



A National Scenic Byway

January 2023

Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway Newsletter

published quarterly



VOLUSIA SPEEDWAY PARK IS PART OF OUR BYWAY

By Georgia Turner, West Volusia Tourism

The Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway is fortunate to have an internationally-known attraction -- Volusia Speedway Park. Known as the "World's Fastest Half Mile," the Speedway is sure to "drive" more visitors along the byway.



The impressive facility, located in Barberville, operates both a 1/2-mile dirt oval and a 1/5-mile dirt oval for karts. VSP hosts dirt track and go-kart racing events throughout the year, as well as the Dale & Emil Reutimann Memorial in November, the Sunshine Nationals in January, and the prestigious DIRTcar Nationals in February. 2023 marks the 52nd running of



the DirtCart Nationals Feb. 6-18, a marquee event for Sprint Cars, Late Models and Modifieds.

Five Big Gator Championship trophies will be handed out, while the iconic Golden Gator trophy will be awarded to every Feature winner. Overall Late Model and Super DIRTcar Series Big Gator champions will be crowned on Saturday, Feb. 18, to close out the last week of racing.

West Volusia Tourism, one of the tourism organizations that helps promote the byway and its attractions and events, is proud to announce it is now the "Preferred Travel Partner" of the Volusia Speedway Park.

Says Brian Carter, World Racing Group CEO: "Our fans and racers come from all over the world. This partnership helps us show them all the wonderful things there are to do throughout West Volusia, giving them even more of a reason to visit." The new partnership between Visit West Volusia and VSP began in July 2022.

Volusia Speedway Park has been hosting racing events since 1968. Originally built by Benny Corbin, VSP helped grow dirt racing in Volusia County. World Racing Group now owns and operates VSP, and airs its events live on its streaming platform DIRTVision.

For more information on the year-round events and activities at the Speedway, visit <https://volusiaspeedwaypark.com/>

NOTE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN.....Jim Thorsen

First and foremost, our FBBSB Committee wants to wish all of you a prosperous New Year and best wishes for 2023! In 2022, we have been busy focusing on our mission statement to provide education to Byway travelers on the natural ecological and scenic values along our 123 mile Byway. In 2023, our motto is, “Education is a Path, not a Destination”. We will continue to improve our informational kiosks along the Byway, provide guided field tours at dynamic locations and participate in local festivals and events to promote membership to share our Byway story.



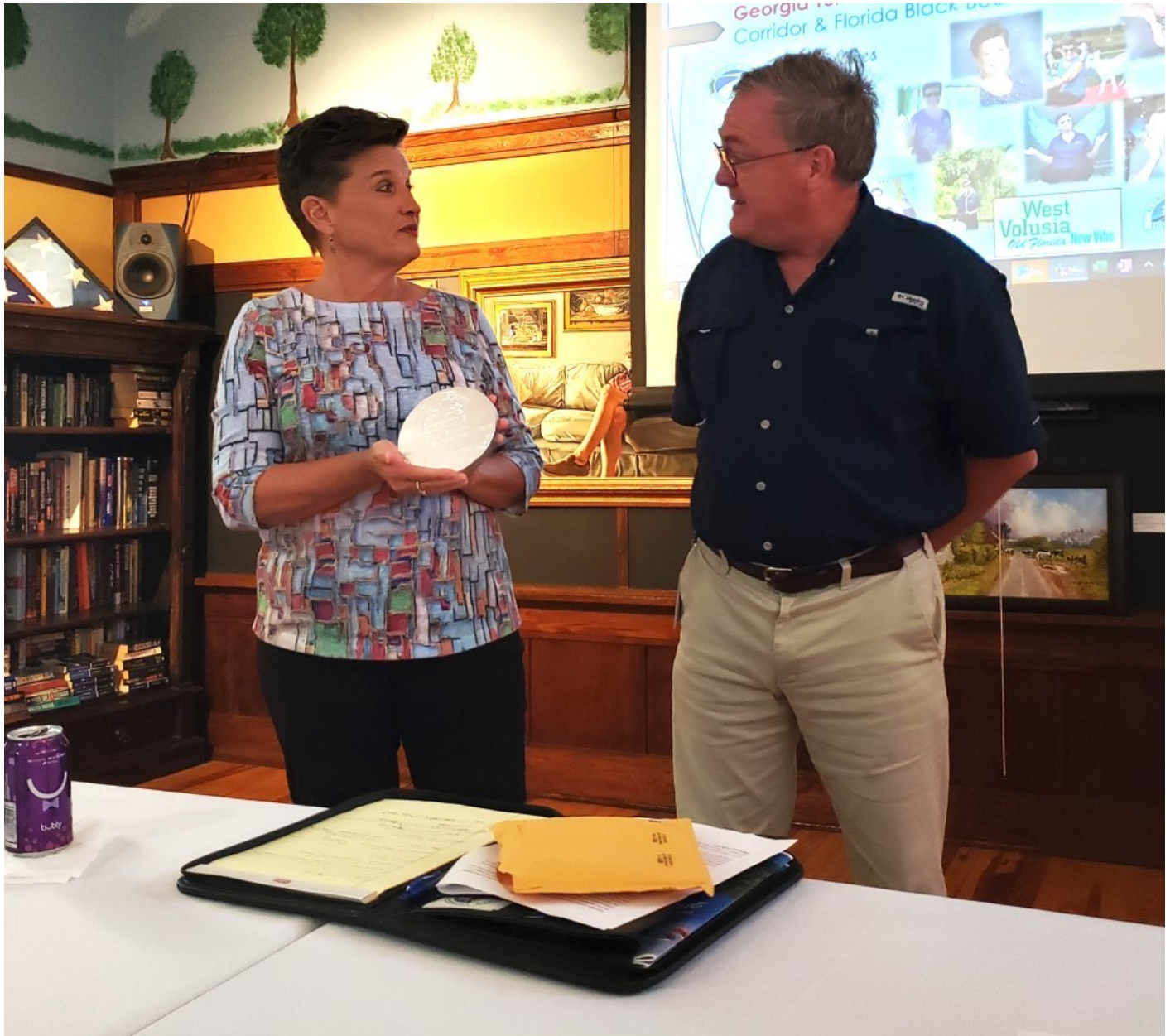
Our continued relationship with the Florida Department of Transportation is our key to success in developing new technical ways to protect all wildlife species that use the Byway for connecting habitats. The “umbrella” species – Florida Black Bear is the symbol for all wildlife and is a measurement of protection.

We also need your help in volunteering. Would you like to have fun, experience an event or festival to educate and help preserve the natural character of the Byway? Volunteering is what we asking from our members. We are planning to have our Byway booth at the Springs Festival, Pioneer Settlement Festival and Bartram Follies in 2023. Your participation is vital to the success of our mission. If interested, please contact me at thor1505@aol.com or call me at 352-455-1326 for more information. Together we can make a difference!

Thank You, *Jim*

GEORGIA TURNER RECEIVES *INSPIRING EXCELLENCE* AWARD FROM FDOT by Mike Palozzi

We are excited to announce that our very own **Georgia Turner** has been selected as recipient of the *2022 Garry Balogh Inspiring Excellence Award* – the highest distinction that a member of the scenic highway community can receive. The award, established in 2015 is named for Garry Balogh - the past Florida Department of Transportation District Five Scenic Highway Coordinator, is given each year to a member of the byway community who best exemplifies Garry’s passion for Florida’s scenic highway program. Nominees are measured in a number



Dean Stoddard, FDOT presents Gary Balogh Award to Georgia Turner

of categories including a candidate's leadership skills, innovation and their passion for the program.

Florida Black Bear Byway Board members Jim Thorsen, Nikki Thorsen and Tony Ehrlich attended the September River of Lakes Heritage Corridor Byway meeting to listen as Dean Stoddard/FDOT State Scenic Highway Coordinator made the announcement of Georgia's award.

Since December 2016, Georgia has been the Executive Director of the West Volusia Tourism Advertising Authority. She serves as a technical advisor to both the Florida Black Bear Byway and the River of Lakes Heritage Corridor – both designated as National Scenic Byways by the Federal Highway Administration.

Georgia knew Garry Balogh well, having supported the community's efforts to designate the Florida Black Bear and River of Lakes byways, along with the designation of the Heritage Crossroads Heritage Highway in Flagler County.

Georgia is highly dedicated to her communities – her days are rarely 8-5. Those who follow her on social media appreciate that many of her evenings and weekends are dedicated to serving her communities at local events.

Most that are around her are exhausted in just following her through her workday because she seems to be everywhere and every place at the same time and is always willing to go above and beyond. She has a smile on her face constantly, is a strategic thinker, and can instantly tell you what's going on in the community and how it benefits West Volusia.

Congratulations Georgia !



***Evan if a bear wears shoes and socks,
he still has bear feet.***

Next Meeting: January 17, 2023 - 2:00 pm at the American Legion Hall 40924 State Rd 19 Umatilla, FL 32784 Open to all members & interested visitors.

Our Mission: *To enhance, encourage and promote the preservation and protection of the outstanding natural, ecological, cultural and historical resources of the **Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway** for its residents, inhabitants, visitors and future generations.*

Officers: Jim Thorsen, Chairman - Kristee Booth, Vice Chair
Cathy Connally, Treasurer - Nikki Thorsen, Secretary

Editor: Tom Rose Contact: tomrose43@gmail.com. **Your letters, comments, suggestions and submissions are welcome.**