

SINCE

1975

## HISTORY OF THE

## PROPERTY OWNERS' ASSOCIATION, INC.

1996

EDITION

### PREFACE

The arrival of so many newcomers is affirmation of our choice of The Villages as the place where we want to spend our retirement years.

We offer the history of our organization as a means of welcoming these new residents to the best retirement community in all of Florida.

It also has been circulated to all residents as an insert in our November Bulletin as confirmation of our presence in our community.

The history of the Property Owners' Association (P.O.A.) spans 21 years of dedication to protecting the best interests and rights of the property owners of our community.

When we organized in November 1975, the name of our 13 unit development was Orange Blossom Gardens. Thus, we chartered under the name of Orange Blossom Gardens Property Owners' Association, Inc. (O.B.G. P.O.A.).

Until we re-chartered in 1994, our efforts to represent residents and protect their rights were limited to the original 13 units. Amendments to our charter and bylaws enabled us to extend membership and representation to all residents of the expanding development.

The name of the development was changed from Orange Blossom Gardens to The Villages with the original 13 units becoming The Villages of: Orange Blossom Gardens, Country Club Hills and Silver Lake.

Without this background information, new residents have found it difficult to associate our name as being that of an organization which has been an integral part of our community for the past 21 years.

We hope to avoid future misconceptions about our existence and purpose by omission of the Orange Blossom Gardens portion of our chartered name in so far as reference to and publications of our organization are concerned.

We hope you will find our history interesting as well as informative and that knowledge of our existence will be important to you.

### ORIGIN AND OBJECTIVES

A group of concerned property owners met to consider options providing an improved means of solving individual and/or group problems with the developer.

The result was the chartering of the Orange Blossom Gardens Property Owners' Association as a non-profit corporation in November 1995.

Our charter and bylaws set forth the following objectives:

(a) to further the good will, friendship and understanding among property owners;

(b) to support legislation which protects the rights of property owners;

(c) to keep property owners informed of legislation at all levels of government which affect their retirement lifestyle and property investments; and

(d) to promote and maintain a cordial relationship with the owner/developer.

Chapter 723 of Florida's statutes designates home or property owner associations in subdivisions as legal representative of residents. We obtained the consent of two-thirds of our residents to bring our bylaws and charter into conformity with the statute.

As previously stated, our most recent amendments enabled us to extend protection of rights and membership eligibility to include all property owners in The Villages.

Our purpose and objectives could be summarized as follows: to render services of benefit to our residents and our community.

### MEMBERSHIP ELIGIBILITY AND DUES

All property owners in The Villages are eligible for P.O.A. membership.

They may join by submitting a completed membership form and payment of dues. Memberships are accepted at any open meeting or may be attained by mail or deposit into our drop box in Paradise Center.

A membership card will be issued bearing the name(s) of the property owner(s) of the household unit.

The membership form provides a space for the property closing date as it has been important in the past in determining service provided to that date.

Originally, annual membership dues were \$12 per household, and monthly payments of \$1 were permitted. The annual date on which dues fell due was the month in which members joined.

Dues were reduced later to \$6 per household, and the annual renewal date changed to a calendar year basis.

Property owners in their first year of residence may become members at a pro-rated 50¢ per month for the remainder of the year.

### MEETINGS

Our meetings are open to all property owners in The Villages. In the event a closed meeting is necessary (e.g.: elections and/or amendments to bylaws), notice is published in our Bulletin in advance of the meeting.

When a program or speaker has been scheduled to follow a closed session, the meeting will be opened to non-members and announcement of the time, program and/or topic will be included in the meeting notice.

Meetings are held in the Paradise Center at 7:00 P.M. on the third Wednesday of each month on a year-round basis.

Every effort is made to schedule speakers on issues of importance to property owners. It is our hope not only to anticipate but to meet the changing needs of our community, and we welcome programming suggestions.

#### VOTING

Each membership household is entitled to one vote when quorum votes are required.

The voting member of the household may be either of the household's property owners. That member may vote by ballot at the meeting

A proxy ballot is provided in the Bulletin for the month in which voting is scheduled, and it may be brought to the meeting or members who cannot attend may deposit it in the P.O.A. drop box in Paradise Center or mail it to:

O.B.G. P.O.A.,  
P.O. Box 1657  
Lady Lake FL 32158-1657

The election of officers and members of the board is held at our November annual meeting. The slate of candidates who have volunteered to stand for election is presented to the October meeting by the Nominating Committee. Any nominations received from the floor are included on the ballot.

Proposals received for amendments to the by-laws and/or charter are included on the ballot. It is customary for these proposals to be submitted at the annual meeting; but, with proper advance notice, they may be presented for vote at any meeting if an emergency exists.

#### OUR MONTHLY BULLETIN

In May 1978, we undertook our first publication for residents. It was entitled "NEWS" and was delivered to every home in Units 1-13. Not just to members.

Its size was enlarged in 1989 and the title changed to "Bulletin." Due to the color of its cover, it often was referred to as "the little green book."

For 18 years, from its inception in May 1978 through May 1996, delivery was achieved by volunteers known as "walkers," and its delivery was expanded to include residents on the west side of the highway as they became members.

The Bulletin is the only means available to us for communicating with the residents of our community.

The amendments to our charter and bylaws to include all Villages property owners necessitated consideration of making changes to allow for increasing the printing and delivery to all households.

Therefore, as of July 1996, the Bulletin was converted to a newsprint pull-out insert in the portion of the Lady Lake Magazine which is circulated to each occupied home during the first week-end of each month.

Our Bulletin serves many purposes. It provides a format by which residents can become aware of our existence and objectives. It makes it possible for us to keep residents informed on matters of importance to them. It enables us to present views not available elsewhere. It also meets legal requirements for notice of our meetings.

#### P.O.A. ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

We were concerned about the medical problems of our residents long before doctors and other providers were available in our then rural community.

Arrangements were made with a resident nurse for BLOOD PRESSURE CHECKS free of charge. Two of our members kept OXYGEN on hand for a number of years for emergency needs of residents.

In 1979, we established the continuing BLOOD BANK PROGRAM. Through an arrangement with the Leesburg Blood Bank (now known as the Central Florida Blood Bank), donations by residents may be credited to our account to make units available to residents and employees free of charge.

A bloodmobile came on a regularly scheduled basis to Paradise Center. For the convenience of donors, a northwest branch office of Lake County has been established in the courtyard of LaGrande Boulevard. The office is open Mondays and Thursdays from 9 to 5. Donors may request credit be given to our account. PLAN 961.

Since 1981, we have been recommending resident participation in the VIAL OF LIFE program. It involves maintaining a list of medications and health problems so this information will be readily available to EMTs in an emergency. If residents have a Living Will, it also should be included.

The Vial of Life program is a service of the office of the Lake County Sheriff. Upon learning Sumter County does not have this service, we contacted Sheriff George Knupp and he has agreed to include our Sumter County residents in this important program.

We have a member working as our co-ordinator with the sheriff's office who will deliver the necessary information and supplies to residents upon request. Her name and telephone number are listed in our Bulletin.

Other early achievements included:

- a) addition of a SEPARATE VOTING PRECINCT,
- b) FIRST SURVEY of residents for opinions of services,
- c) first NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH,
- d) raising \$7,000 toward establishing a FIRE HOUSE on the premises, and
- e) raising an additional \$800 for EQUIPMENT for our volunteer firemen.

(A new ordinance created the Northwest Fire District of Lake County, and the fire house was converted into the present ambulance station.)

More recent endeavors include the following:

1) Although there was little hope of obtaining it, we undertook a survey of residents in 1991 to determine how many wanted HOME DELIVERY OF MAIL. With only 1,400 responses, no further action will be taken except to assist any resident who is physically unable to pick up mail and may be entitled to home delivery.

2) We were the first to notify residents of a potential problem with GRAY PIPE connectors. We supplied information which enabled residents to obtain replacement and reimbursement for prior plumbing bills.

3) A LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE was created to review current laws and proposed legislation affecting home / property owner associations in subdivisions.

The committee learned our long standing concern about INCOME AND EXPENDITURE OF FEES paid to the developer for maintenance of recreation facilities and common grounds was shared by the other home / property owner associations.

Due to our combined efforts, bills were introduced in 1994 requiring developers to be accountable to residents on an annual basis.

Those bills failed to pass. The bill introduced in 1995 by Senator Karen Johnson provided for the desired accountability and was enacted into law effective October 1, 1995.

4) We assisted and supported the residents of Paradise Drive in their successful petition opposing an ENTRANCE FROM PARADISE DRIVE TO THE LAMC OFFICE PARK located on 27/441.

Opposition was based on the fact the portion of Paradise Drive where the entrance was to be located was highly unsuitable for an increase in traffic.

5) We supported owners of property adjoining Paradise Lake in their opposition to ANNEXATION OF PARADISE LAKE into the town by the town commission.

6) In 1993, we adopted the SUNSHINE ARC (Association for Retarded Citizens) of Lake County as our charity project.

As of November 1996, we have sponsored three annual golf tournaments with the proceeds dedicated to their early intervention program for "special needs children" from Lake and Sumter counties.

7) It became necessary in 1993 to resolve the matter of eligibility of residents to continue receiving FREE TRAIL FEE STICKERS when moving from one home to another.

8) The P.O.A., V.H.A. and C.I.C., in a joint effort, submitted a petition to the developer for a GOLF CART HIGHWAY CROSSING. The developer recognized the need for such a crossing and obtained the necessary approval to build the existing golf cart bridge.

It would seem all our endeavors have been in behalf of groups of residents. We have, however, been able to be of assistance to a number of residents on an individual basis.

## ACHIEVEMENT BY LEGAL MEANS

The P.O.A. has never relished the possibility or need for solving problems by employing an attorney. There have been times, however, when problems would not have been resolved without legal assistance.

These instances are listed below.

A) Obtained refunds/ savings for residents regarding their monthly WATER AND SEWER RATES.

B) Resolved the matter of WATER-SEWER TAP-IN FEES FOR RE-SALES.

C) Assisted buyers from Texas to obtain a REFUND when homes placed on lots were not those ordered.

D) Continuance of MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS for buyers of re-sales.

E) In 1989, the developer announced a TRAIL FEE would be imposed as of April 1st for those golfers playing Silver Lake and Hilltop executive courses.

We noted he had not followed statutory provisions for giving a written notice to each affected property owner at least 90 days prior to the proposed date. As a result, the effective date was advanced from April 1st to July 1st.

Advertisements for Orange Blossom Gardens in nationally circulated magazines had specified "FREE GOLF FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE. NO TRAIL FEE." This had been an inducement to buy for many residents in the original 13 units.

OTHER REDUCTIONS IN SERVICES involved imposition of fees for STORAGE OF RVs and, in some instances, for CABLE TV and GARBAGE (TRASH) PICK UP. These services had been a part of the sales package for some residents in the original development.

Reductions in services are contestable under Chapter 723 which provides for negotiation and mediation by our Negotiating Committee with representatives of the developer. When our efforts to negotiate were unsuccessful, members approved employment of an attorney as the only possible means of restoring these services.

The two parties to the class action suit reached agreement on February 4, 1991, with a **SETTLEMENT BY COURT APPROVED MEDIATION** effective as of April 9, 1991.

Terms of the settlement were as follows:

Affected residents were "grandfathered" from payment of these fees based on the following property closing dates.

TRAIL FEE - July 1, 1989 - free annual trail fee stickers and a refund of fees paid in 1991.

RV STORAGE - September 1, 1988 - free storage was restored in an unsecured area as long as ten (10) residents use it.

GARBAGE (TRASH) PICKUP and CABLE TV - free service was restored as of October 1, 1993 to those residents who closed after December 31, 1990 and before March 14, 1991.



Other terms of the settlement were as follows:

a) No free service is to be provided to any person who agreed by contract or other document to pay for the service.

b) No person outside of Units 1 through 8 is entitled to receive free basic one hook-up cable TV.

c) No person outside of Units 1 through 12 is entitled to receive free garbage (trash) pick up.

The developer, as a provision of settlement, required that the P.O.A. could not enter into any legal suits for a period of five (5) years from April 1, 1991.

At the same time, the developer agreed to discontinue renting the Paradise Center to outsiders; but the P.O.A. was not opposed to non-resident use for charitable purposes.

In 1990, approximately 2,000 residents within a specified boundary received notice from the developer of a class action suit SEEKING RELIEF FROM CERTAIN DEED RESTRICTIONS on two counts.

The P.O.A. was asked to look into the matter and determined the request of the first count to CLEAR LOT TITLES was valid.

The second count, however, sought permission to MODIFY DEED RESTRICTIONS which was unacceptable.

The P.O.A. intervened as a party to the suit in behalf of residents. As a result, the developer dropped the second part of the suit, and existing deed restrictions were protected from change.

It should be noted the P.O.A. has undertaken resolution of problems in behalf of affected residents when, in some cases, non-members as well as members have benefited from results.

#### IT HASN'T BEEN EASY

We regret a portion of our history includes extraordinary attempts by the developer to render our organization ineffective in its efforts in behalf of residents.

From the time we organized in November 1975, we were denied approval to hold meetings or any social functions in Paradise Center until April 1980. Instead, meetings were held in Weirsdale at the Presbyterian Church and social functions were held at the A.C.A. in Fruitland Park.

The developer wavered between acceptance and rejection until 1985 when Gary Morse informed officers management no longer would recognize the P.O.A. as spokesman for the residents.

Management issued a public announcement of this decision; and, at the same time, announced their support of a new group to be known as the Community Improvement Council (C.I.C.).

This was followed by his publicized offer to "buy back" P.O.A. memberships by his personal refund of dues.

When that didn't produce desired results, he initiated an unprecedented take-over attempt with an opposing slate of candidates by a group of residents whose dues had been paid by his personal check. Some of the residents involved in the failed attempt then formed the Villages Homeowners Association (V.H.A.).

For many years, we were told amenities fees did not cover the cost of maintenance; but when proof of income from them was needed to sell recreation facilities and common grounds to the C.O.D., it revealed a considerable surplus.

Deed restrictions in many units specifically state fees will be used for maintenance. Thirteen (13) P.O.A. members sought court judgment regarding their use to pay off bonds issued for this purchase. They were subjected to excessive harassment for their efforts to prevent potential misuse of these fees.

The Villages Sun and VNN refuse to print or air announcements of our meetings or community service projects and charity events. They refused to recognize the celebration of our 20th anniversary in 1995. The Sun refused to print and distribute our Bulletin, but performs this service for the V.H.A.

Residents making legitimate complaints have met with "if you don't like it here, move" when they expected correction of existing problems.

Please allow us to assure you P.O.A. members appreciate the developer's vision for providing our premier retirement community and all it offers.

Our hope is we can spend our retirement enjoying peace, harmony, and the expectation of promises kept.

We hope you will attend our meetings, read our Bulletin, and consider P.O.A. membership.

We believe you will find us to be an organization which is pro-resident rather than anti-management as you may have been led to believe.

You may join at meetings or by mailing our membership form with your check for payment of dues to:

O.B.G. P.O.A.  
P.O. Box 1657  
Lady Lake FL 32158-1657.

Or you may choose to use the P.O.A. drop box beneath our bulletin board in Paradise Center. Please make your check payable to O.B.G. P.O.A. and enclose a self-address, stamped envelope.

#### P.O.A. MEMBERSHIP FORM (please print)

NAME(S) \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

VILLAGE/VILLA \_\_\_\_\_

COUNTY \_\_\_\_\_ PROPERTY CLOSING DATE \_\_\_\_\_

NEW \_\_\_\_\_ RENEWAL \_\_\_\_\_ REINSTATE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DUES: \$6/year FIRST YEAR RESIDENTS: 50¢/month

#### FOR P.O.A. USE ONLY

Amount paid: \_\_\_\_\_ by: check \_\_\_\_\_ cash \_\_\_\_\_