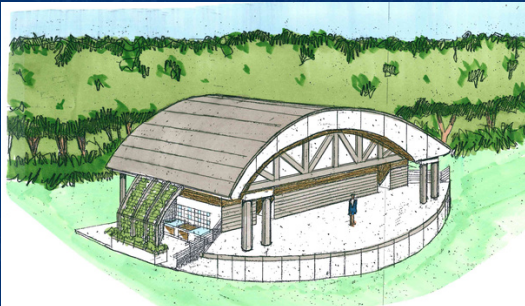


What's New?

THOMAS R. SCHIDEL EDUCATION & EVENT PAVILION FULLY FUNDED!

We are pleased to announce that one generous donor is funding the first project in our long-range Master Plan. The ELC received a \$1M pledge from inventor and business owner Thomas R. Schidel of Vero Beach. Mr. Schidel's gift will provide for the design, construction and maintenance of the pavilion.

This state of the art eco-tech facility will be ideal for midsize educational programs and event rentals and, when combined with the oval (field), will be able to accommodate large scale events, concerts, theatre and festivals for up to 1000 guests.



The Master Plan is a five to ten year plan that will guide future growth and development.

We aim to complete the construction of the pavilion in early 2021.

Our Pontoon Boat is Now Wheelchair Accessible



Lagoon Academy Home School Program



We've expanded our hours!
Monday - Saturday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Sunday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

With Appreciation...

*A special thank you to our donors.
We couldn't do it without you!*

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*"We make a living by
what we get."*

*"We make a life by
what we give."*

Winston S. Churchill



Donor Spotlight

"When I was a child, I spent a lot of time exploring the woods around me. As I got older, I realized how important nature is to one's well-being and to the environment.

When I moved to Vero Beach, I visited ELC and fell in love with how beautiful and interesting the campus was. I saw the school children on campus and saw how much fun they were having walking around and examining nature's critters. They were also learning how important the environment is in everyone's life.

That is when I decided I wanted to become a part of ELC as a volunteer and a donor. When a neighbor recommended me to the board, I jumped at the chance. I've been an active board member and donor for the past seven years," Donor and Board Member Tim Buhl.



Carol and Tim Buhl

A special thank you to Tim and Carol Buhl for not only donating to the ELC, but also for Tim investing his time and talents as a board member.

Our Collaborative Partnerships

Ability Resource Center

Alzheimer & Parkinson
Association of Indian River County

American Association of University Women

Anglers for Conservation

Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge

Big Brothers Big Sisters

Boys & Girls Clubs of Indian River County

Captain Hiram's River Challenge Triathlon

Clean Water Coalition of Indian River County

Coastal Connections

Coastal Conservation Association

Cultural Council of Indian River County

Florida Department of Health

Florida Master Naturalist Program

Florida Medical Entomology Laboratory

Florida Native Plant Society

Friends of St. Sebastian River

Gifford Youth Achievement Center

Grand Harbor Community Outreach Program

Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute

Head Start of Indian River County

Home Depot

Homeless Children's Foundation of Indian
River County

Indian River Cares (coalition of nonprofit
leaders)

Indian River County Recreation Department

Indian River Lagoon National Estuary
Program

Ocean Research & Conservation Association

Indian River Community Foundation

Indian River County Chamber of Commerce

Sebastian River Area Chamber of Commerce

Indian River County Master Gardeners
US/IFAS extension

Indian River Lagoon Aquatic Preserves

Indian River Land Trust

Indian River State College

Keep Indian River Beautiful

Kiwanis Youth in Action

LaPorte Farms

Laura Riding Jackson Foundation

Leave No Trace

McKee Botanical Gardens

Mental Health Association

New Normal Society

Pelican Island Conservation Society

Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge

Quail Valley Charities

Save the Chimps

School District of Indian River County

Sea Turtle Conservancy

Sebastian Clambake Foundation

Sebastian Inlet District

Senior Resource Association

Smithsonian Marine Station

Stormwater Management

Sustainable Kashi

The Learning Alliance

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

United Way of Indian River County

Vero Beach Museum of Art

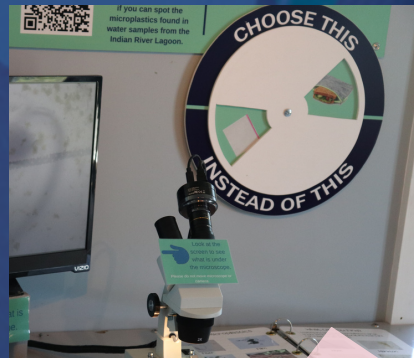
Waste Management

Youth Guidance Mentoring Academy


Youth on a Mission

Our Collaborative Partnerships

A research project being conducted by the University of Central Florida aims to better understand the amount of microplastics present in the Indian River Lagoon. Each month, water samples were collected from various locations throughout the lagoon and filtered to collect microplastics. Working alongside local partner, the DEP/IRLAP, ELC volunteers and interns received training on how to identify microplastics on the filters and processed filters from multiple sites.



What are microplastics?

 Microplastics are extremely small pieces of plastic debris in the environment resulting from the breakdown of consumer products and industrial waste

Microplastics have the potential to impact the entire planet, and they have already been found in unexpected places including the deep sea, arctic snow, and suspended in the atmosphere. They can leach toxins and when ingested by animals, can lead to malnutrition. The effect of microplastics on human health is currently unknown, but researchers are investigating connections between human health and microplastics.

The ELC Foundation

The Environmental Learning Center (ELC) Foundation, Inc. is a separate not-for-profit corporation that serves as a sole support organization to the Environmental Learning Center, Inc. and manages both funds designated by the board for long-term investment and funds permanently restricted by donors for investment in perpetuity.

The ELC Foundation utilizes an internal committee of financial stewards who manage the Foundation's assets. Through prudent oversight, this Investment Committee has ensured rates of return that have performed solidly over a ten year period.

Foundation Board of Directors

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Haydn Cole

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Rate of Return on Foundation Investments

All Data are Annualized	1 yr	3 yr	5 yr	7 yr	10 yr
ELC Foundation Assets	4.15%	11.63%	7.85%	10.95%	10.90%
65/35 Mix*	6.85%	10.00%	5.44%	7.71%	8.30%

*65% of All Country World Index MXWD, 35% Barclays US Aggregate Bond Index AGG

Reasons to Donate Now

Your charitable contributions allow us to positively impact thousands of children and adults each year. It is through your generous donations and memberships that we can maintain and expand our many offerings and services to our shared community, helping make the world a better place. Please give today at DiscoverELC.org, contact Give@DiscoverELC.org or 772-589-5050 ext. 113.



Families Unplug in Nature

Be a Part of the Plan.

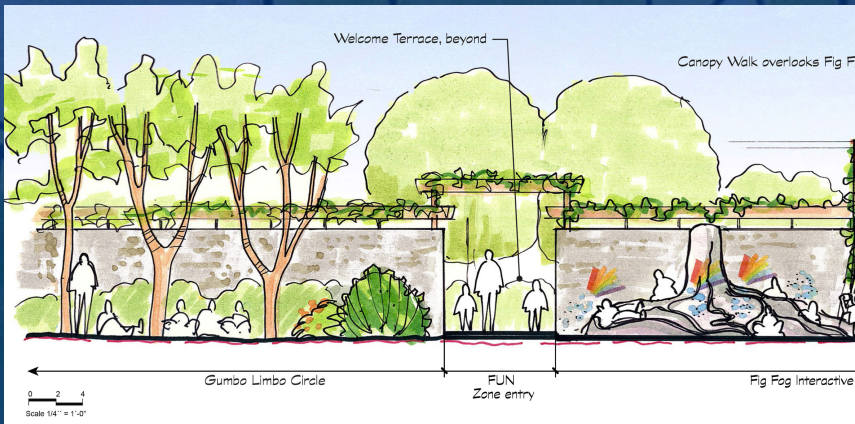
Phase One Goal: \$75,000

We envision a place where children can escape from technology, a place where they can go back to the basics and participate in nature play. Our proposed FUN Zone (Families Unplug in Nature) will give children the opportunity to have these experiences.

The FUN Zone aims to reconnect children and their caregivers to nature - to feel more comfortable with taking their own adventures and learning about the environment through joy-filled, participatory and open-ended free play.

Physical, emotional and social health is strengthened as children work to resolve problems, overcome challenges and get wild!

FAMILIES UNPLUG IN NATURE



Email Give@DiscoverELC.org or
call (772) 589-5050 ext. 113 for more information.



Our Mission

Our mission is to educate, inspire and empower all people to be active stewards of the environment and their own well-being.

255 Live Oak Drive, Vero Beach, FL 32963

(772) 589-5050

www.DiscoverELC.org

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