



May 16, 2022

Florida Division of Cultural Affairs
R.A. Gray Building
500 S. Bronough Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0250

Dear Sir/Madam:

It is my pleasure to submit this letter in support of the Manatee Observation and Education Center (MOEC), endorsing its grant application to the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs for general operating support for 2023-2024.

MOEC is a fixture in our community as St. Lucie County's first non-profit, environmental learning center – teaching, guiding and inspiring stewardship of the Indian River Lagoon and its fragile inhabitants, including the Florida manatee. With the visionary partnership of the Florida Inland Navigational District (FIND), Main Street Fort Pierce, City of Fort Pierce, Fort Pierce Utilities Authority, Indian River State College and local business and community donors, MOEC became a cultural community gathering place and a catalyst for ecological education. Today, MOEC continues as an anchor in the economic revitalization of Fort Pierce, contributing to the local economy through cultural eco-tourism and attracting visitors from all of the world.

Funding from the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs will enhance MOEC's proven ability to engage our community in environmental education. MOEC has shown their dedication to environmental education, and stayed active even during the most challenging of times, with innovative online programming such as the Daily Manatee and Manatee Weekly, which were celebrated and shared widely for their fun and informative content during social distancing. MOEC has also supported the Fort Pierce efforts to beautify and improve the downtown area by partnering with Main Street Fort Pierce in a community-wide art display along Moore's Creek, adopting A.E. Backus Avenue and hosting monthly cleanups. In partnership with Sea and Shoreline and the Treasure Coast Manatee Foundation, MOEC has also fundraised and spearheaded an install of nearly one and a half acres of seagrass restoration to be planted in Moore's Creek and the Indian River Lagoon. The seagrass installation will improve the water quality of the lagoon and ensure a healthy habitat for all of its inhabitants. Best of all, MOEC remains accessible to all who enjoy historic downtown Fort Pierce and its waterfront.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to express support for, and the desire to promote this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Linda Hudson
Mayor