

PRESS RELEASE

Palm Coast, Florida
June 26, 2008

The Florida Agricultural Museum Loses All State Funding

The Florida Agricultural Museum will lose 100% of its state funding as of July 1, 2008. The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services paid the salary of the Museum Director, but due to budget cuts, the Director's state position has been eliminated from this year's budget. This will end the only financial support that the Department of Agriculture provides to the museum. The museum will remain contractually tied to the Department through its Direct Support Agreement and through the Florida Statute (F.S. 570.092) that created the museum as a part of the Department of Agriculture. This development means that the official Florida State museum for the preservation of agricultural and rural history now has no state funding. The Florida Agricultural Museum now faces serious challenges to its future unless alternative funds can be found.

This comes at a time when the museum has just opened to the public and has an active events calendar. The museum is scheduled to host all the fourth graders from the Flagler County School System next school year. The museum recently accepted the donation of the 60 acre Hewitt's Sawmill Site from Palm Coast Holdings. The site contains the remains of a mill complex which was in operation from 1770-1813, and provided much needed timber for the building boom St. Augustine experienced during the Revolutionary War when Loyalists from American colonies sought refuge in Florida. The ca. 1890s Clark Pioneer Homestead along with its many outbuildings has been restored with funds from the Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources, and was opened to the public on June 7. The museum is completing the restoration of five historic structures donated by David U. Strawn with a \$350,000 grant from the Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources. Those buildings will be dedicated and opened for tours this fall. "*Florida's Black Cowboys: Past and Present*" is an exhibit also funded by the Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources, will also be completed by the fall of 2008.

The impacts from our loss of funding are not fully known at this time. The museum's Board of Directors has been meeting to discuss its options and to develop a plan for the future. The Board of Directors, Museum Director, and museum staff thank all the kind folks who sent letters and e-mails asking Florida Legislators to save the museum's funding. Now, the Florida Agricultural Museum will need the support of museum members and donors more than ever.

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