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Siesta Key Beach Ambassadors win state voluntary service award

The Siesta Key Beach Ambassadors have been awarded the Group Voluntary Service Award from The Florida Recreation and Park Association, a statewide non-profit organization representing local government parks and recreation interests in Florida. The award will be presented at the association's annual awards ceremony Aug. 27.

Formed in 2004, the Siesta Key Beach Ambassadors work in partnership with Sarasota County Parks and Recreation to answer questions about Siesta Key, other county beaches and parks, cultural attractions, natural areas and businesses. Ambassadors staff the information "tiki hut" at the main entrance to Siesta Key Beach during the summer months. In 2008, they logged more than 4,300 hours of volunteer service at the beach, which averages 2 million visitors each year.

"Voluntary service is critical to the success of our organization," said John McCarthy, general manager, Sarasota County Parks and Recreation. "The dedication of the ambassadors and our Friends of Sarasota County Parks groups is incredible, and a testament to the generosity of the Sarasota community."

In addition to providing helpful information to visitors, ambassadors help keep Sarasota beautiful by explaining the "pack in, pack out" policy of removing personal trash and recyclables. They also emphasize the importance of keeping all parks and natural areas litter-free.

Awards chair Greg Scott said, "Sarasota County's Siesta Key Beach Ambassadors are an example of the effective use of interested and engaged citizens. The contribution of personal time and creative energy to assure that visitors and residents are able to access information about the many natural attractions in the county is irreplaceable."

For more information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 and ask about Volunteer Sarasota County, or visit the Sarasota County Web site at www.scgov.net.

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