



BICYCLE TRAILS

Pascagoula promotes safe bicycle riding

story by **Alexis Williams** photos courtesy of **City of Pascagoula**



During May's National Bicycle Month, the City of Pascagoula is hoping visitors and residents will take advantage of the city's ten-mile designated bicycle trail and stop along its twelve points of interest, including the recently restored Round Island Lighthouse. Developed in 2012 as a way to highlight Pascagoula's cultural assets and promote a healthy and active lifestyle, the trail has quickly become a popular spot for cyclists. According to the City's Public Relations Specialist Anne Pitre, partnerships with local cycling clubs, in conjunction with city-sponsored special events, have helped the city earn a bicycle friendly honorable mention, which they are aiming to turn into a bronze designation.

On the second Saturday of every month, Singing River Cyclist and the city partner to sponsor an organized ride that begins at Beach Park. The ride is open to riders of all ages and fitness levels and the only requirement is that you bring your own bike and helmet. Each year, the city sponsors both Halloween and Christmas themed rides complete with costumes and decorations. The events have grown from 30 to 100 people in just a few years.

Pitre and other city leaders are hoping the upcoming Flagship Festival and Right2Ride event will increase the already growing number of cyclists on the trail. On May 22, the city will sponsor a Right2Ride race as part of a national campaign to promote bicycle safety. There will be both an 8-mile ride and 40-mile race starting at River Park. Registration is available on-site starting at 7 a.m. The fee for 8-mile riders is \$25 and 40-mile riders is \$40. Both races begin at 9 a.m. People are encouraged to pre-register



through May 13th. Registration can be completed online at www.cityofpascagoula.com, at the Pascagoula Recreation Center, or onsite. Advance registration will guarantee swag bags and t-shirts, otherwise racers can only get them while supplies last.

"We feel it's very important to promote bicycle safety," Pitre said. "The roads are for everyone — pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists. This is a way for people to have a voice for safer roads and enjoy all that Pascagoula has to offer."



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LIVE OAK TREES

500-year-old Friendship Oak is Coast's most famous tree

story by **Lynn Lofton** photo by **John Stricklin**

The live oak trees are an enduring symbol of South Mississippi. None is more enduring than the 500-year-old Friendship Oak that's the majestic centerpiece of the University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Park campus in Long Beach. Perseverance Oaks, a project of Hancock Bank, will make sure that future generations can enjoy the beauty of live oaks. The multi-year, multi-faceted partnership will help replenish live oak populations, primarily with offspring of the genetically superior landmark live oak, in Gulf Coast communities hit by major storms.

With project partners Mississippi State University Coastal Research and Extension Center, the Sun Herald and USM, community leaders planted three Friendship Oak saplings in each of two Coast green spaces, the Long Beach Town Green and Gulpport's Jones Park. Elementary school students from Long Beach and Gaston Point elementary schools attended the Perseverance Oaks tree-plantings.



Hancock Bank President and CEO John Hairston said the tree-plantings sowed the first signs of this long-term effort to help preserve, green, and grow the local landscape for future generations. He and the bank's associates hope Perseverance Oaks saplings will grow and thrive with local communities and young people.

"One day, these students' grandchildren may play beneath the branches of the trees we plant today. We hope they will be as awed and inspired by the adult trees as we are by the Friendship Oak and other live oaks from the Bay of St. Louis to the Pascagoula River," he said.

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