



FLORIDA COMMUNITIES  
OF EXCELLENCE

# The 2015 FLORIDA COMMUNITIES of EXCELLENCE AWARDS WINNERS

**COMMUNITY OF THE YEAR – Condominium**  
**Venetian Condominium (Ft. Lauderdale)**

**COMMUNITY OF THE YEAR – HOA**  
**Stonecrest POA (Summerfield)**



## GREEN

**WATER CONSERVATION**  
(INDOORS AND OUTDOORS)

**SMALL COMMUNITIES**  
(Up to 400 units)

### Apogee Beach Condominium Association, Hollywood

Built in 2013, Apogee Beach Condominium had already incorporated many water efficiencies. However, they evaluated and adopted a zero-bleed water conservation program for their cooling tower. By filtering and pretreating to remove impurities from their cooling tower water, the conventional bleed-off of concentrated minerals to prevent scaling is avoided. The system is saving more than 800,000 gallons of water per year, with an estimated cost benefit of \$8,000 per year.

**LARGE COMMUNITIES**  
(More than 400 units)

### Stonecrest POA, Summerfield

To minimize water use, the Stonecrest community initiated a water conservation and five-year landscape plan. A series of FFL workshops were

held for residents, the list of acceptable plants was revised, and residents were offered microirrigation starter kits. High-maintenance common areas were re-landscaped, removing St. Augustine and replacing it with Asiatic jasmine where possible. The irrigation system was audited and repaired, with a dual-wire controller and rain-sensor system installed to help reduce overwatering. Metered irrigation costs were reduced by \$81,000 from 2012 to 2013, and the 2014 use was cut another 10 percent.

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY

**SMALL COMMUNITIES**

### City 24, Miami

City 24 chose retrofit projects to reduce energy use without compromising comfort or the budget. By installing control valves on the HVAC heat pumps and a variable frequency drive to control the motor, annual pump motor energy use was cut from \$60,000 to \$24,000 per year. A variable speed drive was installed on the domestic water pump, reducing power consumption by 53 percent. Parking garage lighting was converted to LED lighting, reducing energy use by 77 percent and increasing light output by 200–1,000 percent.

**LARGE COMMUNITIES**

### On Top of the World Communities, Ocala

On Top of the World began examining ways to cut energy use in 2007 and followed many recommendations from an energy audit. The community is converting to energy-efficient, LED lighting, upgraded their HVAC system in their recreation center, and added programmable thermostats. Pools are now heated by efficient gas heaters and are covered at night. A solar energy system was installed at the golf course in 2011 and has a payback period of less than 13 years including a credit for selling extra power. A solar installation at the recreation center saves up to \$1,200 per month in energy costs.

## FLORIDA-FRIENDLY LANDSCAPING™

*presented by*



**SMALL COMMUNITIES**

### Madeira Cove Condominium Association, Madeira Beach

Madeira Cove, a self-managed community, found that their plants were not thriving, and their landscaping contractor was indifferent. After

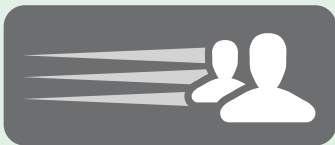
testing the soil, water, and plants, the community determined that they needed to match plants to their location and learn about their care. Volunteers attended an FFL workshop, and the board and owners have determined that FFL principles will improve the community's curb appeal. The community will keep existing plants as long as possible, but will implement FFL principles for new plantings and landscaping, including integrated pest management.

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## LARGE COMMUNITIES

### Evergrene, Palm Beach Gardens

The Evergrene community was originally designed to promote environmental conservation and FFL principles. As the first residential community to be named a Signature Sanctuary by Audubon International, their documents and construction set the framework for the preservation of upland preserves, wildlife, water bodies, and green space, as well as establishing clear guidelines for homeowner landscaping. An annual seminar on adhering to Audubon and FFL standards is held, and association communications help residents comply with FFL principles. More than 80 species of birds are attracted to the community, and the association has received the Gold Audubon Signature Certification.



## ENGAGEMENT

CIVIC VOLUNTEERISM  
AND ADVOCACY

presented by



volunteerflorida

SMALL COMMUNITIES

### K. Hovnanian's Four Seasons at Delray Beach Homeowners Association, Delray Beach

The Four Seasons Events Planning Committee, as well as residents supporting specific charities, has collected donations for local needs and organized fundraisers to support cancer research and the Hadassah Medical Organization. School supplies, food for Thanksgiving, books, and toys for hospitalized children have been donated. Fundraisers, which have also helped develop a stronger sense of community, have included a dinner/fashion show, holiday boutique and lunch, designer bag bingo, community talent show, walkathon, and game parties.

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## LARGE COMMUNITIES

### Fiddlesticks Country Club, Ft. Myers

The Fiddlesticks Country Club formed the 501-C3 Bobby Nichols-Fiddlesticks Charity Foundation in 2002 to raise funds for the Children's Advocacy Center, Abuse Counseling and Treatment, and Blessings in a Backpack. With \$6.4 million in donations raised thus far, the Foundation donated \$900,000 in 2014 and also had a wing at the Children's Advocacy Center built in its name. A complementary effort is made by Fiddlesticks Cares, a group of members who volunteer their time to a broader spectrum of charities. In 2014, the mayor presented Fiddlesticks with the key to the city for their generosity and dedication to children in need.

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COMMUNICATIONS  
AND COMMUNITY

presented by

## SMALL COMMUNITIES

### Mirror Lakes, a 55+ Adult Community, Boynton Beach

Mirror Lakes tailors communication to their residents, starting with new resident orientation in the clubhouse overlooking their lake. This is followed up with a "welcome neighbor" gift basket and a quarterly "Meet Your Neighbor" dessert happy hour. The *Connections* newsletter, available in print or e-mail, shares informational columns from residents plus news about clubs and activities. Word of mouth, phone, and bulletin boards are being supplemented with e-mail, Facebook, and texting, but face-to-face communication remains the most effective.

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## LARGE COMMUNITIES

### Southwood Residential Community Association, Tallahassee

New homeowners are connected to Southwood's rules and regulations, activities, and communication methods through orientation and their new homeowner packets presented by the Welcoming Committee. Weekly e-mail blasts and a bi-monthly print newsletter provide current events, compliance tips, etc. and a Home Expo will also help with architectural/compliance choices. A community mobile app provides push notifications of current community updates to mobile phones, and a text messaging notification is starting in

spring 2015. Social media and a website with a message board enable two-way communication for residents, organizations, and the association. The association tracks effectiveness of communication tools, finding that 60 percent of e-mail blast subscribers view them on a mobile device, etc. Sharing pictures via social media has enhanced community interest.

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## FAMILY FRIENDLY PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

### SMALL COMMUNITIES

#### **Buckingham Estates, Sanford**

Buckingham Estates, home to residents of various ages, has engaged residents in several events appeal-

ing to families. The annual holiday parade features decorated modes of transportation that arrive at the clubhouse for a party, fire truck tour, pictures with Santa, and a food collection drive. A Halloween block party, new in 2014, drew 207 members. An Easter egg hunt, Tuesday afternoon pool time for parents with children, game groups, community garage sales, and fire safety classes are part of the community's events.

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## LARGE COMMUNITIES

#### **Heritage Park, St. Augustine**

Heritage Park schedules monthly activity nights, holiday events, educational classes, fitness and sports activities, and special interest functions, with major event dates provided on a community calendar for the upcoming year. Special events especially appealing to families include the Family Egg-cellent Easter Egg Hunt, community yard sale, Fourth of July parade with fire trucks and helicopter, Halloween party and costume contest, winter social with donation collections, and holiday light contest. The sports courts and fields along with the clubhouse provide space for meetings and events. Volunteer involvement keeps the events coming without being a major expense to the community, and the teens are thanked by the social committee for their work each year with a dinner and movie night.

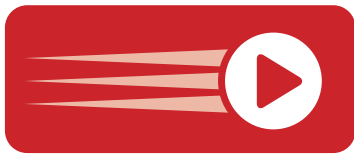
#### **Independence, Winter Garden**

Residents are offered a variety of regular and special events for opportunities for interaction. Each month a Food Truck Round-Up event is scheduled, with entertainment and food vendors. Family movie night, health and wellness programs, and seminars are offered regularly. The winter festival with

real snow is the largest event of the year, but other popular family events include a spring Easter carnival, summer barbeque, National Night Out, Mardi Gras festival (ages 21+), fall festival, and bike rodeo.

#### **Pembroke Falls HOA, Pembroke Pines**

Pembroke has expanded their social program from eight standard events in 2011 to 80 events in 2014. New clubs, new events, and new sponsors have resulted from resident input, and attendance is growing as more communication has developed. Most events are family-friendly, and include family bingo night, a Veterans Day ceremony, Super Bowl party, health fairs, educational seminars, Oscar nominee night, *Hunger Games* movie marathon, and a *Frozen* movie night with snow cones.



## VIDEO

### COMMUNITY VIDEO SHOWCASE

No medium showcases the beauty, vitality and spirit of our communities like video. The 2015 Awards cast a spotlight on this powerful tool to promote home ownership. From more than two dozen short (under two-minute) submissions, these are the top three as chosen by the judges!

[Vanderbilt Community Association, Naples](#)

[Bellaggio Residents Association, Lake Worth](#)

[On Top of the World Communities, Ocala](#)



## SAFETY

### SAFETY AND SECURITY INITIATIVES

### SMALL COMMUNITIES

#### **L'Hermitage I Condominium Association, Ft. Lauderdale**

L'Hermitage is a 25-story high-rise, which employs 24-hour security personnel. All security, concierge, management, and engineering personnel have FEMA CERT certification and are trained in first aid, CPR, and AED use. The association has 63 security cameras and an upgraded DVR system. Key fobs are programmable, and back-up keys are highly protected. Roof doors and perimeter doors sound

an alarm at the security desk, as do Vision Link Nurse call system buttons installed in vestibules for use in fire or emergency.

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## LARGE COMMUNITIES

### Island Walk of Naples

The Island Walk community, with more than 1,000,000 vehicles passing through their front gate each year, has installed a single-database system to control access and manage resident and guest entries with state-of-the-art barcode readers. High-resolution cameras were added in 2014. The sheriff's department, volunteers, a roving officer patrol, and involved residents all contribute to the safety program and solution of security issues. For example, working with teens has practically eliminated problems with vandalism in the community, and adding key card access for the fitness center and post office during off hours has curtailed unauthorized entry there.

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## DISASTER PREPAREDNESS INITIATIVES

### SMALL COMMUNITIES

### Trump Hollywood, Hollywood

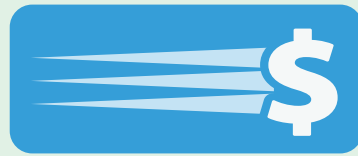
The community has developed a hurricane manual and also updated their general emergency procedures in 2014. The community's emergency response team attends quarterly training. Plans for supplies and equipment, record back-up, generator maintenance, identification of residents and disabled individuals, and other procedures are included in the hurricane manual.

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## LARGE COMMUNITIES

### Kings Point, Sun City Center

Kings Point encompasses more than 5,000 homes in 109 associations, and their emergency response plan coordinates representatives from each association, employees, volunteers, CERT (Community Emergency Response Team), paid contractors, and the association's insurance provider. The plan is communicated to residents at mandatory orientation, and updates are provided in monthly communications. The plan includes multiple communication avenues, an emergency generator, a command center, and supplies to last emergency personnel for several days. Review drills are held annually.



## FINANCIAL

### FINANCIAL INNOVATION

### SMALL COMMUNITIES

### Venetian Condominium, Ft. Lauderdale

Under a new board and management, the Venetian Condominium has eliminated debt and built up cash reserves so that a line of credit and borrowing to pay insurance premiums is no longer needed. The association has rigorous application screening and firm delinquency collection procedures. Energy-efficient upgrades, contract renegotiations and seeking multiple bids, revising the financial reporting method, use of contract personnel, use of direct debit for payments, collecting rent from tenants when landlords are overdue, and making dock users responsible for dock costs have all

assisted in improving the financial situation. The monthly assessments have not increased since 2007 and have decreased twice!

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## LARGE COMMUNITIES

### St. George Plantation, St. George Island

St. George Plantation, a self-managed community, improved operating efficiency during the economic downturn, primarily through restructuring staff duties, reviewing all contracts, paying off a large bank loan, outsourcing tasks, and increasing use of technology. To save on consultant fees for construction projects, a facilities manager with engineering expertise was hired to coordinate projects. After reviewing interest rates and their reserve fund status, the association paid off their clubhouse loan by borrowing from themselves to save \$800,000 in interest. The website has been automated, a commercial HOA banking platform is being used to facilitate owner payments, and communication with owners has become primarily paperless. Aggressive collections, conversion to less labor-intensive landscaping, and collection of fees have contributed to a healthy budget.

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## “THE COMEBACK KID”

### SMALL COMMUNITIES

### The Towers Condominium Association, Ft. Myers

The Towers was confronted with code violations, unit foreclosures, damaged units, and other management issues. In 2006, a new board hired professional management to turn the community around. Finances were audited, a law firm was engaged to address foreclosures, maintenance and repairs were performed, and

payment of debts and upgrades to code were arranged. For more than seven years, the financial situation and physical condition have been put in order, prices have quadrupled from their depressed 2004 values, and foreclosures dropped to only two in 2014.

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## LARGE COMMUNITIES

### The Charter Club, Miami

A building more than 40 years old, the real estate market collapse, changing and ineffective management, and a lack of trust and communication brought The Charter Club to a point where major repairs and updates were necessary. The waiving of reserve funding and unsuccessful special assessments had contributed to the community's inability to fund

needed projects. A more effective board brought new management that has helped identify essential improvements and arrange financing to supplement the required special assessment. From 2011 to 2014, The Charter Club revitalized aesthetically, structurally, financially, and socially, and they continue improvement of amenities on financially-solid terms.



## TRENDSETTER

The Trendsetter Awards recognize innovation in any area where a community has created a service or solution that others may someday follow. This could be anything from communication and social media to income production, traffic management, health and fitness, dispute resolution and environmental protection and sustainability. They are selected by a special committee of judges; no finalists are named. Winning communities are notified prior to the Awards event.

### Blue Condo

A "man-less" convenience market on-site allows residents to shop 24/7 for healthy snacks, prepared sandwiches, toiletries, baby products and much more. A 24-hour automated dry cleaning drop-off also was created in partnership with Zoom Locker.

### Pelican Lake Property Owners Association

Residents raise funds to lower quarterly assessments by staging vendor-sponsored Luxury Class A Motor Coach shows for the public twice a year. The free weekend events feature tours of luxury motor coaches brought in from many areas.

### Stonecrest POA

To improve response times to cardiac arrest emergencies, the community purchased 32 automated defibrillators for its 23 volunteer Neighborhood Emergency Response Teams, and trained over 300 residents. Volunteer responders are activated with "Call Alerts" from 911 Dispatch.

### Timber Pines Community Association

A data collection program was implemented to guide efforts to promote the community to prospective home buyers and identify priority areas for facility enhancement and development. Analysis of new resident surveys, web site activity reports and new home sales data is being used to support decision making.