ARCH CREEK TRUST Newsletter

1855 N.E. 135th Street, North Miami Beach, Fla. 33171 - 305-944-6111

archcreektrust.org

April 2026

Meet at the Bridge - Arch Creek Park Pioneer Day

On April 4, 2026, Arch Creek Park became the setting for a vibrant centennial celebration honoring the cities of North Miami and North Miami Beach. Presented by the Arch Creek Trust in partnership with the Miami-Dade County Parks Department, this year's *Meet at the Bridge – Pioneer Day* brought together history, community, and culture in a truly meaningful way.

For centuries, the natural limestone bridge spanning Arch Creek has served as a gathering place—from the early Tequesta and Seminole peoples to the settlers of the late nineteenth century. Its enduring role as a meeting place continues today, offering an ideal setting for connection and reflection.

Hundreds of visitors joined the annual celebration, enjoying a day dedicated to local history, archaeology, and community life. Participants explored the past through interactive art-making activities and engaged with objects from the museum's teaching collection. Once a lush forest inhabited by Indigenous communities, and later a site for stagecoach stops, boat tours, and Sunday picnics, Arch Creek Park remains a unique landscape through which the creek transits on its way to Biscayne Bay.

In the twentieth century, the area faced the threat of commercial development, with plans for a Chrysler dealership. Thanks to the advocacy of local environmentalists, represented by attorney Harvey Ruvin, the State of Florida purchased the land in 1973. On the very day of that acquisition, the historic natural bridge collapsed under still-uncertain circumstances—an event that further underscored the urgency of preservation.

Today, through the continued partnership between the Arch Creek Trust and Miami-Dade County Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces, the site is protected as a state-designated archaeological and historic area. The park now features a museum, nature trails, a reconstructed bridge, and educational programming offered through Miami EcoAdventures.

The day's events began with a flag-raising ceremony led by the Honor Guard of the North Miami Police Department. The park also commemorates Officer Carl Mertes, who was killed in the line of duty while protecting the community; a moment of silence was observed at the request of Councilman Kevin Burns.

The main program featured remarks from the North Miami Mayor, Alix Desulme, and Council members Kevin Burns and Cassandra Timothe, who highlighted the park's importance as a shared civic and historical space. Proclamations from both cities were read, and officials were recognized by the Arch Creek Trust for their ongoing support of preservation efforts.

Additional presentations were delivered by Arch Creek Trust members Robert Burr and David Raymond, whose contributions are further detailed elsewhere in this publication.

History enthusiasts enjoyed special exhibits, including a display by local historian Seth Bramson on the Florida East Coast Railway along with unique local history materials, as well as a display from Arch Creek Trust member Andrew Ricke, who presented archival images and newspaper clippings documenting the early development of the Arch Creek community—where his great-great-grandfather served as the first postmaster. Visitors also explored a popular exhibition of a 1925 North Miami fire engine and a 1970 police car, connecting the region's past with its present.

Art and community spirit were on full display through a collaborative project organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami. Attendees decorated fabric squares to add to a growing community quilt that will commemorate the City of North Miami's centennial.

Families enjoyed complimentary food and beverages, live music, children's games, and a wide variety of interactive activities throughout the day. Visitors also had the opportunity to connect with numerous local organizations at informational booths. We extend our sincere thanks to all participating partners for helping make this year's celebration a success.

Participating friends and partners who accompanied us this year included:

City of North Miami - Office of the City Clerk
City of North Miami Councilman Kevin Burns
Complete Dermatology
Dade Heritage Trust
Engage Miami
Environmentally Endangered Lands Program (EEL)
Ernie Long, providing food in support of Retired K-9 Foundation of South Fla.
Everglades National Park
Flora of Miami
Florida Blue
Florida Public Archaeology Network
Friends of Enchanted Forest
History Miami
Miami-Dade County - Solid Waste - Mosquito Control
Miami Dade Public Library
Miami Waterkeepers
MOCA NOMI
NoMi Firetruck & Police car
Pelican Harbor Seabird Station
South Florida Woodturners Guild
Tropical Audubon Society
UF/IFAS Master Gardening Program
Urban Sketchers Miami Chapter

If we have mistakenly left out any group of friends or vendors, please excuse us and let us know at this email address archcreektrust2025@gmail.com

Finally, we'd like to thank our friend Daniel Correa from DaLiMediaLab for volunteering to record the event, which we will share with you very soon.

For more photographs go to page 5

Robert Burr - Featured Speaker at Arch Creek Park Pioneer Day

The Arch Creek Trust welcomed Robert A. Burr, a descendant of one of Miami-Dade County's earliest pioneer families, as the featured speaker for the *Meet at the Bridge* Pioneer Day celebration held on April 4, 2026, at Arch Creek Park.

The Burr family arrived in Florida from Georgetown, Washington, D.C., in 1876, initially settling near Gainesville before relocating to the Peace River region in 1881. Following the Great Freeze of 1894–95, the family moved to Dade County, coinciding with the arrival of the railroad in Miami in 1896. Members of the family established homes in Miami, Little River, Arch Creek, and Goulds, contributing to the development of these early communities.

Burr shared reflections on pioneer life in South Florida, informed by family history and his ongoing involvement with local historical organizations, including the Miami Pioneers and Natives of Dade, the Arch Creek Trust, and the Florida Pioneer Museum.

His remarks highlighted Arch Creek's longstanding role as a site of community gathering and civic engagement, drawing connections between historical traditions and their continued relevance today.

David Raymond — Best-Selling Author

During the event, attendees also had the pleasure of hearing from Miami native David Raymond. A member of the Arch Creek Trust, he is a bestselling author known for blending humor, mystery, and the supernatural. With a diverse background in public service, education, and science—including leadership roles at the Florida Department of Children and Families and the Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust—he brings real-world experience to his imaginative storytelling.

During his presentation, Raymond reflected on his youth, recalling visits to the park to enjoy its natural beauty and go fishing. He recounted the day the historic bridge collapsed without explanation—an event he later reimagined as the work of mermaids, an idea that inspired the title of one of his books, The Mermaid of Arch Creek.

The Mermaid of Arch Creek (2021) tells the story of Wekiwa Sawgrass, a mystical heroine in the Florida Everglades whose home in Arch Creek hides supernatural secrets.

For more information about the author and acquisition of his books click here David Raymond

Proclamations

The Cities of North Miami and North Miami Beach issued proclamations recognizing April 4, 2026, as *Meet at the Bridge – Arch Creek Pioneer Day*.

This meaningful recognition from both municipalities affirms the importance of the Arch Creek Trust's mission and strengthens its commitment to preserving and celebrating the rich history of Arch Creek Park. Their support not only honors the work of the Trust, but also underscores the value the community places on protecting its cultural and natural heritage, including the park's geological, archaeological, and historical significance.

These proclamations serve as a powerful reminder that the preservation of Arch Creek Park is a shared responsibility, supported by the cities it serves. Such encouragement is invaluable as the Trust continues its work on behalf of future generations.

The recognition also stands as a testament to the years of dedication contributed by volunteers and supporters who have worked to safeguard this unique site. The Arch Creek Trust extends its sincere gratitude to both cities for their continued partnership and for recognizing the importance of this ongoing effort.

Here you can view and read both proclamations. The City of North Miami Beach presented two proclamations; one was delivered on the day of the event. Due to space constraints, only one is included in this publication.

Meet at the Bridge in photos

City of North Miami Mayor Alix Desulme

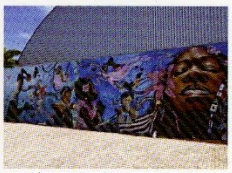
City of North Miami Councilman Kevin Burns and Arch creek Trust President Maureen Harwitz

Proclamation, City of North Miami, March 10, 2026

NORTH MIAMI FLORIDA

CITY OF NORTH MIAMI CELEBRATING 100 YEARS 1926-2026 CENTENNIAL

Proclamation



The City of North Miami, Florida

Is pleased to issue this proclamation in honor of

Pioneer Day

WHEREAS, the City of North Miami's first residents were the 19th-century pioneers who lived and prospered at Arch Creek, laying the foundation for the community's growth and enduring legacy; and

WHEREAS, Arch Creek Memorial Park is named in honor of North Miami Police Officer Carl Mertes, who courageously sacrificed his life in the line of duty, as well as in remembrance of other fallen officers whose service, dedication, and valor shall never be forgotten; and

WHEREAS, Arch Creek Memorial Park for Carl Mertes is a 9.5-acre historic landmark with more than 2,000 years of history tied to its earliest inhabitants, offering rich geological, archaeological, botanical, and historical significance; and

WHEREAS, the City of North Miami, founded on February 5, 1926, proudly commemorates its Centennial Year, celebrating a century of history, resilience, and community pride; and

WHEREAS, the Arch Creek Trust is organizing a Pioneer Day celebration featuring keynote speaker Robert Burr, a descendant of Arch Creek pioneers, along with historic exhibits, guided nature walks, food, music, children's activities, and a ceremonial planting of fifty (50) coontie plants to support the Atala butterfly and local biodiversity;

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the foregoing, I, Alix Desulme, Ed.D., Mayor of North Miami, along with Vice Mayor Kassandra Timothe, MPA, Councilman Kevin Burns, Councilwoman Mary Estimé-Irvin, and Councilman Pierre Frantz Charles, M.Ed., do hereby proclaim and designate **Saturday, April 4, 2026**, as

Pioneer Day

and to be an official Centennial celebration during Miami-Dade County's annual Arch Creek Park "Meet at the Bridge" event in the City of North Miami and urge all residents to join us in Pioneer Day activities honoring the pioneers whose legacy continues to shape our community.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the City of North Miami to be affixed this 10th day of March 2026.

Mayor
Alix Desulme, Ed.D.

Vice Mayor
Kassandra Timothe, MPA

Councilman
Kevin A. Burns

Councilwoman
Mary Estimé-Irvin

Councilman
Pierre Frantz Charles, M.Ed.

SEAL

Proclamation, City of North Miami Beach, March 26, 2026

PROCLAMATION
CITY OF NORTH MIAMI BEACH

WHEREAS, Arch Creek Memorial Park, also known as the Carl Mertes Arch Creek Memorial Park, is a 9.5-acre nationally recognized Rockland hammock once inhabited by prehistoric peoples and later by pioneers who helped shape the early history of North Dade; and

WHEREAS, the park is rich in geological, archaeological, botanical, and historical significance, providing valuable educational and cultural opportunities for residents and visitors alike; and

WHEREAS, the park's most distinctive feature is the Natural Bridge over Arch Creek, a unique limestone formation that has served as a vital crossing point for centuries and attracted both indigenous peoples and early settlers; and

WHEREAS, the City of North Miami Beach has played an important role in preserving this historic site and ensuring public access from Biscayne Boulevard and surrounding areas; and

WHEREAS, the historic Military Trail was widely used during the Seminole Wars and throughout the pioneer era of North Dade's history, serving as a key route for early settlers; and

WHEREAS, the City of North Miami Beach has protected access to Arch Creek Park through portions of the historic Military Trail that connect north of the park and continue through it and across the Natural Bridge; and

WHEREAS, the year 2026 marks the Centennial anniversary of the City of North Miami Beach, a milestone that celebrates the City's rich history, growth, and the contributions of those who helped shape the community; and

WHEREAS, the "Meet at the Bridge" event at Arch Creek Memorial Park serves as a meaningful opportunity to honor the history of the area, recognize the significance of this natural landmark, and celebrate the pioneer spirit that continues to inspire the region.

NOW, THEREFORE, we, the Mayor and Commission of the ***City of North Miami Beach, Florida***, do hereby proclaim **Saturday, April 4, 2026, as**

PIONEER DAY

and recognize the **"Meet at the Bridge" Event** at Arch Creek Memorial Park as a community event that commemorates the historic and cultural legacy of the area.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and caused the Seal of the City of North Miami Beach to be affixed on this 26th day of March 2026.

Mayor Michael Joseph, Esq.

Vice Mayor Fortuna Smukler

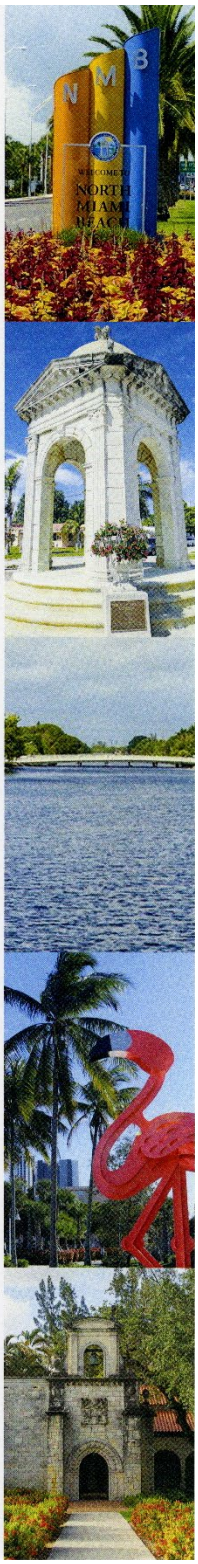
Commissioner Jay Chernoff

Commissioner Phyllis Smith

Commissioner McKenzie Fleurimond

Commissioner Lynn Su

Commissioner Daniela Jean



Arch Creek Park April-May Events

Remember Arch Creek Park is located at 1855 N.E. 135th Street, North Miami, Fla. 33171

For a full list of programs clicks here Arch Creek Park & Preserve Programs

Register online at www.miamidadeparks.com

For more information, please call 305- 944-6111

Volunteers Needed to Save Arch Creek Hammock

The Arch Creek Trust is calling on volunteers to help out park staff on community workdays to remove the invasive air potato vine and other invasive plants now spreading through the Arch Creek hardwood hammock.

The Park staff needs volunteers to register the hands-on plant "invasive collectors" and help oversee and guide them during the removal actions. Collectors may include students, adults as well as boy scout and girl scout volunteers.

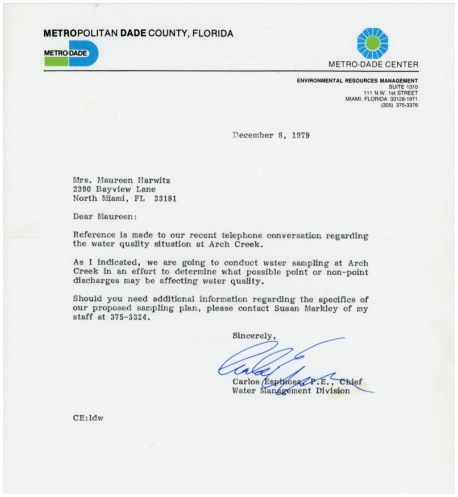
The workdays will be on the **third Saturday of each month**, starting at 9:15 am- 12:30 pm.

For example, the air potato vine (*Dioscuri bulbifera*) is a highly aggressive exotic plant that grows with frightening speed, climbing trees, blanketing native shrubs and blocking sunlight from the forest floor. It reproduces rapidly by dropping "air potatoes" or bulbuls, which sprout new vines wherever they land. Without removal of invading exotics, whole sections of the hammock will be smothered.

No prior experience is required- training will be provided by Park staff on how to identify and safely remove air potato vines and other invasives without disturbing native plants. All needed equipment will be supplied. Please call Arch Creek Park at (305) 944-6111 to volunteer or respond by email to: aimee.scott@miamidade.gov

I Found it in the Archives

Letter from Carlos Espinosa, Dade Water Management Division, to Mrs. Maureen Harwitz, Miami, Florida, December 8, 1979



METROPOLITAN DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA
METRO-DADE
METRO-DADE CENTER
ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
SUITE 1310
111 N.W. 1st STREET
MIAMI, FLORIDA 33128-1971
(305) 375-3376

December 8, 1979

Mrs. Maureen Harwitz
2390 Bayview Lane
North Miami, FL 33181

Dear Maureen:

Reference is made to our recent telephone conversation regarding the water quality situation at Arch Creek.

As I indicated, we are going to conduct water sampling at Arch Creek in an effort to determine what possible point or non-point discharges may be affecting water quality.

Should you need additional information regarding the specifics of our proposed sampling plan, please contact Susan Markley of my staff at 375-3324.

Sincerely,

Carlos Espinosa, P.E., Chief
Water Management Division

CE:ldw

Arch Creek, once a vital and resource-rich waterway supporting Native Americans and early settlers, has undergone significant environmental change over time. Altered by 19th-century development and later threatened by mid-20th-century flood-control projects, it was ultimately protected through local advocacy. Despite its historical importance and ecological value, Arch Creek is now one of South Florida's most polluted waterways—a concern documented as early as 1979 and one that still calls for active community involvement today.

Arch Creek Trust Membership

Annual membership	$10.00
Organization membership	$50.00
Lifetime membership	$250.00

Donations are tax deductible
Renew membership
https://www.archcreektrust.org/
For more information, please scan QR codes

Trust website

FIU Digital Collection