

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: JACQUELINE FAY AND PAUL BINA

Hubband and wife Jacqueline Fay and Paul Bina are two of our newest volunteers. In the eight months since they started volunteering with Conservation Foundation, they have helped with a variety of tasks. Read more below about their experiences and why they choose to volunteer.

What is it about Conservation Foundation's mission that resonates with you?

Jacqueline: I am all about trying to preserve our natural environment so that everyone can enjoy it. Hiking, photographing nature, and cherishing the creatures that inhabit these special places feeds my soul in a way that nothing else does. I think that everyone should have that opportunity, including our grandchildren and theirs. I am a tree hugger whose heart breaks when I hear the sound of yet another chainsaw taking out one more precious tree, so conservation resonates with me loud and clear.

Paul: The combination of preservation and education is very appealing. On every outing, I have learned more about the lands being preserved and restored which enables a more personal connection.

What's your favorite memory about volunteering with Conservation Foundation?

Jacqueline: There is something special about participating with others who are working toward the same goal and mission. You have that thing in common right from the start and it makes you feel closer.

One favorite memory was at a Food Truck event. My husband and I were working the table where kids were painting mini pots and placing soil and basil seeds inside. The excitement on their faces as they painted their pots and then planted their seeds was amazing! I loved every minute.

Another favorite memory was the land stewardship event where we planted trees alongside a very narrow strip of the Myakka River. The water was the most incredibly beautiful amber color. I will never forget it.

Paul: It's all good. At the Stewardship outings, there is a small picnic lunch get-together after the work is completed. I enjoy these times because of the social connections and

opportunity to learn more about the properties and other volunteers.

What contribution or achievement are you most proud of?

Jacqueline: Connecting with one child at a Food Truck event who wanted me to personally show her the activities. That connection made me realize that if we can reach children and get them excited about their natural surroundings then, hopefully, they will share that passion for preserving the environment with their families and friends.

Paul: At one of the first outings we attended, we planted pop ash trees. We returned to the property a few months later and it was very satisfying to see how many had rooted and survived as a first step towards restoring the original tree cover.

What motivates you to stay involved?

Jacqueline: The staff and volunteers at Conservation Foundation are wonderful and fun to be around! I always have a good time with them and feel that what I am doing is worthwhile and appreciated. I always look forward to the next volunteering opportunity!

Paul: The friendships I have made with other volunteers, the sense of accomplishment, and the food truck events.

What would you say to someone considering volunteering for Conservation Foundation?



Jacqueline: Actually, I have been trying for a while to get friends and acquaintances involved! I share with them the mission of Conservation Foundation and tell them what a great group the staff and volunteers are to work with — that it's fun and worthwhile and that you get to make new friends in the process.

Paul: Just do it. You will meet so many wonderful people, you will do important work, and you will make a difference.

CLEANER WATER ONE HOA AT A TIME

Red tide, toxic algae, no swim advisories — Floridians are all too familiar with water quality issues and what happens when excess nutrients make their way into our waters. But there's hope!

The *Community Playbook for Healthy Waterways* is a comprehensive online manual highlighting activities to reduce and remove manmade nutrient pollution in waterways. Activities within the *Playbook* — released in 2021 — use the Sarasota County community as a real-world example and are transferrable and customizable to other regions and communities. Community leaders are encouraged to examine current water-impacting practices and see how the *Playbook* might add value to existing programs and activities.

One local leader, Mike Knupp, did just that. A volunteer member of Conservation Foundation's Board of Trustees and former volunteer Vice President of the Landings Homeowner's Association, Knupp is dedicated to our environment and community, always looking for ways to help keep our waters clean and healthy. When he first heard of the *Playbook*, he couldn't wait to bring it to his neighborhood.

The Landings is made up of 20 different residential associations bordering Phillippi Creek and Roberts Bay. There are nine stormwater retention ponds/lakes and over 14 miles of stormwater drainage infrastructure flowing through this residential area. With the exception of one lake, the Landings HOA is responsible for the maintenance and proper functioning of all these manmade water bodies.

Many activities from the *Playbook* have been implemented in the Landings community since Knupp first brought the guide to the HOA's attention.

Knowing that deed-restricted communities' lawn care standards often contribute to excess fertilizer use and water pollution, Knupp and the Landings' Environmental Committee first educated the Landings' 20 homeowner associations on Florida-friendly landscape practices. Next came implementing 'no mow' zones around community shorelines to help prevent grass clippings from directly entering the water and releasing nutrients that stimulate algae growth.

As part of the Landings Lakes & Drainage Committee, Knupp helped initiate a shoreline restoration program to prevent lake bank erosion.

To support their efforts, the committee wrote and received a grant from the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program that provided funding to plant native plants along shorelines, enhancing the soil's ability to retain water and process nutrients naturally. In the future, they hope to work with the County Stormwater Department to dredge one of the community lakes where sediment has built up over the past 30 years.

Knupp believes that these activities helped illustrate to the 700+ homeowners within the Landings the important role we all play in safeguarding the health of our waters. He looks forward to continuing to utilize the *Playbook* and strongly encourages other HOAs to take advantage of this free resource and the free consulting available.

The *Community Playbook for Healthy Waterways* was created by Gulf Coast Community Foundation in collaboration with Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast, Sarasota Bay Estuary Program, UF/IFAS Extension Sarasota County, the City of Sarasota, Solutions to Avoid Red Tide, Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership, Jones Potato Farm, the Argus Foundation, Sarasota County Stormwater Environmental Utility, Shafer Consulting, and Progressive Water Resources. Learn more at waterqualityplaybook.org.

"I have referenced the *Playbook* to colleagues in the environmental engineering field and local officials in Virginia, Maine, Cape Cod, and Martha's Vineyard where they face similar issues. Special thanks go out to Jon Thaxton at Gulf Coast Community Foundation, his steering committee, and the contributing authors and editor for a job very well done." —MIKE KNUPP

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To learn more, contact Lee Ann Rodriguez at 941.918.2100 or LeeAnn@conservationfoundation.com or visit conservationfoundation.com/sponsorship.



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now have access to more helpful documents and videos on the designated landowner resources page on our website. This page will be updated regularly with new resources, how-to guides, best management practices, and more, always focused on what is most useful for the land management community.

Landowners also now have the option to receive a quarterly email newsletter with content specifically for them, including stewardship and management information, upcoming landowner events, funding opportunities, and more.

Getting in touch with our land protection team is also now easier than ever! Landowners looking to connect and schedule a one-on-one visit or

introductory phone call can now do so quickly and conveniently using a new form on our website called *Let's Talk About Conservation*.

For those who prefer to do their learning in person, we are excited to announce our first educational landowner outreach event scheduled for Friday, December 2! We hope you'll join us at Longino Ranch to learn more about preservation opportunities and how Conservation Foundation can be a valued partner in protection.

Visit conservationfoundation.com/landowners to learn more about this special event, see the survey results, join our landowner email list, get in touch with a member of our land protection team, or access our growing collection of landowner resources.