

The DeLand Tree Wrap Project

Thanks to Mary McBride and her “Masked Tree Wrappers“, and with the help of the City Facilities Department, new yarn art wraps have been installed on 13 palm trees on the south end of town. That brought the total number of palm trees wrapped up to 20. Currently, the total on display is 17 (see explanation at the end of this article).



Earl Brown Park



South Woodland Boulevard



The original wrap, at S. Florida Ave and W. Wisconsin Ave, was retired in 2022.

The DeLand Tree Wrap Project began in 2017, when John Wilton and Ray Johnson spotted a palm tree trunk wrapped in yarn at the intersection of south Florida Avenue and west Wisconsin Avenue. It had been created and installed by the owners of Fabrications, a Fiber and Fabric Arts Shop located at that intersection. They immediately stopped the car, went inside and contracted with Nancy Gear and Julie Scheurich for as many wraps as they could produce. Wilton and Johnson then successfully pitched the project to the Public Art Committee at the

Museum of Art-DeLand. At that point, the committee solicited and received a small amount of funding from the downtown CRA.

Fabrications produced six more wraps before the business closed at the end of 2019. Those wraps were installed through the generosity of Tree Work Now, Ken Goldberg Construction, Freedom Electric and the City of DeLand's Facilities Department. In late 2020, coordinated by Kieu Moses, Events Manager for the City of DeLand, ACED DeLand revived the project, resulting in the 13 new wraps created by The Masked Wrappers. ACED, the Arts Culture and Entertainment District of DeLand, was founded as a stand-alone, non-profit organization to promote the rich creative offerings of the downtown DeLand area as defined by four border roads: Plymouth to the North, Amelia to the East, Beresford to the South, and Boundary to the West. The ACED website address is ArtsDistrictDeLand.com.



W. Georgia Ave and S. Woodland Blvd



N. Woodland Blvd and E. Church St.

The Story of the Masked Tree Wrappers:

At a Museum of Art - DeLand Public Art Committee meeting, when John Wilton announced that the Fabrications group would not be creating any more tree wraps, committee member Mary McBride volunteered to take on the task, as she had secretly yearned to do tree bombing for many years, and she belonged to two fiber art groups. "How hard could it be?", she thought, "And what fun!"

That was a month before COVID-19 made itself known in our area and all future fiber art meetings were cancelled. After weeks of investigating and finding out that all materials had to be acrylic or polyester yarn, and that no one was interested in leaving their homes at the time, McBride began visiting thrift shops when they opened again and picked up the beloved but discarded afghans crocheted or knitted by devoted grandmas and mothers. Every shop had them and she built up a large collection in assorted colors, patterns and sizes, but never taking the well-made or beautiful ones and always spending less than \$4 a piece.

She phoned her friends from the Barberville Pioneer Settlement Fiber Arts Guild and convinced two to meet with her in Sunflower Park, where there were picnic tables well-spaced apart and there was a roof to keep out the intermittent rains. No one else was there and they spent over two hours learning which threads to cut so that the blankets did not unravel as they were resized. The three women divided the pile and took their stash home to deconstruct and remake panels. They moved on to the Pioneer Settlement for their next meeting and laid out the panels. A third friend from ArtsEtc joined from Edgewater. A retired teacher of young children, she found the group floundering and helped make decisions regarding what should be put together to make the wraps, which would end up 12-24 inches wide and 19-30 feet long. The ballroom floor was the perfect place to lay out the wraps. The next two meetings were in Edgewater, where there were sewing machines and lunch. They were almost finished, but two members were now ill and everyone stepped back from production. Mary's mind continued to spin with ideas, which she sketched out and then hunted down more thrift shop materials. Keeping friends up-to-date, Mary brought in two retired teachers who were also stitchers and they met in Barberville. They took Mary's raw ideas and brought them to life with enthusiasm. It helped that there were at least six sewing machines in the room and the hallways were longer than 38 feet! They had to remove pieces that turned out to be cotton or wool and replace them with acrylic patches. Then they added personality to the wraps with fish, heads, hands, feet, a sea monster, a large butterfly and a mermaid. The panels were measured, photographed and rolled up to wait till the weather and the City bucket truck were ready for their works.

The Masked Tree Wrappers include Mary McBride of DeLand, whose enthusiasm dragged in friends Pamela Kettner (Lake Helen), Dale Samler (DeLand), Peggy Imbert (Edgewater), Anne Sweeny (DeLeon Springs) and Gale Harbeck (Geneva).



Works in Progress

CURRENT LOCATIONS:

Corner of north Woodland Boulevard and east Church Street (3)

Parking Lot at south Woodland Blvd and west Georgia Avenue (2)

East side of south Woodland Boulevard across from west Georgia Avenue (3)

East end of private parking lot in 100 block of east Georgia Avenue (1)

100 block of east Voorhis avenue (5)

Earl Brown Park, on western shore of the pond (3)

The original wrap, installed at the intersection of south Florida Avenue and west Wisconsin Avenue, has succumbed to the elements and is no longer on display.

Two wraps on the east end of the 100 block of east Voorhis Avenue were removed in early 2023 to make way for new construction.

