



FACES of



LEMON BAY
ESTABLISHED 1971
CONSERVANCY

A HARBOR STYLE SPECIAL SECTION

Vision

To forever protect and preserve the natural features of Lemon Bay, Charlotte Harbor and their surrounding waters and uplands through property acquisitions and management, comprehensive environmental education, and regional advocacy of appropriate land and water conservation policies, programs and practices.

Mission

The preservation, protection and acquisition of natural areas important in maintaining the ecological balance of Lemon Bay, Charlotte Harbor and adjacent waters.

The Lemon Bay Conservancy, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization established in 1971, has long been recognized as a good steward of our natural resources around Lemon Bay. In recent years, its mission has expanded to include the Charlotte Harbor estuary and surrounding lands.

Some of LBC's most significant projects include:

- **Buttonwood and Rookery Islands:** Two of the Conservancy's earliest acquisitions, these two uninhabited islands are located in Lemon Bay.
- **Grove City Heritage Village:** In 2007, LBC entered into negotiations to acquire the last intact shell midden in Charlotte County that is believed to be a pre-Calusa Indian village.
- **Cape Haze Preserve:** In 2009, LBC partnered with Wildlands Conservation, Inc., Florida Park Services (FDEP) and the Southwest Florida Water Management District to acquire lots that were completely isolated and undevelopable within the boundaries of the Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park.
- **Wildflower Preserve:** LBC acquired 80 acres of land in Cape Haze in 2010, formerly the Wildflower Golf and Country Club. The Conservancy is actively working on a multi-dimensional, phased Preserve Improvements Plan, including well-marked walking trails, educational signage and a variety of area-specific wildlife habitat improvements.
- **Thorton Key:** Dean and Gar Beckstead donated nearly 10 acres of pristine barrier island land on Thorton Key in late 2011. Valued at over \$600,000, this donation is expected to act as a catalyst for the acquisition of the remainder of Thorton Key.



Jim Cooper
President

Jim Cooper is clearly a man on a mission to protect our local waterways. "Our harbor is our lifeblood. It's what generates and drives our economy," he said.

In his former life, Cooper flew AC-119 gunships in night combat in 1969 and 1970 during the Vietnam War, along with C-141 transport and the F-111 fighter bomber. He retired from the Air Force with the rank of colonel after 25 years and began to devote the rest of his life to helping others in the community and improving our environment.

Cooper was urged by a fellow Rotarian to join the LBC board nearly five years ago. He came on as president and has held that position ever since, spreading the word about how important it is to

keep our environment pristine and the way it was when the native Calusas inhabited the area.

During his presidency, the LBC's vision has expanded beyond just the Lemon Bay to include Charlotte Harbor, which has a long history of being treasured for its abundance of fish. In fact, a century ago, Cuban fishermen would fish our waters due to currents and cycles that give our estuary "a special quality," Cooper said.

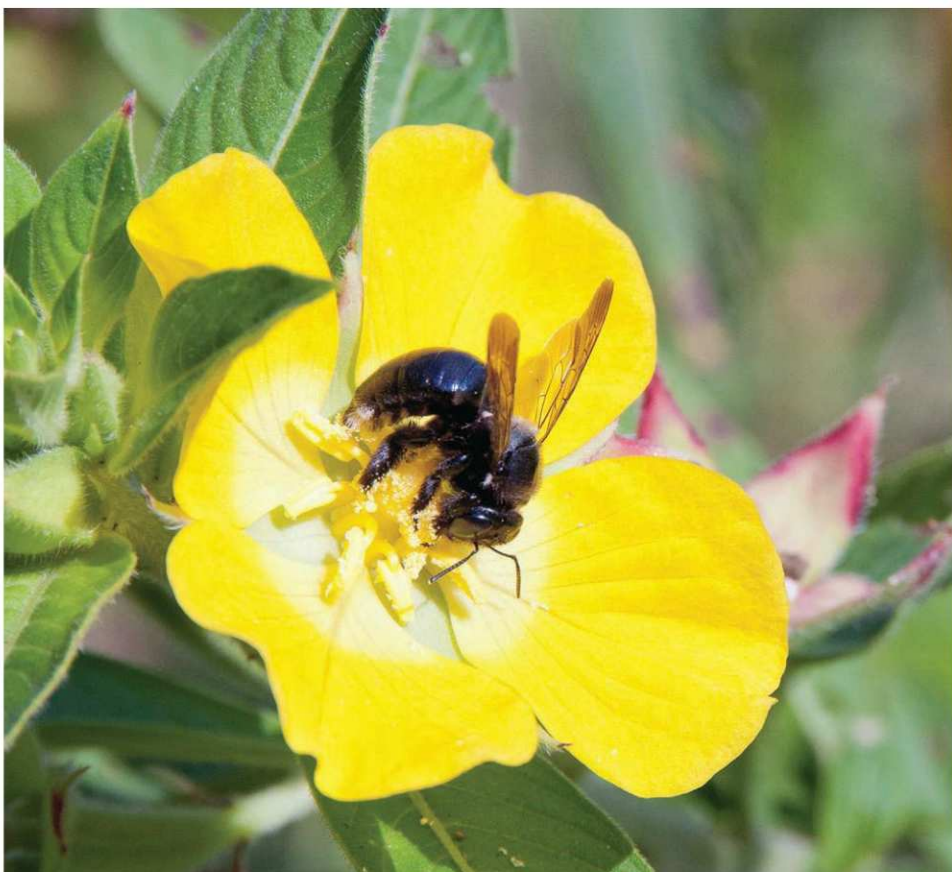
But the Charlotte Harbor habitat needs to be protected for future generations of fishermen and the entire ecosystem; if a species disappears or becomes endangered, its loss affects other organisms in the food chain.

Cooper cited the various achievements the Conservancy has accomplished, many of which are listed above. One of his missions as president was to buy up scrub jay lots and then give them back to Charlotte County for its scrub jay mitigation plan.

The Wildflower acquisition came about during his tenure, and that project continues to grow. He said that in the future, LBC hopes to sponsor an annual \$35,000 scholarship for a biology student who would work on their thesis in conjunction with Mote Marine Laboratory. The preservation of the tarpon fishery would be part of this important student project.

For Cooper and his fellow LBC members and volunteers, preserving our last, great and natural outdoor places is a top priority so that future generations can enjoy the habitats and wildlife that we have today.

The Pride and Joy of the Lemon Bay Conservancy



When it became known that 80 acres adjoining the Lemon Bay Golf Club was up for sale in the mid 2000's, members set about to find ways to purchase it. Unfortunately, the property was already under contract to an individual who planned to put up a large condominium development. LBC approached the owner directly and contracted to purchase the property. "We had 90 days to make a decision and put a down payment on the property," said Walter Meanwell, LBC Treasurer.

"The \$750,000 acquisition was made possible in a large part by a bequest from the estate of Verna Rogers, an Englewood resident and longtime LBC member who left the Conservancy her home valued at \$150,000," said Vanessa Smith, director of development for the LBC and its sole paid employee. "If early fundraising efforts by Wildflower neighbors were the catalyst, the Rogers' bequest was the lynchpin to a successful fundraising campaign," Smith said.

The purchase closed in September 2010, thanks to a last-minute loan of \$250,000. "The mortgage was paid off in one year," said Jim Cooper, president of the Lemon Bay Conservancy.

The Conservancy set aside \$50,000 to build trails and remove exotic plants and replace them with native species in addition to other improvements. Many volunteers worked tirelessly to clear trails and create a tranquil, natural setting. Professional naturalists serve as volunteer guides to lead tours and provide names of the native plants and wildflowers whose species' names fill five pages. The Englewood Men's Garden Club donated beautiful wooden benches. Butterflies flutter nearby, attracted to plants donated by the Englewood

Women's Garden Club and the local butterfly club. The Native Plant Society has donated plantings, and members of the Audubon Society are frequent visitors to Wildflower, where they conduct bird counts and point out species, such as the painted bunting, to those who are interested.

Two very helpful Eagle Scout projects have also been completed this year: a new Informational Kiosk near the Wildflower Parking Lot Trail Head entry point as well as a well-designed Bird Observation area with bird blinds to aid photographers and a solar powered water fountain to attract birds.

Cooper spoke enthusiastically about upcoming plans to have a tarpon-tagging program that would be run in conjunction with Mote Marine Laboratory and noted biologist Dr. Aaron Adams. Also, a tiny bit of fin would be sliced off and DNA-tested to determine the parent fish and their habits, he said. The Wildflower habitat is important to the tarpon because it takes juveniles 10 years to mature. During their vulnerable juvenile stage, they spend their time in the mangrove waters feasting on such food sources as mosquito fish that are abundant in the area. The Charlotte Harbor Natural Estuary Program has also been instrumental in helping Wildflower cultivate the habitat. Also, since gopher tortoises have been found on Wildflower, others might be moved there as part of a mitigation program if their habitat is threatened or their presence unwanted.

With more than a little help from their friends, Lemon Bay Conservancy's stewardship and ownership of the land has given natural habitats to the public for generations to come.

"Vanessa has been invaluable to us; she is just absolutely worth her weight in gold," said Walter Meanwell, LBC's treasurer. His praises were echoed by other board members who said they appreciate the work that Smith, the Conservancy's only paid employee, has done in her three years with the organization.

Even though she works part-time, Smith's tasks seem to be full-time and all-consuming. She wears many hats and interacts with dozens of volunteers and LBC members on a regular basis.

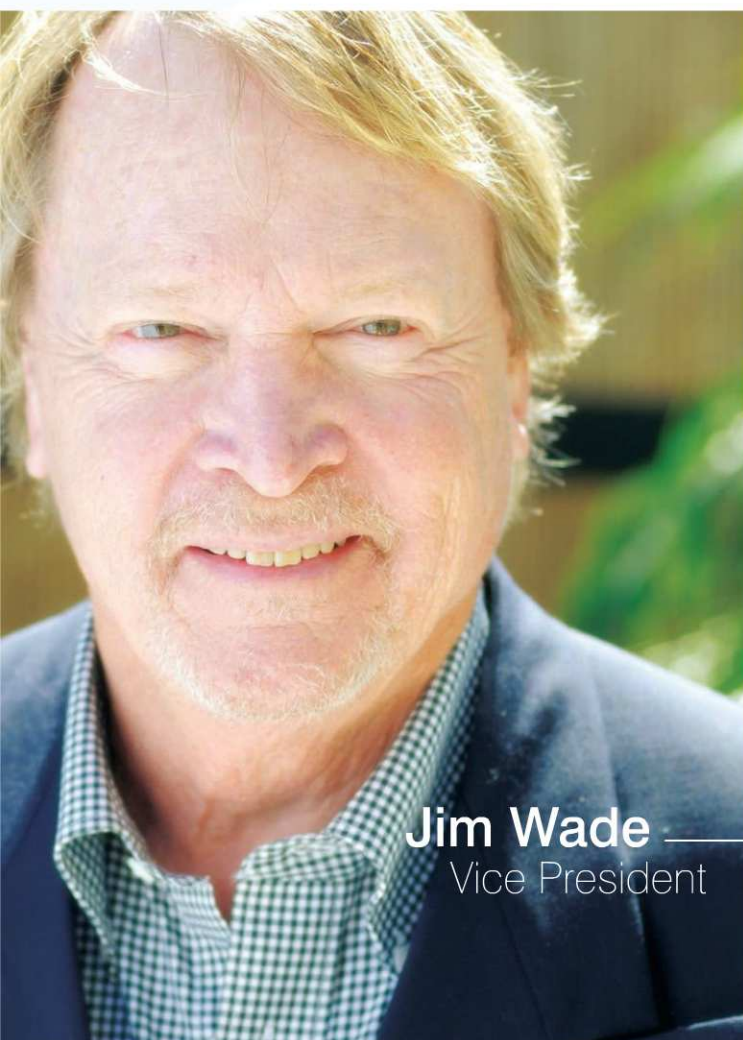
Smith said that her "hobby is life," and she has always wanted to make a difference by either "helping the planet or humans." Her passion for helping the planet was evident when she was an adolescent. In her eighth grade history class at Delray Beach Junior High School, she was instrumental in drafting a petition that opposed the proposed Cross-Florida Barge Canal that would have cut the state in two with a man-made waterway running from the Atlantic coast to the Gulf of Mexico. "I was green before my time," she said.

A single parent, Smith worked in accounting before she moved her family to the Gulf Coast, where she ran a daycare center from her home. She then worked with at-risk youth through various nonprofit organizations in Sarasota. She also served as a juvenile probation officer. "But after 12 years of working with troubled families, I decided it was time for a change," she said. Smith came to the Lemon Bay Conservancy and found a niche that fueled her passion while utilizing her creativity, business and accounting skills.

The phones seem to ring non-stop at LBC headquarters some days, and Smith must multi-talk by dealing with business matters, callers and visitors to the office. But this grandmother of four wouldn't have it any other way, because she's working for a cause that's near and dear to her heart.



Vanessa L. Smith
Director of Development



Jim Wade
Vice President

When Dean Beckstead, one of the owners of the Palm Island Resort on Knight's Island, approached Jim Wade more than five years ago and asked whether Wade would help the Lemon Bay Conservancy, he couldn't say "no," Wade admitted.

Wade came along at a serendipitous time for the Conservancy. The organization was about to deal with a major land acquisition that would become known as Wildflower. Wade knew the ins and outs of real estate thanks to his former life as an international developer. Among the many projects he worked on were a several million square-foot shopping center, residential and office complex in Arlington Va., just outside Washington, D.C., a 3.5-million square-foot merchandise mart in Brussels, Belgium, and assorted projects in Paris, Atlanta, Shanghai and Orlando.

After some four decades of globe-trotting, Wade decided to "retire" around five years ago, and had every intention of enjoying the quiet life at his home on Don Pedro Island. Instead, he turned his attention to nonprofit organizations like Kids Needs of Englewood, Helping Hands Food Bank and LBC. In addition, he is active on several committees of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church on Boca Grande.

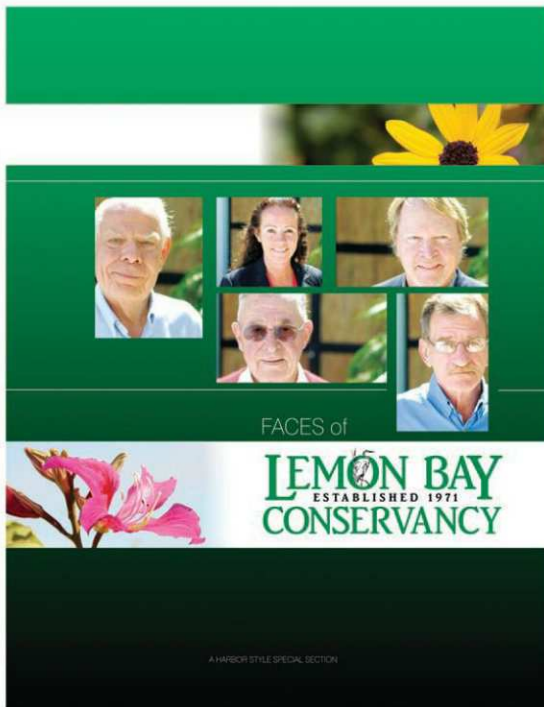
Although unassuming and reluctant to take credit for his numerous contributions to the Conservancy, Vanessa Smith, LBC's director of development, said, "Jim took the lead role in negotiating our purchase of Wildflower, did much of the due diligence, reviewed the mortgage documents and orchestrated the closing. He also speaks to groups interested in the Conservancy and was very involved in Toast to the Coast, our annual fundraiser."



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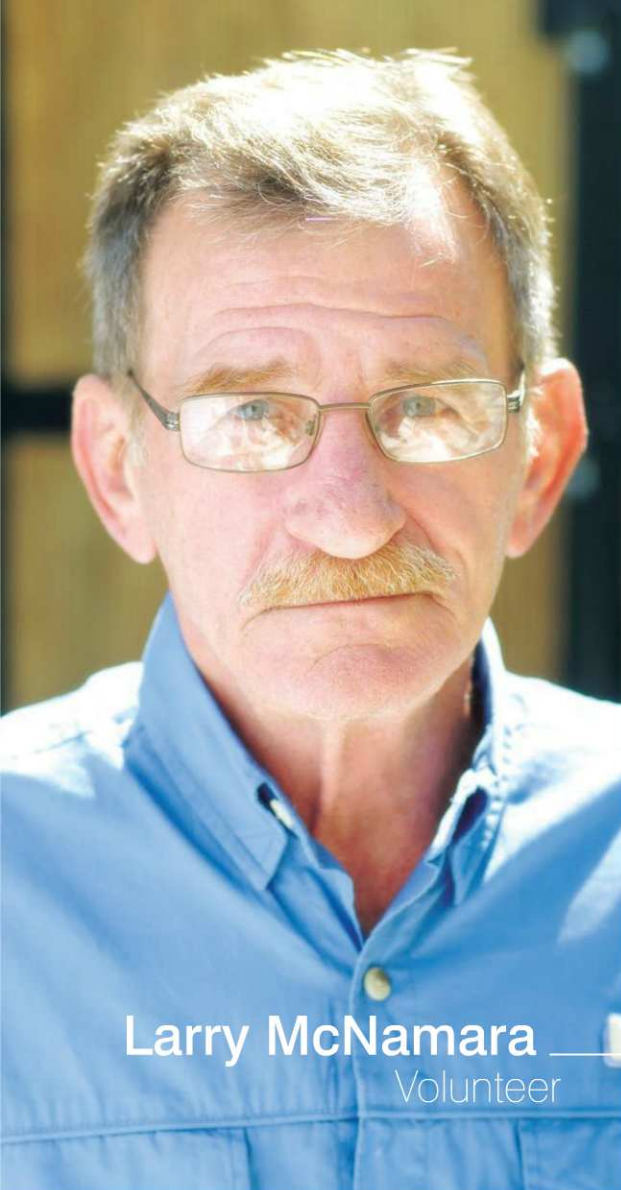
CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF SERVICE



The Lemon Bay Conservancy is dedicated to the preservation, protection and acquisition of natural areas important in maintaining the ecological balance of Lemon Bay, Charlotte Harbor and adjacent waters.

We here at HARBOR STYLE are honored to partner with, and salute the mission, vision and work of, the Lemon Bay Conservancy as they work to forever protect and conserve our community's natural resources.

www.harborstyle.com



Larry McNamara
Volunteer

Larry McNamara, owner of Mac Lawn Services in Englewood, admits that he likes to help others. So, when he kept passing a sign at the Wildflower Preserve on his way to work each day, his curiosity was whetted. He drove onto the 80-acre site and "saw all of the brush piled up." He remembers thinking, "I have the equipment to take care of it." He called the Conservancy's office and offered his crew and equipment. And he's been showing up ever since. "I guess it was meant to be," he said.

McNamara sends out a three to five member work crew with heavy equipment to the Wildflower Preserve twice a month. The workers mow trails, clear brush, trim trees and remove debris.

When the crew first started their work, Wildflower was "overgrown and had a lot of brush that had to be chipped." Piles of brush were stacked up, but McNamara's equipment was able to chip it into small pieces that could then be carted away.

McNamara said his work at Wildflower is more difficult than his regular commercial and residential landscape labors. The chipping and brush removal is "pretty rough work, especially in the summer when it's 100 degrees out," he said. Once McNamara gets caught up with the maintenance work and brush removal, he'll probably be called on to do some mowing and planting at Wildflower, he said.

McNamara decided to volunteer at Wildflower for two reasons. First, he was delighted that LBC bought the property and that "a bunch of condos" didn't get built instead. Secondly, "they obviously needed help, and I was able to help out."

McNamara's efforts extend beyond his landscape work. Each year he donates art pieces to the Conservancy's Toast to the Coast fundraiser. He creates nautical-themed items made from coconuts: "coconut art." His work is well known in the area, and one of his pieces is displayed in the LBC's office.



Walter Meanwell
Treasurer

Walter Meanwell and his wife, Jean, have been working to save the environment since they were first married. He joined the LBC board seven years ago and has served as treasurer for the past four. His current position seems to have been tailor-made for him, as it combines finance with conserving our natural resources.

Meanwell retired from Wells Fargo Securities in Madison, Wis., after a career that spanned half a century. His legacy in business lives on in the Meanwell Group of Wells Fargo Advisors run by his son. His other legacy — helping to preserve land — continues.

Meanwell's love of nature began in his childhood when he spent 12 summers on week-long trips canoeing the boundary waters of Minnesota and Canada. Later, as a married man, he and Jean took their sons on camping trips where they would "spend a week paddling and cooking under the stars."

While Meanwell worked in the securities business, Jean was a teacher and founding member of Gathering Waters, "a model for the State of Wisconsin for land trusts," he said.

In the 1980's, the Meanwells discovered Boca Grande. After visiting several times, they bought in the early 1990's and built their present home in 1997. It is situated "right on the Harbor looking down towards Useppa," he said.

He became an active volunteer after he officially retired, and, among other things, served as president of the Barrier Island Parks Society for four years. Then he came to the Lemon Bay Conservancy. When the opportunity arose for the LBC to acquire the Wildflower acreage, Meanwell used his contacts in business and finance to secure a one-year loan for the organization.

When he's not volunteering, you might spot Meanwell cycling on Boca Grande as he rides a bicycle every day and "the 15 to 16 miles along Boca Grande three times a week," he said. Perhaps that's what gives him the seemingly indefatigable energy to work so hard for the LBC.

How You Can Help

Jim Cooper, president of the Lemon Bay Conservancy, urges the public to consider making a donation to help LBC with its conservation efforts. "It's the gift that keeps on giving," he said. There are four ways you can help:

Become a Member

Members are the heart and lifeblood of the LBC. Without their annual membership, donations and volunteer activities, there would be no Conservancy, no Wildflower Preserve, no educational activities and no group to advocate for the preservation of our magnificent Southwest Florida lands. If you wish to support the Lemon Bay Conservancy, you should become a member. Memberships start at as little as \$35.

As a member, you will receive important updates on the Conservancy's activities by email, postcard and newsletters. An additional benefit is access to the Wildflower Preserve. Of course, donations of any amount are welcome.

Donate Land

LBC accepts donations of land that is environmentally significant either in the form of outright donations (transfer of title) or through the vehicle of an environmental easement. Environmental easements are usually restricted to larger parcels, but conservation easement allows you to retain ownership of your property while ensuring the land will be preserved in perpetuity. Call for a consultation on your property to see if it might qualify for an easement and possibly save you tax dollars while protecting the land.

Volunteer

Cooper strongly urges the public to get outdoors this year and "volunteer." Make new community friends, observe Wildflower's many natural treasures firsthand and join in the fun.

"The folks volunteering at Wildflower are having a ball as they make great 'legacy' things happen. If cutting brush or planting a butterfly garden is not for you, volunteer in the office or help man a booth for Lemon Bay Conservancy at a local event. Our teamwork is what makes us great and unique," he said.

Leave a Legacy

If you're not ready now, you might consider helping LBC in the future. Verna Rogers, a philanthropist and environmentalist, did just that. She understood the meaning of giving back. She was gracious enough to put Lemon Bay Conservancy in her last will and testament. Her gift, combined with the support of the community, made the purchase of Wildflower Preserve possible. Her bequest is not only a joy to this generation but the many more to come. In appreciation Lemon Bay Conservancy has dedicated a pond at Wildflower as the "Verna Pond" to be enjoyed by all visitors for years to come.

Lemon Bay Conservancy

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