

New event venue in Turkey Creek

Clubhouse facility renovated

By RAY CARSON
Today Reporter

ALACHUA — On July 13th the Turkey Creek community celebrated the grand opening of the former golf clubhouse as a new events and reception venue. Featuring 6,000 square feet of event space, the renovated Events at Turkey Creek clubhouse is one of the largest event venues for rent in Alachua County. The rental space can be divided into four separate units for smaller events. What makes the event space more unique is its ownership. It is actually owned by all 1,100 residents of Turkey Creek as part of the Turkey Creek Master Owners Association (TCMOA) fees and is managed by the association. All revenues go back into the association to help cover community expenses.

The building originally served as the clubhouse for the golf course, but was managed by a

privately owned company. In April of 2011, the company withdrew their services and closed both the clubhouse and the golf course. For four years, the site was abandoned. Located in the middle of the Turkey Creek housing community, the large scenic golf course became overgrown and the clubhouse sat empty. In December of 2015, the TCMOA offered to buy 152 acres, which included the course, clubhouse, two parking lots and a swimming pool. After acquiring the land, the association renovated the clubhouse and turned it into a rental event space. “Basically, we kept the building layout as it was, but updated the interior to be more current and efficient” said association manager Sarah Beavers. She became a resident of Turkey Creek in 1999 and became the association manager

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Association hoping to lease golf course as a commercial venture

in 2007. Beavers had a strong background in event planning and running rental venues, including work at the University of Florida Foundation. When it was decided to turn the clubhouse into an event venue, Beavers was selected to run it.

After the renovation, the Events at Turkey Creek building opened in April 2017. Beavers and her events coordinator Michelle Smith oversee operation of the venues. The building offers several choices for events depending on the type and size of the event. For bigger events, such as weddings or reunions, the entire space can be rented as the Grand Ballroom. This includes 50 tables, 400 chairs, dance floor, bar and prep kitchen. Since big events often take hours of preparation, the client has the space from 8 a.m. until midnight for a fee of \$2,000. The Grand Ballroom can seat up to 600 people with no dance floor and 400 with the dance floor.

For smaller events, the space can be divided by movable walls into three separate areas. Clients can rent two of the three for \$1,400. Individual sections can be rented for 4 or 8

hours, at \$600 and \$900, based on the time. Each of the two rooms offers different features to match the client's needs. Section A offers access to the prep kitchen and bar for parties serving food and beverage. This section also offers access to the terrace overlooking the golf course and lake. Section B is the middle space and offers access to the dance floor, which can also be used as a table space for clients who are bringing their own food or refreshments. The third room is the seminar room for lectures and business meetings. At \$300 for 4 hours, it includes 100 chairs, two six foot tables and a lectern.

The size of the building offers a variety of room options for clients to choose from. The location itself is another feature. The event space overlooks the golf course and a lake. “I think that one of our unique features is the beauty of the scenery. It offers some great locations for wedding and family photographs” said Michelle Smith. The approach to the building drives under large oaks with another lake to the right. The terrace overlooks a section of the golf course. Although

the TCMOA owns the golf course and does general maintenance and upkeep, they are presently looking for someone to lease the course as a commercial entity, since the association does not have the funds to run a golf course.

The Events at Turkey Creek staff offers advice and recommendations for other services such as caterers, entertainment, photography and bartenders. However, they are not associated with any particular service and the client is free to bring their own caterer or supply food themselves. The only stipulation is that any bartender has to be licensed for liability purposes.

The Events at Turkey Creek reception center is an example of a community re purposing an area for the betterment of the residents. An empty clubhouse and overgrown golf course were an eyesore and waste of space, so the residents of the community decided to purchase the land and turn the building into a working business to benefit the community itself.

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