

The Growth of Greatness

Every now and then magic happens... this year was our turn. Our little club found its wings and soared amongst the phlock!

Parrots are known for long direct flights and thus, our 8 year journey is well deserved. On the ground they (parrots) walk with a rolling gait and that describes the fun free spirited time we have shared as part of this great organization. As our club founded we were scorned away by our neighboring phlock's. As with any species in the animal kingdom the dominate leader fights to protect its standing. We were told you will not succeed, "many have tried and you will fail as they have"... It is with great determination that one flies and I'm glad to report our phlock's are now happily flying the region together!

This past year some older phlock members flew off and we experienced a resurgence of new phledglings. This new blood strengthened us and we began to grow in numbers and ambition. Fresh idea's combined with tried and true methods equal happy members and a successful club!

Thus, the many projects, events and socials this past year have brought us even closer. Old and new are now coexisting and soaring to heights we have not previously reached. We are extremely proud to be part of PHIP, Inc and feel our journey has just begun.

For the past 7 years we have helped provide smiles for 50 kids on Christmas morning through our annual giving tree program. We decorate, distribute and purchase gifts and then deliver them to our local agency. Parents must be screened to qualify and participate in the program. One dad's story explains best why we do this. He came in last minute and needed a gift for his daughter, he was in tears and said it is not the gift she receives that matters, but the fact he doesn't want to break her spirit if Santa Claus doesn't arrive on Christmas morning.

On Christmas morning our phlock meets at our local hospital and organizes 500+ teddy bears that we distribute to local nursing homes and hospital patients. One resident has 8 bears lined up on her dresser and for many we are their only visitor on Christmas Day. Residents / Recipients smile from ear to ear when they see us coming... the simple things in life are the greatest gifts. Thus, 2011 will be our 9th year for this project. It is a club favorite and exemplifies the true meaning of the holidays. We feel privileged to share our holiday and afterwards we spend time celebrating together as a club.

February brought on a new challenge amongst the phlock...during a drink at Meeting of the Minds, two dominate birds within a regional phlock decided to challenge each other by jumping into frigid water in below zero weather. It was a fund raiser for a local children's charity and at the time while sipping cocktails in tropical Key West all seemed like a good idea. Standing on the edge of ice just moments before jumping in, it didn't seem like the good idea we had just months before. We raised over \$2000 and the southern phlock took home title of "most money raised" by just feathers. Following our frigid jump we held a tail gate on the lake event for our local winter festival providing warmth with bonfire's and cinnamon whiskey to spectators of the winter fire works! We then held a tropical dance complete with Caribbean attire, sand on the floor and margarita's at our local pub. Free will admission provided

enough money for our local food pantry to be able to purchase over a 1000 lbs of hamburger. See Parrot Heads are angels in tropical shirts even if they are covered with frozen ice! Fundraising efforts for this event were spearheaded by new members.

As part of our spring agenda we gather our excess belongings and treasures we can live with-out. Cleaning our nests to host an annual rummage sale and pancake feed enables us to raise enough money to purchase our Christmas bears. It was at this event we discovered that Mary Kay has "Party with a Purpose" on all their bags! Do we have that phrase coined? Three new members helped with this project.

Since 2004 we have cleaned 2 ½ miles of ditch through a state adopt a highway program. Having our name posted on both ends is great exposure for us. We do this 3 times per summer and plan to continue our contract.

RV loaded, coolers packed, windows dressed, Buffett shirt on... Our annual summer flight to see Jimmy Buffett provided the opportunity for birds of a feather to phlock together. This quality time spent together with fellow club members granted us the chance to get to know each other on a deeper level. We had several "Virgins" along and we initiated them well (that first flight out of the nest and they're ready to fly). A regional gathering in the parking lot with live music to boot broadened the phlock's knowledge through networking and idea sharing and oh maybe a little fun was had too. Big plans made for future event!

Cooking chili and salsa in our annual summer festival is tradition and provides great exposure and opportunity to showcase the Parrot Head nation. We proudly display our true colors and the media attention draws new interest to our club. Visibility in your community helps with fundraising efforts throughout the year. This is a time we really strut our feathers!

When people are in need Parrot Heads react. A headline in our newspaper announced the local food bank was in desperate need of donations. Over 900 families had visited in June and shelves were empty. 9 days later we had a benefit arranged complete with Trop Rock music and Caribbean flare. We are proud to have raised \$2461.00 which was matched by a state grant providing even more meals to those in need. Our club received huge attention and media coverage for this event. We even received a letter of appreciation from the County Administrator thanking us for all we do. Two new members helped with this event.

We are busy putting the final feather in our cap with our biggest event of the year. Who doesn't like music, tropical drinks and steel drums? Add water and you have a perfect day. Habitat for Humanity is the recipient of this event for the 6th year. Last year we were able to donate \$2500 and hope to double that this year! Fun in the sun while we fly around the lake, it hardly seems like work.

By the time you read this we will all be at the 20th Anniversary of Meeting of the Minds... what an accomplishment! We are sending 6 members to Key West this year of which 4 are new to MOTM (do they even know what they are getting into?). As we continue to grow as an organization and a club, our plumage brightens each step of the way. Peacocks have nothing on us Parrot Heads!

Knowing the Golden Coconut is the perfect seed to feed our phlock on its growth to greatness, we are extremely proud of our small club and thank you for your consideration.

See you in the Keys!