



BOCA RATON BEACH & PARK DISPATCH

August 2024 | Official Newsletter of the Greater Boca Raton Beach & Park District



McDONOUGH IS FLORIDA'S BEST BUDDY

Claire McDonough learned in kindergarten what many fail to grasp in a lifetime: Helping people is its own reward.

That revelation came into focus when, from her backyard, McDonough heard her cousin, Emily Granet, playing in a TopSoccer match at nearby Woodlands Park.

“We heard the music one day, and we decided to walk over, and we saw everybody playing, everybody having smiles on their faces,” McDonough said. “I saw my cousin and I just jumped in and started doing the drills with her.”

TOPSoccer is a program within the Soccer Association of Boca Raton (SABR) designed for Boca Raton's Special Needs community. The program is open to special needs players beginning at age four. Players don't age out of the program.

Volunteers, called “Buddies,” are paired with players or a team to help on Saturdays with soccer drills and the games that follow.

Though the general rule is that a volunteer has to be in at least eighth grade, and most are in high school or older, McDonough officially became a Buddy as a fifth grader.

Her youth prompted TOPSoccer to pair her with higher functioning players.

“As she progressed, got older, and more mature, we gave her the hard kids,” TOPSoccer Director Vic Nocera said. “She's been a great asset to our club. The kids love her.”

[CONTINUE READING](#)



Gilbert's Glorious Gumbo

Forty years after Gordon Gilbert's vision became a reality, the Gumbo Limbo Nature Center still stands as one of the Greater Boca Raton Beach and Park District's most important accomplishments.

A high school environmental science teacher and a District Commissioner from 1978-2008, Gilbert began his push to preserve a natural hammock along the Intracoastal within the Shine Tract - most of which became Red Reef Park- shortly after the purchase finalized.

Gilbert spent the better part of a decade raising funds for his project. Many, including some of his fellow Commissioners who were more focused on developing Patch Reef Park, doubted the usefulness of a nature preserve and education center.

[CONTINUE READING](#)



Patch Pickleball Progress

Earlier this month construction crews began clearing the area near the Patch Reef Park Tennis Center for construction of 18 new covered pickleball courts. Invasive and unhealthy trees are being removed. Healthy indigenous trees are being moved to a newly created preserve area within the park. The courts are expected to be open to the public by the end of next year. In other pickleball news, the Patch Reef Tennis Center has expanded the number of pickleball courts available for Friday afternoon open play to 12. Patch Reef is also hosting a Labor Day pickleball tournament on Monday, Sept. 2, from 9 a.m.-11 a.m.

GREATER BOCA RATON



District's Stable Foundation

At a time when chaos seems constant in national, state and local politics, the stability that characterizes the Greater Boca Raton Beach and Park District is all the more remarkable.

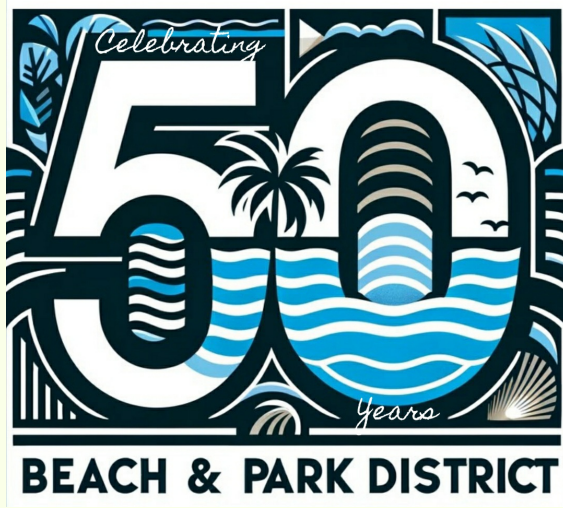
That steadiness continued in August when all three commissioners seeking reelection - Craig Ehrnst, Steve Engel and Erin Wright - ran unopposed and retained their seats.

For Ehrnst and Wright, this election marked the third time they've won their seats. Engel won his fourth election. Should all serve their complete four-year terms as expected, the trio will have given a combined 40 years of service to the District.

"I'm excited to serve four more years," said Wright, the District Chair.

[CONTINUE READING](#)

GREATER BOCA RATON



Year Of The Month: 1996

What's in a name? When it comes to the District, a greater mission. When founded in 1974 as the Greater Boca Raton Beach Tax District, the District's sole purpose was to help retire the debt Boca Raton incurred when purchasing the Shine Tract - which would become Red Reef Park and the Gumbo Limbo Nature Center. In the years that followed, the District purchased and developed Patch Reef and Sugar Sand parks, creating more green space and athletic opportunities for the Boca Raton community. In 1996 Palm Beach County legislators officially changed the District's name to "Greater Boca Raton Beach and Park District."



Playground For All

District Commissioners selected Schiff Construction's bid to renovate the playground at Patch Reef Park. Early this year Commissioners voted to upgrade the Pirates Cove playground to [make the playground more inclusive](#) for children with special needs. Commissioners acted in response to the Ogman family's request to create a more accessible playground for their son, Jordan, and other families with special needs. Schiff is currently navigating the city's permitting process and ordering the new equipment. The new inclusive playground is expected to open in the summer of 2025.



50th September Free Rides

The District takes its 50th Anniversary celebration to Sugar Sand Park in September – and the kids are going to love it. Every Sunday in September from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. children will be allowed to ride the Sugar Sand carousel for free. Sugar Sand's carousel is one of Boca Raton Community's most identifiable landmarks. It's located in the heart of Sugar Sand Park, between the community center and the science playground. To learn more about the carousel's history and how it came to reside at Sugar Sand Park, [enjoy this article](#).

UPCOMING MEETINGS

TUESDAY SEPT. 3	TUESDAY SEPT. 3	MONDAY SEPT. 16
Commissioners' General Public Meeting, 5:15 p.m.	First Public Hearing On Budget And Taxes for FY 2025, 6 p.m.	Commissioners' General Public Meeting, 5:15 p.m.

**Meetings at Boca Raton Swim & Racquet Center
21618 St. Andrews Boulevard Boca Raton, FL**

Ode To Open Space

“In every walk with nature, one receives far more than he seeks.”

— John Muir, naturalist and writer.



LINKED INTO BOCA RATON

Looking to learn to play tennis or simply improve your skills? The Boca Raton Racquet Center, located on St. Andrews Blvd. between Glades Rd. and Palmetto Park Rd., holds regular clinics for adults and juniors of all skill levels. Pick one from the schedule and grab your racket!

[RACQUET CENTER CLINICS](#)

**GREATER BOCA RATON
BEACH & PARK DISTRICT**
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