



Spring Lake BREEZE

Florida... the way it should be!

Happy 55th Anniversary
Spring Lake



1971 to
2026

September 22, 2026 marked the 55th Anniversary of the creation of Spring Lake. This edition of The Breeze contains articles that appeared in the 50th Anniversary booklet, which can be viewed in its entirety on the District web site.

Updates

- Landowners Meeting November 10, 6:00 p.m., community center. State of the District presentation will be made, and a landowner position on the Board of Supervisors will be elected. Proxies are available at the District Office.
- Mosquito spraying has begun. By State rules, this is a complaint driven program, so request spraying if mosquitoes are in your area.
- You can now fill your pool at discounted water rates, but you must call the District office prior to using the water.
- No increase in water rates and fees for fiscal year 2027, assessment has slight increase to \$347 per year.
- Stay up to date by visiting the website regularly at www.springlakefl.com

Eco Park Anniversary

October marks the 10h anniversary of the Storm Water Treatment area, known as the ECO Park. In celebration of this popular amenity an informal event will take place on **FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23, FROM 5:30 UNTIL SUNSET**. Food and drinks will be available, so come and watch the sunset and walk the storybook trail.



Employee Safety

Preferred Government Insurance Trust recently presented Spring Lake with a check for \$1,973 in recognition of the District's employee safety program.



How It All Began

In 1971, the Spring Lake Improvement District (SLID) was created by a special act of the State Legislature. Throughout Florida, special districts were established to promote development. As a unit of government, SLID acts like a municipality, except in the matters of land use, zoning, development codes, and police or fire protection; all services are provided by Highlands County. Westinghouse Electric took the leadership role in the development of Spring Lake. After a long, involved process with the State of Florida, approval was given to allow two subsidiaries to oversee construction. Florida National Properties were owners of the land and Coral Ridge Properties handled the development and sales in Spring Lake.



Without some sort of drainage system, the land of Spring Lake would be mostly uninhabitable. The area was originally designed to have gravity flow drainage through water control structures that spread from west to east at the pump station. The system drains more than 3000 acres through seventeen miles of canal networks. Westinghouse began the project after permits were issued by The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD). A pump station was built, a water plant and infrastructure were completed, and roads, fire hydrants, and streetlights were installed. Coral Ridge Properties began building homes and sales were brisk. A Community Center was built, several parks were opened and a District Office began to coordinate services. By the mid 1980s, growth did

not meet Westinghouse's expectations and they began to sell their property. SFWMD allowed them to sell the property and leave Spring Lake without completing the reclamation plan. Numerous canals, ponds and lakes were incomplete and the expense and work to complete the project was left to the next generation of residents.

By 1985, leadership of the District was in the hands of Coral Ridge Properties, who used a management company to oversee programs and services. As a subsidiary of Westinghouse, Coral Ridge was not interested in pressuring them to spend millions to complete the reclamation plan. State statutes provided that three supervisors form the board and the original supervisors appointed earlier by Westinghouse remained in office for many years. When the management company began to oversee the District, all the groups associated with Westinghouse exited Spring Lake as fast as they could!

In the late 1980s and through the 90s, several Charter changes and litigations took place and in 1998, two seats were added to the Board of Supervisors because of increased population. The make-up of the Board remains the same to this day; three positions are Landowner Supervisors, and two are elected by popular vote. There have been 31 different individuals who have served as District Supervisors since the first Board in 1971.

In early 2006, the Board decided they no longer wanted a management company overseeing the District and employed a full-time on-site District Manager. Joe DeCerbo, a resident and former board member was chosen. He felt he could utilize his skills to organize the District and implement needed systems and procedures in a few years. As more needs arose, that two year projection has expanded and Joe continues today in his role as District Manager.

Over the past 18 years, the District has focused on numerous projects that were a result of the management company postponing action and Westinghouse leaving the property without completing the reclamation of the area. Major items that needed attention were levee certification; water control plan; retention and storage areas for storm water; water quality; upgrading the pump station; construction of a new sewer plant; acquiring a second water plant; securing grants, appropriations, and loans; and maintaining a high level of services and programs from our Field and Utility Departments.

The next 50 years will see many changes to our community with more people, businesses, and development. The foundation has been laid for a bright future for Spring Lake.

The First Lady of Spring Lake



Those who live on or have traveled Duane Palmer Boulevard; perhaps wonder where the name came from. This boulevard was named after Duane Palmer, husband of the lady who is pictured. Unfortunately, the District does not have a picture of Mr. Palmer. The land Spring Lake is built on was a part of the Palmer Ranch, which was a working ranch.

The Palmers sold their farm near Wampsville, New York and in 1935 moved into the vicinity of Orlando on 20 acres of a small lake at a cost of \$200. In 1941 the Palmers decided to move south because their fruit trees froze and sold the land for \$3,000. The Palmers purchased land, built a ranch home with cypress from the land and begun raising cattle. The 275 acres is located on the south side of Rt. 98, at the curve across from the old golf course driving range. This ranch home still exists

on the property. Today, that property is owned by Fr. Robert Graves, whose family purchased it from the Palmer family.

The Palmers also owned most of the land north of Rt. 98, all the way to the airport. In the early 1970's the Westinghouse Corporation purchased the land that is now called Spring Lake. They received a Charter from the State Legislature to create the Spring Lake Improvement District and the rest is history!!

Historical Documents Preserved



No one knew more than Lollie Norris about the history and development of Spring Lake. When she first arrived in Spring Lake in the 1970's, Lollie personified the real estate broker of that time. Lollie was the Queen Bee!!!

Lollie kept everything that was ever written about Spring Lake from in the newspapers, pamphlets developed by builders, legal notices, pictures, newsletters, and community papers. Some of the maps on her walls were so old, the only homes shown were the ones in Village I.

Lollie, seen here in a 1975 picture, passed away in 2010. All of her collections have been preserved by the Spring Lake Improvement District Office. Many items are on the website, some are in this commemorative booklet. Some maps and photos are on the walls in the office.

We sincerely thank Lollie for preserving our history, and for her family in trusting us to preserve her legacy.

Spring Lake Heritage

Mr. Duane Palmer came to Spring Lake from the north in 1941 and bought most of his property from the Davis family and several other local families. Mr. Palmer owned most of the land north of Rt. 98, and sold it to Westinghouse when they wanted to build the community of Spring Lake in the 70's. Mr. Palmer kept Pine Ranch, which is the land directly across Rt. 98, at the curve, across from the old driving range; the Graves family now owns that land. Duane Palmer Blvd. is named after Mr. Palmer.

On a past visit to the District Office, Barry Smith, the daughter of Duane Palmer shared a lot of history with staff. As a young girl she remembered coming to Spring Lake when there was nothing but dirt roads along Rt. 98. Ranching, hunting, and riding horses took up most of her days, and the vacant land stretched from the Lake all the way up to the Airport. Ms. Smith passed away in 2016 at the age of 95.





Spring Lake Churches

Spring Lake Presbyterian Church

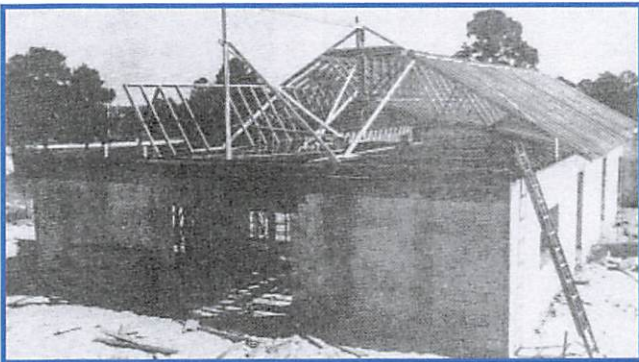
On October 3, 1976 about 150 people gathered at the Spring Lake Shopping Center to formally organize the Spring Lake Presbyterian Church. For Mary Yontek, whose husband had recently died, it was an anticipated moment. She needed a project to fill her mind and heart and the new community needed a church. The Rev. Barbara Yontek, Mary's daughter, had contacted St. John's Presbytery and Jack Ryan, sales manager of Coral Ridge Properties, developers of Spring Lake, to suggest the community's need for a church.

Teenager Donna Greenhalgh was first in line to put her name to the document that petitioned the Presbytery to form the congregation as a church of the United Presbyterian Church, USA. Forty-nine other people followed, putting their names to the list of charter members.

Before this evening there had been fifteen months of investigating, searching, and meetings led by representatives of the Presbytery. Their mission was to determine if there was sufficient interest in the community to form a church. Dr. Harry Bryan was the first of these emissaries from Orlando.



The congregation of the Spring Lake Presbyterian Church enjoyed fellowship in the courtyard of the shopping plaza before worship service each Sunday. Shown here (l-r) Donna Greenhaigh, Joyce Shanklin, Ruth Storath, Mary Yontek, Helen & Bob Hart and Ann Hargett. Jan, 1977



Easter, March, 1978

Realizing the zeal among residents, Bryan began worship services in rented quarters at the shopping center. The first was held on December 7, 1975. Neighboring congregations in Sebring, and as far away as Alabama, supplied resources for worship. The search for a permanent pastor ended when the Rev. Paul Stauning, a pastor in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania accepted the call. He was installed as pastor on October 2, 1977. With funds given by the Presbytery and raised by the congregation, the present buildings were dedicated on November 26, 1978.



Spring Lake United Methodist Church



On October 12, 1981, the groundbreaking for the Spring Lake United Methodist Church was announced. The story describes how Lillian Palmer told people at the ground consecration how she and her late husband, Duane Palmer, came to Spring Lake in 1941 from New York. They farmed over 1,000 acres, which eventually became our Spring Lake community. The Rev. Perry James held the official groundbreaking ceremonies and Lakeland District Superintendent Dr. Jimmy Jones led a host of dignitaries from the area. Jones officially constituted

the church on Easter Sunday of 1981 after it was organized by a Planning Committee, which, the article stated, included Mr. and Mrs. Reed McLean Jr., Dr. Odell Miley, Freda Hawkins, among others.

Foster Alter was the administrative Board chairman, Jim Zimmerman headed the building committee, and Clayton Hall served as finance chairman.

The congregation raised the money to construct a chapel with a multipurpose room on acres bought in 1979.

In another article dated February 10, 1982, the newspaper noted the church had experienced a steady growth

in interest and cooperation of members and friends. A Bible study group was meeting with Clayton Hall as one of the teachers. Mrs. John Gill as president was leading

an active Women's group. Howard Pike was president of the men's organization.



Rev. Perry James with Mrs. Lillian Palmer at the site of the new Methodist church



The new Spring Lake Methodist Church

Spring Lake Baptist Church

Located at the intersection of Rt. 98 and Spring Lake Blvd., the Spring Lake Baptist Church has a unique origin. In November of 1978 Pastor Arthur P. Mann and his wife arrived at Spring Lake after leaving an established church in Stevens Point, Michigan. Their objective, as directed by the Hiawatha Baptist Mission in Grand Rapids, was to establish a fundamental Baptist church in the Spring Lake area.

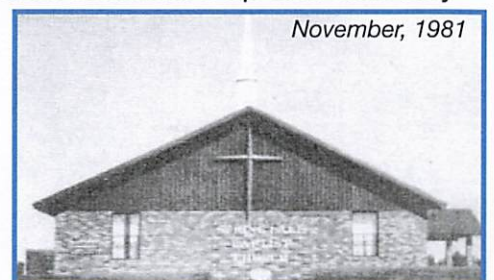


December, 1978

Upon arriving to Spring Lake Pastor Mann and his wife began holding services in their living room and soon had assembled a small but dedicated congregation. Soon the house was remodeled to accommodate a larger congregation, and as they grew a church building was inevitable.

Within two years of his arrival Pastor Mann and his group, now grown to 30, managed to purchase the land the church currently stands on. The land and building required no outside financial help and was fully supported by the congregation.

Groundbreaking began November 2, 1980 and interim services were held at the Community Club at Spring Lake while the new building was erected. The 3,000 square foot sanctuary, which has seating for 160, was constructed in less than 90 days by a team of five construction missionaries, their wives, and volunteer helpers from Michigan, Iowa, and Spring Lake. Services were held in the new church for the first time on March 8, 1981.



November, 1981

Shopping Plaza

Groundbreaking for the original plaza took place in July of 1973 and the dedication ceremonies were attended by County Commissioners, County Engineer, and other officials and dignitaries. The plaza was built by Coral Ridge Properties and was designed to have two phases. The first building was constructed at a cost of \$134,000 and the second building for slightly more. The grand opening for the first building was held on May 2, 1974. By 1977 the second building was completed and had 10 stores

The First Stores:

- Spring Lake Development Administrative Offices
- Annabelle's Boutique
- Kelevon Appliance Center
- Hair Gallery
- Sebrino's Italian Restaurant
- Hughes Spring Lake Market
- Smiley's Ceramics
- C&B Hardware
- Spring Lake Draperies

Original rent at the Shopping Plaza was \$127 per month for an average size space.



Coral Ridge-Westinghouse presents
Spring Lake Shopping Plaza



6101-03 US Hwy. 98, Spring Lake, Sebring, Florida

Come and join Hughes Spring Lake Market, Kelevon Appliances, and Sebrino's Spring Lake Restaurant in the new and beautiful community of SPRING LAKE.

Space available for as little as \$127 PER MONTH

TERMS ARRANGED TO MEET YOUR NEEDS

SPACE SUITABLE FOR

BEAUTY SHOP	BICYCLE REPAIR SHOP
BARBER SHOP	DRUG STORE
HARDWARE STORE	GIFT SHOP
GARDEN SHOP	CRAFTS SHOP

Realty Management Corp. R. L. Hofmann, Broker

For further information call (813) 385-2538

March 6, 1975

Spring Lake Shopping Plaza

Look what we have in store for you!

Benjamin Moore paints C&B HARDWARE 385-8403	HELENE CURTIS UNI-PERM <i>Hair Gallery, Inc.</i> 385-3520
Fine Italian & American Cuisine <i>Sebrino's</i> 385-2182	CERAMIC INSTRUCTION SMILEY'S CERAMICS.. 385-2971
Westinghouse Appliances KeLeVon APPLIANCE CENTER & BUILDERS SUPPLY 385-1744	Hughes' Spring Lake Market 385-2637

Spring Lake

on U.S. 98. Seven miles south of SEBRING.

October 16, 1975

Spring Lake Underwater!

In September of 2006 Tropical Storm Ernesto made a direct hit on Spring Lake and brought into focus the need for increased flood control. As a result of litigation against the District and the use of our pump station, it was clear that without a working pump station and more retention and storage, the future of Spring Lake was bleak. These pictures show the extent of the damage inflicted on our community, and why we had to focus our attention on developing a new and improved storm water management program.

Starting in 2007 the District worked closely with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Florida Legislature to secure grants, appropriations, and no-interest loans. While this was a time-consuming process, the fruits of our labor came to fruition beginning in 2014 and the development of our Storm Water Treatment Area, known today as the ECO Park. This was followed by additional funding for the pump station, a new sewer plant, the purchase of a second water plant, sewer lines along Rt. 98, and a focus on creating as much retention and storage as possible. Today, Spring Lake is the premier community for flood control and storm water management.



IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

115 Spring Lake Blvd.
Sebring, FL 33876
863.655.1715 phone
863.655.4430 fax

Save the Date to Participate!



"Under the Oaks"

2026

Spring Lake Fall Festival and

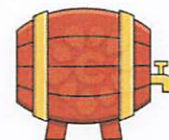


October 24, 2026

10:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.

Spring Lake Boulevard & U.S. Highway 98
Pine Breeze Park Community Center

***Vendors, Food Trucks, Music, Costume
Contests, Exhibits and Farm Market***



For the latest news and events...Visit SpringLakeFL.com