

Port St. Lucie hopes 50th anniversary celebration will foster sense of unity

By Susan Burgess

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PORT ST. LUCIE — Port St. Lucie turns 50 on April 27 with considerable fanfare surrounding the event and high hopes that the celebration will help bring the city's residents together in commemoration of a shared past.

The city, built as a housing development on 40,000 acres owned by General Development Corp., was incorporated in 1961.

"I think this whole project is exactly what this city needs to bring everyone together," said city Communications Director Ed Cunningham, whose office promotes the city's special events.

"When people are proud of their city and its past, and confident in its future, they will get more involved and become better neighbors and better citizens."

The city has an event planned each day starting April 25 with a proclamation and ending April 30 with a big festival at the city's civic center, said city recreation specialist and lifelong resident Allison Kohler, who counts herself among those entitled to be called Port St. Lucie natives — people who were born in the city.

"We are having a week's worth of significant events spread out over the city to celebrate," Kohler said. "This will give our younger generation and newer residents some perspective on how our city started and what it has grown into.

"Events like the story-telling we are having at our oldest business, which is the Shell Bazaar, will give people a chance to hear things first-hand from the people who lived these events and history. We invite them to come and participate and listen."

City spokeswoman Rita Hart said mementos are being collected for exhibit at the civic center during the celebration. Residents are invited to loan whatever they have been saving — photos, letters, articles, programs and flyers, invitations, drawings, plaques, or various items that can be displayed.

Those who wish to loan items can contact Kelly Tiger at the civic center at 772-807-4488.

A new 200-page coffee table book produced by the Port St. Lucie Historical Society, authored by former city Communications Director Nina Baranski, will be available for purchase in April for \$39.95. A numbered edition will be available for \$49.95. Both numbered and un-numbered editions of the photo-filled book will be signed by the author during the week's events.

The event week ends April 30 with a noon to 10 p.m. multicultural festival and parade at the civic center.

"It's going to be honor all the various cultures that have come together in Port St. Lucie," Kohler said. "We are still working on it, but we know our German-American Club will be there in costume with German food and dancers, and the Sons of Italy are planning to be there and we will have others."

Several veterans' organizations are also participating, she said.

The event is a "huge milestone in the city's history," Rita Hart said. "It couldn't come at a better time with the economy the way it is, and in a way that will help pull everyone in the city together."THE EVENTS:

For additional details see www.cityofpsl.com and click 50th Anniversary Celebration on right.

To pre-order Port St. Lucie at 50: A City for All People, go to www.pslhistory.org

To loan mementos for the exhibit, call Kelly Tiger at the civic center: 772-807-4488.

Monday, April 25

7 p.m. City Council meeting proclamation; 50th anniversary cupcakes; author Nina Baranski will sign editions of Port St. Lucie at 50: A City for All People.

Tuesday, April 26

10 a.m. Port St. Lucie Botanical Gardens special anniversary events including a time capsule ceremony, Keep Port St. Lucie Beautiful exhibit, history book signing and refreshments.

Wednesday, April 27

Premiere of the city's docu-drama, "City of Dreams" and an old-fashioned celebration at the Port St. Lucie Civic Center, with lots of entertainment, antique vehicles on display and more. Come out in your best 1960's attire. Time to be announced on city's web site.

Thursday, April 28

Storytelling by long-time residents at the historic Shell Bazaar, established in 1953 by the Williams family at 10100 South U.S. 1. An all-day event. Get your city history book signed by the author and have some anniversary cupcakes.

Friday, April 29

4:30 p.m. Community tailgate party, Digital Domain Park, and history book signing.

6:30 p.m. St. Lucie Mets game and fireworks. Look for special discounts at Duffy's restaurant and 50 percent discounts at SuperPlay USA.

Saturday, April 30

1. The Saints Golf Course Tournament. Details to come on city web site.
2. Noon to 10 p.m. - Multi-cultural Street Festival, Port St. Lucie Civic Center.

Colorful parade, great family entertainment, music, food, arts and crafts, and an awesome fireworks finale.

