

## 2019 Annual Award Narratives

### **Bike Club: *Caloosa Riders Bicycle Club***

The Caloosa Riders Bicycle Club describes itself as a family of cyclists in Southwest Florida since 1988. The CRBC consists of a wide range of riders from various ages and backgrounds, all of whom share a common enthusiasm and love of cycling.

The CRBC has also advocated for safe cycling in Lee County and beyond. Through the dedication of their members, CRBC offers summer bicycling skills programs in their community with a goal to not only teach young riders cycling skills and laws, but also to reinforce life skills of cooperation, teamwork and communication. Those who register for a summer session are also provided a free bicycle safety check in partnership with local bicycle shops.

The Caloosa Riders believe that among the benefits of cycling is development of self-assurance. Bicycling helps motivate youth to overcome failures and is one of few sports where boys and girls follow the same rules for competition. For adults, the CRBC encourages members to become involved in the transportation decision process through advocacy and attendance at public meetings to make their voice heard.

### **Off-Road Club: *Shane Richeson, SWAMP Mountain Bike Club***

The original SouthWest Association of Mountainbike Pedalers was founded in 1999 as a social off-road bicycle club. Today, SWAMP Mountain Bike Club is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that aims to inspire adventure, build and maintain sustainable trails and strengthen community through cycling.

The SWAMP in the community web page boasts 6000 volunteer hours (via 645 active members and counting) to maintain the off-road trail systems in Balm-Boyette Scrub Nature Preserve, Croom (within the Withlacoochee State Forest), Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park and Wilderness, Morris Bridge and Flatwoods Trails of the Wilderness Preserve of Lower Hillsborough County. The club has donated \$21,000 (and counting) to community organizations and projects, including the development of natural surface single-track in Pinellas County. The club has representation on the Hillsborough County Greenway Committee and is currently orchestrating a state-wide coalition of natural surface trail leadership. SWAMP is a sponsor to the inaugural season of the Florida Interscholastic Cycling League.

### **Law Enforcement Agency: *Sarasota Police Department***

Sarasota Police Department is committed to eliminating traffic fatalities resulting in serious and fatal injuries to pedestrians and bicyclists. Their consistent High Visibility Enforcement efforts resulted in a reduction of bicyclist fatalities from four in 2015 to one in 2017.

The Sarasota Police Department also hosts what is called “Tweet from the Beat.” Twitter users can virtually “ride along” with department officers during a night shift and those following on Twitter can ask questions and interact with the officer during the patrol shift.

During Spring Break, there is an influx in vehicular, bicycle, pedestrian and private transportation throughout the community. In an effort to save lives and stop drivers from drinking and driving, the Sarasota Police Department partners with the Florida Sheriff's Association, Florida Highway Patrol and Florida Police Chiefs Association for a statewide DUI enforcement operation known as "Dry Streets." A special "Tweet from the Beat" takes place during "Dry Streets," demonstrating how officers are saving lives.

**Supporting Agency: *Westshore Alliance***

The Westshore Alliance is a membership-based organization of business and community leaders recognized as the voice of Tampa's Westshore District. Although the Westshore District of Tampa has long been considered among the least walkable and bike-friendly areas within the city, the Alliance has made significant progress in transportation, public safety and education primarily for pedestrians and cyclists due to Michael Maurino.

Michael Maurino is the Director of Transportation for the Westshore Alliance and Chair of the Hillsborough MPO Livable Roadways Committee. Thanks to Michael's leadership since coming on board just one year ago, the District now has a comprehensive multi-agency active transport master plan.

Michael has identified some 25+ studies and projects that have been conducted over several decades and breathed new life into many, and identified additional segments of the desired outcome: a connected grid of safe, comfortable space for all who live, work and play in the District. He's worked to gain support from agency partners City of Tampa, Hillsborough Metropolitan Organization (MPO), Hillsborough County, and the Florida Department of Transportation.

In 2019, he oversaw a new League of American Bicyclists Bicycle Friendly Business<sup>SM</sup> program (BFB) within the District, which had a goal of five BFBs and achieved six new and one bronze-to-silver elevation, for a total of seven. The crowning jewel of the BFBs in the Westshore District was Tampa International Airport, which is the first airport in the nation to receive the League's BFB designation.

**Supporting Agency: *Hernando/Citrus MPO***

As the Executive Director of the Hernando/Citrus Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), Steve Diez has been a steadfast champion of long-distance paved trails. He actively promoted the existing Suncoast Trail alongside the Suncoast Expressway in Hernando and Pasco Counties, and in the process added a critical segment to Florida's evolving paved trail system.

With the creation of the SUN Trails program in the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) in 2015, the Suncoast Trail became a significant part of the Coast to Coast Trail, a corridor planned to link the Canaveral National Seashore on the Atlantic Ocean to the City of St. Petersburg on the Gulf of Mexico. In fact, it was Steve Diez who first recognized the potential of linking many existing area trails into this regional system.

In recognition of his vision of regionally linked trails and his efforts to secure funding support for their development, Steve was nominated to the Honorary Board of the Florida Greenways & Trails Foundation in 2019.

**Program: *Project Hero***

Project Hero is a national non-profit organization dedicated to helping Veterans and First Responders affected by Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI) and injury to achieve rehabilitation, recovery and resilience in their daily lives and increasing awareness to combat the national mental health emergency posed by PTSD and TBI.

Valerie Gambino is the regional contact for the Jacksonville Project Hero “HUB” and is always looking for ways to help the local Veteran and First Responder community by introducing them to cycling. Valerie started with Project Hero on a 9/11 Memorial Ride to commemorate her brother Thomas who was a Fireman in NYC on 9/11.

Through Project Hero, Valerie has secured several loaner bikes that she uses to introduce cycling to wounded veterans. She attends the quarterly Vets for Vets meeting to recruit new cyclists and host new rider rides every week.

Valerie recently organized a 9/11 Memorial ride that was widely reported by local news. She has also helped organized a ride to Key West for wounded veterans.

**Program: *Pedal Power Ministries***

Ted Hogan is the founder of Pedal Power Ministries at the Florida Presbyterian Church in Lakeland. Since 2008, the mission of Pedal Power Ministries is to refurbish and repair bicycles to give to those in need as a means of transportation and to children whose parents have fallen on hard times.

The ministry relies solely on donations and is not funded by the church. Any monetary donations received are used to buy parts and equipment to further the ministries’ goal of obtaining, refurbishing and repairing more bicycles.

Since it’s founding, the ministry has given away over 3000 bicycles to those in need. Many of the recipients are homeless men and women without reliable transportation. When someone receives a bicycle, they are given lights and a lock. Children receiving a bicycle are also fitted with a helmet. The ministry recently started teaching recipients how to maintain and repair their bicycles. All persons working for Pedal Power are volunteers. Since Ted repaired his first bicycle the ministry has grown exponentially and he has several hundred bicycles waiting to be repaired and distributed.

**Bicycle Professional: *Mary O’Brien, FDOT Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator***

Mary O'Brien, AICP (American Institute of Certified Planners), is the State Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator. In her three years at the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), Mary has

led revolutionary overhauls to FDOT's bicycle facilities criteria and has spearheaded the creation of the ConnectPed app.

Mary has thoughtfully sought out the best national and international guidance on separated bike facilities, including the CROW manual (Netherlands Design Manual for Bicycle Traffic), for inclusion on FDOT's system. Her considerable personal drive and infectious commitment to bicycle safety have allowed her to effect changes directly and indirectly through the efforts of roadway design and operations engineers, planners, IT staff and others at FDOT. Recent examples include the first ever guidance on separated bike lanes in the FDOT Design Manual.

Mary has also led the development of ConnectPed, an online data visualization app. Based on the TransPed concept developed by FDOT District 5, ConnectPed taps into the vast data resources of FDOT that have previously been inaccessible to most people. Crash data, roadway speeds and volumes, Context Classification and much more are now available to the general public thanks to Mary's leadership and hard work. Mary was able to assemble and lead an interdisciplinary team of engineers, planners and IT staff to develop this app. She continues to monitor and champion this effort.

In her unique position at FDOT, Mary has the opportunity to make changes that can impact the entire state for decades to come. She is using that opportunity wisely for the benefit of Florida's cyclists.

**Citizen Bike Advocate: *Christian Wagley, Bicycle Pensacola***

Christian Wagley Co-founded and is the Executive Director of Bike Pensacola, an organization made up entirely of volunteers who advocate for bike-friendly streets. Christian started a "Slow-ride Pensacola" event to get citizens to start thinking about safe-streets initiatives and to showcase the value of bicycles as an alternative to driving.

The events are held monthly and started with just a few riders, but through Christian's persistence and leadership the events are now attended by over 350 people. Bike Pensacola uses these events to educate citizens about bike safety and to encourage them to get involved in our complete streets initiative. Christian also attends local City Council meetings and public input meetings held by FDOT.

**Citizen Bike Advocate: *Ashley Hopkins***

In 2018, Ashley began working on a project to demonstrate the accessibility of all Leon County parks by bike. To date, Ashley has established routes to over 138 Leon County parks, making the route information public along with valuable information such as available bike infrastructure, traffic expectations and general rider-comfort. Ashley carefully documents these routes with photos and makes all the information available to the public through the Bike2Parks.com website. The Bike2Parks project can also be followed on Instagram, where Ashley provides a stream of photo documentation of the beautiful parks and public lands in and around Tallahassee.

In 2019, Ashley began demonstrating how she can use her bike to help contribute to maintaining public lands by committing to carrying out trash and litter by bike. She uses a cargo bike to haul a kayak so that she can paddle some of the spectacular waterways of Leon County, while gathering up any trash she comes across, everything from bottles and cans to household items and small furniture!

Ashley also demonstrates how she can make an impact by carrying a messenger style bag to carry out trash while riding mountain bike trails, and fire roads through the Apalachicola National Forest, ensuring that she always leaves it better than she found it. In almost every post made on the Bike2Parks account, followers will be reminded that these public lands and parks are homelands of various nations including the Apalachee Indian Nation, the Muscogee Nation of Florida, the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma and the Seminole Tribe of Florida, reminding our community that all of these tribal nations still exist today.

Because the Bike2Parks project is accessible on social media, the inspiration and impact reaches far beyond Tallahassee. The Tallahassee bike community would look very different without the enormous contributions made by Ashley Hopkins. She is a constant source of inspiration, encouragement and leadership.

### ***Bicycle Business: The Ride Experience***

Alex Regino is the founder of The Ride Xperience, a bicycle rental and tour business in Orlando. The Ride Xperience provides innovative and exceptional services for visitors from all over the world.

Alex first fell in love with cycling while living at a boarding school in Massachusetts at the age of 15. The only way he could explore the beautiful coast of the City of Beverly, MA (just north of Salem) was on a bicycle. Cycling gave him freedom and the feeling that there were no limits to what and where he could explore.

Now living in one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world, Alex has a mission to show that there is much more in Orlando than just huge conventions centers and theme parks, and that you can explore Orlando by bicycle. At the end of a Ride Xperience tour, there is nothing more satisfying to Alex than to hear from guests that the cycling experience was the best part of their trip to Orlando. That is The Ride Xperience.

### ***Bicycle Friendly Community: City of Inverness***

In the fall of 2016, the League of American Bicyclists designated the City of Inverness as a Bronze Level Bicycle Friendly Community<sup>SM</sup>. This national recognition has brought numerous cyclists to Inverness, a few of which have become regular snowbirds to the area.

Part of the attraction for cyclists to Inverness is the Withlacoochee State Trail, a 46-mile, mostly flat, rails-to-trail system traversing rivers and forests. The City of Inverness, capitalizing on its small-town charm while still being the county seat of Citrus County, has created a sense of place utilizing the trail.

Comprehensive planning, supported by annual review and budgetary consideration, has given staff and city leadership strategic vision and direction for Smart Growth. Downtown streets have been reengineered and pedestrian walkways, decorative lighting, benches and ecologically friendly landscaping have been added to compliment the historic district. Between this district and Wallace Brooks Park lies the Withlacoochee State Trail – a perfect respite for cyclists.

In 2019, the City of Inverness made a pitch to the Florida Office of Greenways and Trails Council to become a Florida Trail Town. The presentation included detailed plans for the makeover of Wallace Brooks Park and the Railroad Depot. Today the plans have come to life and Inverness is a designated Florida Trail Town.

**Trails Promoter: *Friends of Amelia Island Trails, Inc***

The Friends of Amelia Island Trail, Inc., is a non-profit organization with the purpose of developing, improving and maintaining the Amelia Island Trail (AIT). In essence, to help make the Amelia Island Trail the best place to walk, run or bicycle in Florida.

The Amelia Island Trail currently extends over seven miles and connects to Big Talbot Island in northeast Florida. The AIT also connects across the Nassau Sound to the Timucuan Trail, which eventually, when all phases are completed, will give users over 15 miles of continuous multi-use trail. These trails are also part of the East Coast Greenway, an ambitious greenway system designed to connect Calais, Maine to Key West, FL.

The Friends of AIT have helped Nassau County to receive federal and state grants, totaling over 9 million dollars, for off-road and on road trails, in addition to Safe Routes to School grants for projects to benefit three Amelia Island schools. The group is currently helping to plan and solicit additional trail funding for two additional Amelia Island Trails that would provide 100% completion of the East Coast Greenway Trail on Amelia Island.

The Friends have represented AIT needs and proposed plans at the Fernandina Beach City Commission and Nassau County meetings. They maintain a partnership with the North Florida Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) staff and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection Office of Greenways and Trails while working with local businesses, clubs and developers to the area. A BBF to AIT for sure.

**Trails Manager: *Tim Baylie, Volusia County Parks***

As the Parks Director for Volusia County, Tim Baylie has been on the leading edge of long-distance paved trail development in Florida. Two SUN Trails system by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) – the Coast to Coast Connector and the St. Johns River to Sea Loop – pass through Volusia County with Tim a champion of both.

Since long-distance regional trails are still new to Florida, both transportation planners and park managers are learning how to develop these trails so that they work for travelers and recreational users. Since the advent of the SUN Trails system in 2015, he has worked tirelessly

to understand and address the issues unique to a long distance linear conservation corridor as a park amenity for Volusia County.

In the process, Tim has established a standard of excellence for trail signage and trail aesthetics that are inspiring other park leaders in Florida. In 2019, Tim Baylie was nominated to the Honorary Board of the Florida Greenways & Trails Foundation in recognition of his efforts to make Florida a delightful trail state.

**Volunteer: *Jim Shirk***

Jim has been an advocate for safe, effective and fun bicycle transportation for over 25 years. Jim himself uses bicycling as a way of life for recreation, errands and commuting.

Jim is a part owner of City Bike Tampa bicycle shop and spends significant portions of his time educating customers on bicycle safety (Jim is a League of American Bicyclists certified instructor), even if they do not actually buy anything. He has also been a member of the Hillsborough County Metropolitan Planning Organization's Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) since 2002 and has served as Chair. He volunteers when he can to Hillsborough County's annual Gasparilla Children's Bike Safety Rodeo along Tampa's Bayshore Boulevard.

Jim has led and/or participated in over 300 long-distance bicycle rides with individuals as well as organized groups such as former Tampa Bay Freewheelers and current Seminole Heights Bicycle Club. He has volunteered for numerous Sunday Market rides and community events that offer Bike Valet operations. He encouraged the University of South Florida (USF) student body in advancing bicycling on campus and in their personal endeavors. He is a regular participant, on his dime, to the National Bike Summit in Washington, DC to advocate for cyclists while serving on Team Florida.

Jim's sincere love for safe and fun bicycling has earned him the title as "Tampa's Bicycling Enabler-in-Chief."

**Elected Official Champion: *Senator Wilton Simpson, District 10***

Senator Wilton Simpson was elected to the Florida Senate in November of 2012 and currently serves as Florida's Senate Majority Leader while representing the state's 10<sup>th</sup> District. Growing up on a farm in rural Pasco County, Senator Simpson developed a hard work ethic and a take-responsibility attitude. He prides himself on being a strong and consistent voice for the issues that matter most to families.

In 2019, Senator Simpson introduced Senate Bill 76 – Driving While Using a Wireless Communications Device. Originally, this bill would allow Florida to be a Hands-Free state – meaning no devices in your hands while driving. The journey of this bill was a hard-fought battle and a testament to the Senator's will. All through the 2019 Florida legislative session, before the four Senate committees the bill was heard, amendments were made to the point that SB 76, when arriving to the Senate floor, evolved as CS/CS/CS/CS SB 76 (CS = Committee Substitution).

Ultimately, however, the companion House bill, CS/HB 107 (Representative Jackie Toledo, District 60), is what Governor Ron DeSantis signed into law. In essence, this bill made texting while driving a primary offense. This may not have been the initial outcome the Senator hoped for, but the victory to move texting while driving from a secondary offense to a primary offense was six years in the making.

For this bill and the process through which the Senator went through, Floridians witnessed a champion for public safety on public roads. Thank you, Senator Simpson. [And thank you Representative Toledo, our 2017 Elected Official Champion.]

**Special Recognition: *Amanda Beal, Florida Department of Health/Seminole County***

Amanda Beal is a Bicycle Enthusiast. In mid-2017, at the age of 48, she made the decision to start biking at the gym and on the road. This decision followed her doctor telling her that she had osteoarthritis in both knees and that she was too young and too obese to have surgery to correct the condition. The doctor told Amanda, "If you want to walk the second part of your life, you need to start biking or swimming for regular exercise." Amanda listened.

Amanda fell in love with biking and gradually lost over 100 pounds; and is in great physical health! When her place of employment completed their First Annual "Bike To Work" Day in late 2018, Amanda became a cycling commuter. Amanda is also involved with the bicycle community and received certifications in Bicycle Helmet Fitting and Bicycle Safety Rodeos. She works part-time with Best Foot Forward and in late 2019, coordinated the Seminole County Health Department's First Annual series of events for Safe Mobility for Life Week.

**Special Recognition: *Rajeeb Das, The Freewheel Project***

Rajeeb Das has been the heart and soul of low-income and children's bicycle advocacy in Gainesville for a very long time. For more than a decade, Rajeeb has organized and managed bicycle repair classes, free repairs and an Earn-a-Bicycle program for the most-needy in the Gainesville community – low-income children, day workers, the homeless and other residents – through a program called The Kickstand.

Rajeeb has served on the Gainesville/Alachua County Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board (BPAB). Rajeeb organized the "Light the Night" program, where members of BPAB went to local day labor sites in the early morning darkness to install free bicycle lights and distribute reflective vests. In 2007, he began to organize a volunteer bike repair – The Kickstand – which continues more than 13 years later to provide weekly free bike repair, training on bike repair and Earn-a-Bikes for kids, the homeless and others in need. The goal has always been about "empowering members of the community to ride and repair independently (or in groups), for work or play."

Rajeeb Das is an inspiration by his vision, by his example of hard work and friendship on behalf of those in need and by his success in getting others to join the cause. Having just

accepted a new position in Texas, Rajeeb leaves behind a strong and dedicated group of volunteers committed to carrying on his work. Gainesville, UF and Florida have been blessed to have Rajeeb Das as such a dedicated bicycle advocate for so many years.

**Special Recognition: *Jim Dodson, FBA***

Jim Dodson was invited to join the FBA Board in the spring of 2015, and his wisdom and dedication cannot be understated. Everyone who knows Jim can attest to his honesty, his integrity and his sincerity.

As a personal liability attorney, specializing in bicycle-related crashes, his knowledge of the laws to protect Florida cyclists has been valuable as a member of the FBA Board.

Jim is a regular contributor to The Messenger with concise, informative articles. In addition, Jim has written ten books, including the Florida Bicycle Handbook, relied upon by hundreds of cyclists across the state. He also publishes from his law firm a monthly newsletter that features interesting articles, healthy recipes and important bicycle safety information.

Although FBA misses Jim's insight and contributions during our Board conference calls and meetings, his commitment to FBA continues with his service on our Advisory Board and his liaison with the bicycle clubs.

**Special Recognition: *Steele Olmstead, FBA***

J. Steele Olmstead was invited to join the FBA Board in the spring of 2014. Steele is a personal liability attorney, specializing in bicycle-related crashes, and his knowledge of the laws to protect Florida cyclists has been valuable as a member of the FBA Board.

Perhaps what will be missed most is Steele's unique sense of humor and his willingness to volunteer. As president of the FBA Board, Steele enjoyed representing FBA at various events and loved engaging the public to talk bicycle. Our association will always remember the time and service Steele gave and the memories of his whack-a-doodle ways.