

Florida state parks celebrate record-breaking year

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Florida state parks are celebrating new records from the 2007-08 fiscal year; more than 20.7 million visitors experienced Florida's 161 award-winning state parks, and nearly 1.2 million volunteer hours were contributed - both record highs.



State Park in Melbourne Beach served more than 830,000 visitors. Based on the National Park Service's Money Generation Model, these visitor numbers generated more than \$1 billion for Florida's economy last fiscal year.

In addition, Florida State Parks celebrated a record number of volunteer hours contributed. Last fiscal year, more than 6,000 park volunteers contributed an all-time high of almost 1.2 million hours of work to the State, valued at \$22.5 million - an increase of more than 121,000 hours from the previous fiscal year. Volunteers contribute in a variety of ways to help maintain the natural beauty of Florida's beaches, waterways and trails, participating as interpreters, educators, tour guides, greeters, landscape artists, and wildlife and resource custodians. The work of Florida's park volunteers is equivalent to 555 full-time employment positions.

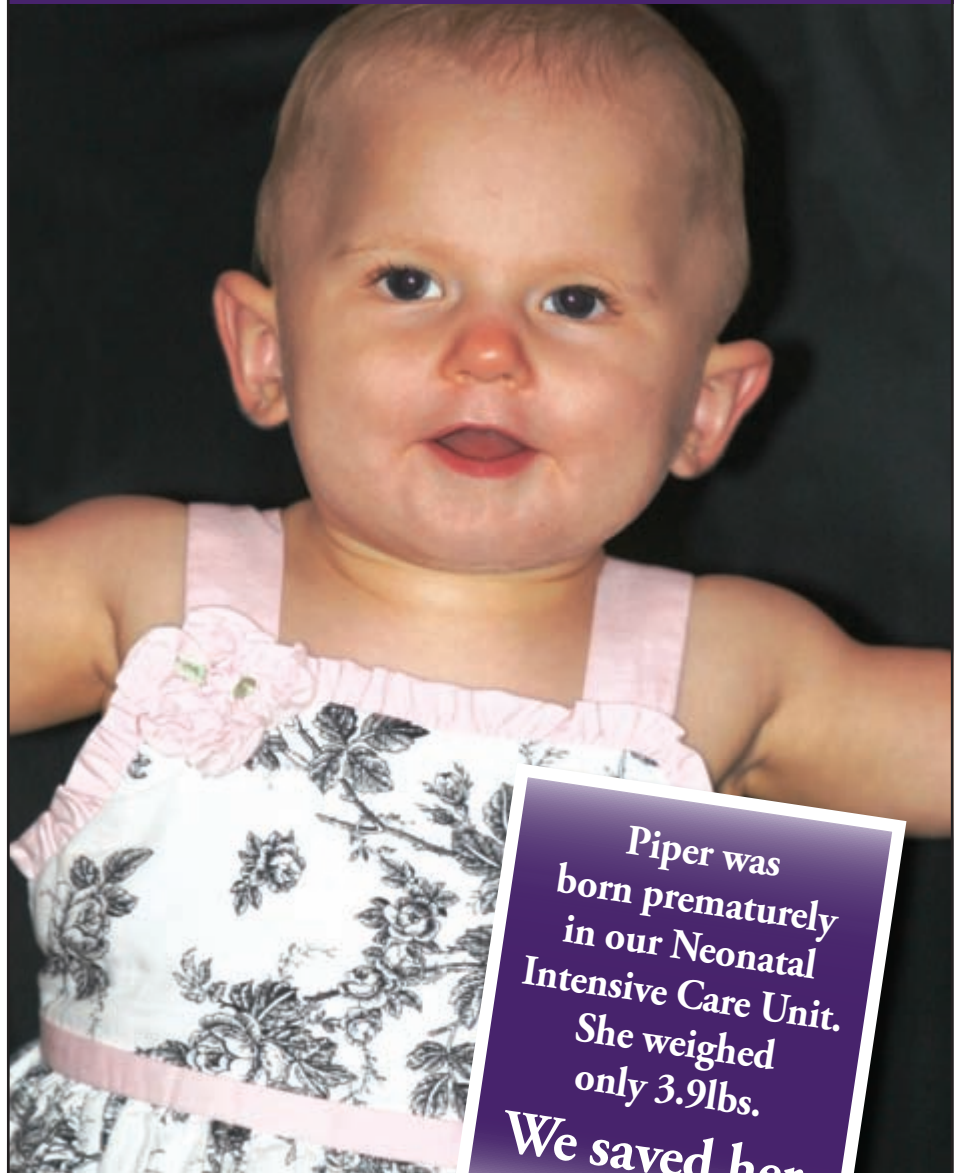
"Florida's state parks continue to provide opportunities for Floridians that are cost-effective and close to home," said Bob Ballard, FDEP deputy secretary for land and recreation. "With an emphasis on affordability and customer service, Florida's state park system preserves natural landscapes and cultural sites, and provides unmatched recreational and educational experiences for visitors from the state, nation and world."

Last fiscal year (July 2007 - June 2008), Florida's state parks welcomed a record-setting 20.7 million visitors, a 6.2 percent increase from last year. Honeymoon Island State Park in Dunedin had the most visitors, with more than 1 million individuals served. South Florida parks also were popular among visitors, with Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park on Key Biscayne receiving more than 890,000 visitors and John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park in Key Largo welcoming almost 880,000 guests. More than 878,000 people visited St. Andrews State Park in Panama City Beach, and Sebastian Inlet

"State parks provide numerous opportunities for Florida's citizens to get involved in their communities," said Florida Park Service Director Mike Bullock. "The contributions of park volunteers help make Florida's state parks a place where families and individuals can experience Florida's rich and diverse natural and cultural environment."

For more information on Florida State Parks, or for more information on volunteering, visit www.floridastateparks.org

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Join us as we help raise Alzheimer's awareness, and unveil the newest US Postal Service stamp with a special Hidden Oaks pictorial postmark!

All attendees will received a stamped first day cancellation envelope with the special postmark.

Friday, October 17 • 10 am

- New Alzheimer's stamp unveiled by Postmaster Anne Murray
- Hear an informative talk on Lee County support services given by Dotty St. Amand, MSW, Executive Director of the Alvin A. Dubin Alzheimer's Resource Ctr.
- Door Prizes! • Refreshments! • Open House!

RSVP (239) 939-1393 by 10/16/08.

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