

FLORIDA FISHING ACADEMY ANNUAL REPORT 2018



Submitted by Capt. Rich Brochu

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Florida Fishing Academy

Annual Report 2018

OUR HISTORY

The FFA has spent 12 years delivering a highly celebrated, custom-designed fishing education and life skills program to over 22,258 Palm Beach County elementary, middle and high school students. At its heart, the *Angling for a Healthy Future* curriculum is an environmental awareness initiative that teaches children – tomorrow’s boaters, anglers and environmental stewards – to enjoy Florida’s fragile marine resources in a way that preserves the ecosystem for generations to come. The program also arms these kids with the tools and knowledge to resist the temptations of the streets and to gain a richer appreciation for our local waters. Some even use what we teach them to pursue jobs in the marine industries. **To date, we have helped over 333 students find jobs and certified 182 students as Red Cross lifeguards.**

Executive Director’s Statement

Dear Friends,

As we reflect on the past year, I have to thank our board, crew, students and supporters for making 2018 another great year. In 2018 alone, we had 3,750 students of all ages participate in our camps and weekend events, thanks in large part to funding from the United Way of Palm Beach County, Prime Time Palm Beach County, Palm Beach County Youth Services, Community Foundation of Palm Beach and Martin County and our contract to run the Riviera Beach Community Development Agency’s Community Boating Program. In the past year, the Marine Industries Association of Palm Beach County awarded us a \$30,000 grant for Mobile Marine Lab, \$6,500 for an annual fundraiser and \$10,000 for our new workforce development program in Riviera.

Mobile Marine Lab



While these numbers are impressive, this year was truly enlightening for me. Every time I write a grant, I am asked about our outcomes. They have been focused around our environment, helping students transition out of high school, increasing graduation rates, decreasing drug use, and the list goes on. Somewhere along the way, I lost track of one of the most basic outcomes – overcoming fear. Around 95% of our students have never been on a boat or in our ocean, even though they live within one mile from the water. I was reminded of this while on a trip with some high school students from the Boys and Girls Club of Riviera Beach. We had several girls who were terrified of the water. I watched other girls in the group take their hand and, together, they jumped into the water.

Thanks to the Community Foundation for Palm Beach and Martin Counties and the Marine Industries Association of Palm Beach County, we have built a fun, interactive public-messaging Mobile Marine Lab that promotes advocacy across all demographics, especially at our schools in Palm Beach and Martin counties and at area events, fairs, boat shows and other community settings. With this new hands-on educational program, our students, at their schools, explore a working model of Florida’s watershed, the effects of pollution and beach erosion and how it relates to the marine-life food chain. They have the opportunity to hold various marine critters in our touch tank, and they participate in an oil spill clean-up activity. These activities explore the importance of water quality, conservation and a healthy marine environment. We require students to brainstorm ideas for conservation activities and pollution control. They are asked to educate their families and friends on the need to protect and sustain the quality of our aquatic and marine environments.

It was another great year!

Shannon’s Statement

STORY 1

When we first reached out to Western Academy Charter, they were hesitant to schedule our program. They were worried about the safety of handling fishing tools. They wondered if our program would work with their kindergarten and first-grade students. Those worries quickly ended on day one. The students were so excited to be a part of our fishing program. Each week when we arrived, the students would go crazy. They quickly grasped the basic fishing skills of casting and knot tying. Throughout the course, the students grew an interest in our environment. They would bring in books about marine animals or pictures of the fish they caught that weekend. Parents and teachers would often hang around the class to get a glimpse of the students’ activities. We even had a

family come visit us at the South Florida Fair to see our Mobile Marine Lab. One parent couldn't stop talking about their son's newfound interest in marine science and said that all he talks about is how he wants to be a marine biologist.

Zack's Statement

STORY 2

Xain from Inlet Grove Community High School has been part of our fishing and outdoor exploration programs for over a year now. He had always been an active member of our program, but once we brought our new Mobile Marine Lab out, we saw a side of him that we never had the pleasure of experiencing. It was clear from the first minute that he had a special connection with our lab, showing more enthusiasm and engagement than his peers. He was excited to share with us his knowledge of South Florida's local ecosystems and agricultural community.

Fast forward about a week, when we set up our lab at the South Florida Fair. During the first few days, Xain came by, ecstatic, and informed us that he and his family were long-time volunteers at the fair. Xain started coming out to the lab every day to visit us to learn more about our display. Before this program, Xain was quiet and reserved, enjoying the programming but doing the bare minimum. Now that Xain has connected with our lab, he has had the opportunity to open up to us about things that he really cares about. His parents and brother came by and had the same connection as Xain. Seeing this whole family connect with our lab through their knowledge and curiosity of local ecosystems really shows me the value of our new lab and the programming that goes along with it.

Need for 2019-20

It is time that the FFA purchase our own vessel to continue to run our programs. The *Thea Maria* is currently being leased and has become an essential part of our summer program. We put approximately 1300 students on this boat during the summer. Having a vessel is a critical part of the FFA. We have an immediate need for:

- \$750,000, for the FFA to purchase the *Thea Marie*, a 49-passenger handicapped-accessible vessel

Total immediate revenue need: \$250,000 for a deposit to purchase the *Thea Marie*



2018 Board of Directors

Jeff Freeman, President (2011-Present)

Jeff, a native of Detroit, Mich., came to Florida after many summers as a camper, employee and eventual Outdoor Education Program director with one of the largest summer camps in the Midwest. Jeff has been facilitating team-building and experiential education classes since 1998 with diverse groups of adults and children. He is an American Red Cross-certified lifeguard and a CPR and first-aid instructor. A graduate of the police academy at Indian River State College, Jeff is now an officer at a law enforcement agency in South Florida. His other passions include teaching kids new skills that will remain with them for life and being a strong role model.

Jim Mostad, Vice President (2016-Present)

Jim has been a resident of Palm Beach County since 1967, and grew up in the area enjoying life on the water. Since 1984, Jim has held various positions at The Breakers in Palm Beach, and currently is Vice President of Sales, responsible for all sales administration for this 540-room world renowned luxury resort. Jim has served on the Loggerhead Marine Life Center Board, and currently serves on Palm Beach County's tourism board, Discover Palm Beach County, which he recently chaired. An avid boater, fisherman and golfer, Jim and his wife, Peggy, reside in Jupiter, Florida.

Alyssa Freeman, Treasurer (2013-Present)

Alyssa was born and raised in the metro-Detroit area, where she grew up on the water enjoying recreational boating, fishing and water sports. She graduated from Oakland University in Rochester, Mich., with a Bachelor of Arts degree in communication, with a focus on public relations. Alyssa moved to Florida and started her career with the Marine Industries Association of Palm Beach County in 2008, and now serves as the organization's Executive Director. She is a member of several committees, including Palm Beach County's Artificial Reef and Estuarine Enhancement and Lake Worth Lagoon Public Outreach committees, and she chairs the Palm Beach Holiday Boat Parade committee. Alyssa lives in West Palm Beach with her husband, Jeff, and their two daughters, Ella and Maisyn.

Nicole Brochu, Secretary (2008-Present)

Nicole works as Manager of Writing & Content Creation for Cancer Treatment Centers of America at its Boca Raton headquarters. She is a former journalist who spent 20 years as a senior writer, health reporter, columnist and editorial writer at the Sun Sentinel. A South Florida native, she has a master's degree in journalism from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature from Tufts University. She has won state and national awards during her nearly three-decade career writing for newspapers and magazines. In her spare time, she kickboxes with her husband and two girls and has served as a guardian ad litem in the Palm Beach County Circuit Court system and as a Girl Scout troop leader.

Marc Tanner, Vice President (2014-Present)

Originally from New Jersey, Marc moved to South Florida in 1984 and spent the next 15 years in the financial industry as a municipal bond broker. The former co-owner of Adanelle Fine Gifts & Interiors in Parkland, he lives in Coral Springs with his wife, Angela, and now works as a life insurance agent and financial advisor with New York Life Insurance Co. Marc is an advisory board member for In Jacobs Shoes. An avid photographer, golfer, fisherman and pool shooter, Marc has a particular passion for traveling – and family. He has three adult children: twin sons, Adam and Daniel, and daughter, Gabrielle.

Rhonda Nelson, Board Member (2014-Present)

A native of Nashville, Tenn., Rhonda is a veteran business owner with 15 years' experience running multiple operations. She is currently the vice president of Tuesday Productions, writing and producing TV and radio commercials and jingles, and she helps manage the travel, lodging and other support services for her husband's legendary rock group, the Little River Band. Rhonda is a dedicated volunteer, philanthropist and advocate for children's causes, animal rescue organizations, cancer research and other charitable efforts and has given her time, energy and resources to hospice and other compassionate-care organizations. She lives in Delray Beach with her husband, Wayne, and their rescue Maltese pups.