

## Swimmer-powered Float Parade: Lake Cane Keeps it Clean

A pristine lake in southwest Orange County will come abloom Saturday morning with floating sea creatures, gigantic plastic ducks and even inflatable pizza slices! Pools toys are trending hot at the first annual Lake Cane Float Parade. Explaining to his neighbors, Dr. Lucky Meisenheimer remarked, "Imagine us swimming the Macy's Day parade."

The event will celebrate the 28<sup>h</sup> anniversary of the lake's signature event, Lucky's Lake Swim, a one kilometer out and back course that attracts hundreds of open water swimmers each week. The swim-parade begins and ends in Meisenheimer's backyard.

A five-member judging panel, composed of civic and swimming leaders, was appointed to evaluate the floats within a range of classifications. Area residents are invited to the spectacle which will be visible to traffic on the western side of the lake paralleling Turkey Lake Road from 7:45 a.m.- 9 a.m.

The family fun Float Parade is designed to raise awareness of how residents can protect Lake Cane. Sponsored by the Lake Cane Restoration Society (LCRS), this event includes a plant give-a-way. "Planting Florida native plants in your yard helps keep the lake clean", " remarked Jay Madigan, LCRS Executive Director.

LCRS does its own water quality testing, every month volunteers track nutrient levels. "Our data is a good conversation starter on lawn chemical use", said Madigan. LCRS advocates homeowners use rain barrels to capture rainwater. They advise crafting rain gardens to detain storm water flow long enough for absorption. LCRS is an all-volunteer Board dedicated to keeping Lake Cane "Swimmable, Fishable and Lovable."

Lucky's Lake Swim is a six-day-a-week event. Over the years the swim has attracted thousands of athletes from around the world to Lake Cane. Several Olympic athletes have joined Lucky for a swim.

"The preservation of the lake is essential not just for current swimmers but for maintaining property values. Everyone wants to live near a healthy lake, no one wants algae bloom in their backyard", Madigan said. Using best lake management practices, the LCRS works in concert with the Orange County Environmental Protection Division, the City of Orlando Public Works Department, the State of Florida LAKEWATCH program.

Additional LCRS allies include the Florida Association of Native Nurseries, the Edith Bush Institute for Philanthropy and Non-Profit Leadership at Rollins College, the Florida Section of the American Water Works Association, the Florida Lake Management Society, and the Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Foundation.

"Ultimately, we aim to be an example to communities who want what's best for their own lake, and are willing to volunteer their time to make it better" Madigan concluded. Lake Cane is in the northern most headwaters of the Everglades.

While only prior Lake Cane swimmers will be allowed to participate in the float parade, spectators are invited and encouraged to view. The lake is within a mile of the Universal Theme Parks in Orlando.

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