

The Ruskin Community Development Foundation's mission is to develop and improve the community. If you are a Ruskin resident, or interested in improving this community, you are automatically a member. There are no membership dues. Tax deductible donations are accepted and appreciated. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

We are a group of volunteers. Without the staff or overhead required by other organizations, we are able to put the money we raise directly into projects that benefit the community.



Marsh Creek Restoration

Restoring Marsh Creek is important not only for the aesthetic value of this lovely waterway running through the heart of downtown Ruskin, but for its ecological value as one of the precious few low-salinity tidal creeks left in our rapidly developing watershed. Many species such as snook, redfish, mullet, crabs, flounder and tarpon require this nursery habitat in their juvenile years. Take a walk behind the Ruskin Library, and you might spot a family of manatees feeding in Marsh Creek!

RCDF members spent countless hours and many of our own chainsaw blades, clearing out invasive Brazilian peppers and Australian pines along Marsh Creek's shoreline. We secured grants to expand the project, and are now working with the county and the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) to complete the restoration.

RCDF won a county award for "Best Environmental Project of 2000" for the boardwalk in Commongood Park along the Ruskin Inlet, which was built with volunteer labor and donated materials. We continue to work on the enhancement of the public lands around the inlet and Marsh Creek.

Working for a Better Ruskin

RCDF works with government agencies and other organizations to represent the interests of the Ruskin community. Our affiliations include the South Shore Roundtable, Tampa Bay & Co. and the Hillsborough County Invasive Species Task Force. We have lent financial support to many projects and organizations such as:

- Local Scholarships
- Greenhouse for Lennard High School
- Future Farmers of America
- Ruskin Chamber of Commerce
- Junior Woman's Club
- District Four Sheriffs Office
- South Shore Regional Library
- Community cleanup and beautification



Above, former RCDF President Wade Clark presents a scholarship to a student (left), and gives a donation to the local sheriff's office (right) on behalf of RCDF.

Please see our website for upcoming meetings and events, a list of board members and other current information: ruskinfoundation.org

Phone: 813-645-6028

Mail: PO Box 549, Ruskin, FL 33575-0549

E-mail: postmaster@ruskinfoundation.org

Join us, and get involved in your community!

Ruskin Community Development Foundation



If you care about Ruskin, you are a member!



A Vision for Ruskin

In 1994, the Ruskin Community Development Foundation (RCDF) was founded to facilitate and fund community improvement projects. In 1997 the Ruskin Community Development Plan was finalized, and RCDF took on the goal of implementing that plan. We later participated in the SouthShore Areawide Systems Plan—the big-picture plan for the systems of transportation, natural resources and cultural & historical resources throughout south Hillsborough County. Within that framework, several south county communities are forging their own community plans.



In 2003, Ruskin began a 2-year Community Planning process that built upon the elements in our original plan to create the award-winning Ruskin Community Plan that was formally adopted by the county into its Comprehensive Plan in 2005.



The plan provides guidance for growth while preserving Ruskin's small-town character and unique history. Goals include:

- Revitalize the Ruskin Town Center
- Promote eco-tourism
- Protect and enhance Ruskin's natural environment
- Promote Ruskin's historic character and culture
- Promote economic development that is compatible with our community
- Protect our community character and quality of life as we grow

RCDF continues to support the Ruskin Community Plan, working together with county government, local landowners and developers to modify zoning and direct land use to realize the community's vision for the future.



Ruskin Tomato & Heritage Festival www.ruskintomatofestival.org

Held annually at E. G. Simmons Park on the first weekend of May, the festival promotes the area's agricultural heritage, and showcases local organizations and businesses. This Ruskin celebration is the Foundation's biggest fundraiser. The down-home fun includes:

- Farmer's Market
- Ruskin Tomato Queen
- Butterfly Tent, with release at end of festival
- Antique Tractor Show
- Watershed Tour
- Taste of "Old Florida" Food—even fried green tomatoes!
- Classic Car Show
- Arts & Crafts
- FREE sliced tomatoes!
- Bluegrass & Country Music
- Plant Show & Sale with Gardening Seminars
- FREE tomato plants!
- Heritage Center & Historical Exhibits
- Kid's Korner with rides, games, and prizes



Camp Bayou Outdoor Learning Center www.campbayou.org

As a community service and stimulus to Ruskin's development of nature-based tourism, RCDF, in cooperation with Hillsborough County Parks, Recreation & Conservation Department, operates Camp Bayou as an environmental education center. The facility promotes appreciation and understanding of our natural resources and our local culture & history. Classes are offered for children, families & adults, including the Florida Master Naturalist Program, a continuing education program of the University of Florida.

The 160-acre nature preserve is on the Little Manatee River (an "Outstanding Florida Water") and features:

- Interpretive center
- Wildlife includes gopher tortoises and Sherman's fox squirrels
- Canoe launch
- Demonstrations of Florida Indian life and the pre-Columbian village of Ucita, sited on the Little Manatee River
- Butterfly garden
- Nursery offers Florida native plants for sale
- Hiking trails through varied habitats: riverine, sandhill and flatwoods
- Selected for The Great Florida Birding Trail, a birdwatching blind overlooks a bird garden

www.campbayou.org

Camp Bayou is open to the public Thursday – Saturday, 9 A.M. – 2 P.M.

Phone: (813) 641-8545

Location: 4140 24TH St. SE, Ruskin, 3 miles south of SR 674 (I-75 exit 240 west)

The Charlie & Shirley Riddle Scholarship Fund provides opportunities for schoolchildren to attend educational programs at Camp Bayou. We kicked off this fund in 2006 with \$10,000, and we are accepting contributions in hopes of attaining a \$12,500 challenge grant from the Community Foundation of Greater Sun City Center. Our goal is a \$50,000 endowment.

The Paleo Preserve partners with RCDF at Camp Bayou, showcasing creatures of the very early ice age. In 1983, local paleontologist Frank Garcia discovered the world's greatest collection of Pleistocene fossils at the Leisey Shell Pit in Ruskin, uncovering scores of fantastic creatures from prehistoric times, some of them previously unknown to science. Today, Frank Garcia is the Director of Education at the Paleo Preserve, where you can discover prehistoric Florida!

