

# BEACH BUZZ

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"Keeping Our Beaches Bare"

## Haulover Beach Park Volunteer Fix-up Project a Success

By Michael Kush

This summer, the United Way of Miami-Dade County selected Haulover Beach Park as the site for a volunteer public service project on August 15th, to include dune restoration, painting, and the installation of new Vita Course exercise stations in the park. The Park Department pressure cleaned and primed all the lifeguard towers at Haulover in advance - except for the towers on the Naturist beach. United Way volunteers painted all the lifeguard towers, pedestrian tunnels, and other structures on the beach side of the park - except for those on or adjoining the Naturist beach. Exercise stations were installed - except for three stations intended for placement along the walk path by the Naturist beach.

We applaud the United Way and its volunteers for undertaking this project to improve the appearance of the county's most heavily used park. Yet Naturist beach users were somewhat disappointed that the execution of the project fell short of the goal implied by its motto: "All Over Haulover". After all, Naturists removed cartloads of accumulated garbage from the beach when they started using Haulover in 1991, and have helped to keep the beach clean since. South Florida Free Beaches has opposed undue commercial and non-recreational use of park lands, and is a member of the Urban Environmental League. Naturists have had virtually no conflicts with other park users, and the clothing-optional beach now accounts for approximately two-thirds of all Haulover Park users, according to the Director of the Park

Department. I can only speculate that a vague unease that a few negative comments might be made led to the silent exclusion of the Naturist beach from this



project. Yet with Naturists among the United Way volunteers, and polls showing that 80% of Americans are not opposed to public clothing-optional beaches, could not willing volunteers for this area of the beach have easily been selected from among the thousands of participants?

To correct this oversight, a coalition of Naturist groups, including B.E.A.C.H.E.S. Foundation, South Florida Free Beaches,

Haulover's AOL Naturists, and the Wildfyre Society, was quickly formed to solicit volunteers to complete the painting. Dorie Gravlin, a member of Haulover's AOL Naturists (and a disappointed United Way volunteer), was an early advocate of the new project, which was coordinated by B.E.A.C.H.E.S. Foundation's Executive Director, Shirley Mason. This project was named "Take Pride All Over Haulover", and had the unqualified support of the Park Department. Park Department personnel began preparing the remaining lifeguard towers, and on Sept. 20th and 21st, Naturist volunteers completed painting the structures adjoining the Naturist Beach. The original intent was to complete the installation of the three remaining exercise stations at that time, but unfortunately this part of the project had to be postponed to a later date. We would like to thank the Haulover Beach concessionaire for providing free hot dogs for our volunteers, and the Wildfyre Society for providing refreshments, as well as a sizable number of volunteers.

### AND PLANTS...

Another aspect of the United Way project was dune restoration. The goal here was the removal of exotic (non-native) plant species, and the thinning of the dunes to allow a better view of the ocean from the walk path. Park Department personnel prepared approximately 1/3 mile of dune at the center of the park by removing most existing plants. The United Way volunteers then planted native species,



such as sea grapes and sea oats. The extent of dune restoration was limited both by the volunteer time available and the funding allocated to purchase plants.

The most prominent exotic in Haulover's dunes is a non-native species of the genus *Scaevola*, easily recognized by its tight clusters of relatively small, light-green leaves and small white flowers. Heavy growth of this plant can be seen on either side of the dune crossover near lifeguard tower 27 and at many other places in the dunes. Ironically, this species was at one time favored for dune plantings, as its rapid growth and density of foliage offer a good defense against dune erosion. However, these same otherwise desirable characteristics cause it to overwhelm and displace native species. The intention is to eventually remove all exotic plants at Haulover Park and plant native species. The United Way project provided a start, but according to the Park Department there is currently no funding allocated for further dune restoration.

It gives one a nice feeling to know that the preservation of small patches of native flora is now considered a valuable societal goal. As we silently allow our politicians to surrender more public land to commercial development; as we quietly deplore the destruction of forest habitats around the world to provide lumber for our furniture and mulch for our gardens; as we breath in car exhaust sitting stalled in traffic in our SUVs on I-95; we can at least take pride in our small contribution to preserving specimen plots to show our children a little of how Florida's landscape once looked. ✨

