

Villagers’ Holiday House Tour a Huge Success for Historic Preservation

The Villagers have been hosting successful house tours since 1982, and this year hundreds of house tour fans came out to support the cause of historic preservation.

Events like the Holiday House Tour fund annual grants. In addition to their preservation grants and college scholarships for those studying preservation, The Villagers recently provided emergency post-Irma recovery support to seven historic properties in Miami-Dade County.

The 2017 tour included five homes located in Coral Gables and one in South Miami, built from the 20’s through today, featuring styles ranging from classic preservation, contemporary re-mix, and vintage-inspired new construction.

Guests were guided through the beautifully decorated rooms by members of The Villagers who explained the art, history and unique features of each. A popular addition to this year’s tour was a box lunch included with each ticket. The lunch was prepared by Chef Richard of St. Philip’s Episcopal Church and School which served as the site of the popular gift boutique, Attic Treasures vintage shop and Villagers’ quilt raffle. This year’s quilt, “Sea Watch,” featured colorful Art Deco life-guard towers of South Beach.

A special bonus was the opportunity to visit the home of St. Philip’s School Headmaster Dr. Gregory Blackburn and his wife Dr. Cathy Blackburn. Built in the mid-1930s, the home is an unusual Coral Gables example of Art Moderne with Mediterranean features



Villager Deena Bell-Llewellyn with homeowner Sally Matson. [Photo courtesy of Karen Buchsbaum]



Villager Valerie Sutter with Emmy & Ron Vech. [Photo courtesy of Karen Buchsbaum]

and is in almost totally original condition. Guests entering the home were immediately impressed by the gorgeous, colorful Cuban tile stair steps.

Following a life-long dream, Sally and Duffie Matson have painstakingly restored and enhanced the home of Sally’s grandparents. After purchasing the home in 2014, they have successfully created a comfortable yet elegant home with touches of the past and lighthearted nods to local history and design. One of the many fascinating elements is the dramatic use as wall art of Duffie’s collection of wooden gear forms, used in grist mills during the 1800s.

Raul Rodriquez’s home is newer, built in 2000, but fits in perfectly with its North Gables surroundings. Beautiful proportions and cathedral ceilings enhance spaces, and along with a gourmet kitchen, flow seamlessly into a charming patio and backyard perfect for entertaining. Architect Luis Jauregui was on-hand to help explain unique features.

Another North Gables gem



Terry Buoniconti and her husband Chris Pedersen with Villager Ilaria Belloni. [Photo courtesy of Karen Buchsbaum]

was a stop at the residence of Herbert Brito. Built in 1927, Herbert completed an extensive renovation that not only totally modernized the home, but kept its sense of place and history. He even traced and used the original exterior paint color. Yet the interior of the home is a visual surprise, treating guests to bold, colorful art and decorated with important Mid-century Modern design pieces.

Homes toured included that of Villager-member Marlin

Ebbert whose love of history and attention to detail is evident in every feature and corner of the house. A visitor favorite was the beautiful 1930’s Everglades-themed fireplace screen that Marlin salvaged from her first Gables home and is now prominently on display in her living room.

Suzy Fernandez and Neli Arias turned a non-descript 1961 ranch into a charming contemporary home filed with whimsical elements and load-

ed with personality. A complete renovation of the home demonstrates how vision and style can turn even a conventional space into a showcase. The large completely open kitchen dominates the living space which opens up to the beautiful garden and grounds. The bold use of color, including red, in the interior, is offset by the tranquility of the garden retreat.

Villager President Loyda Lewis and board members worked with House Tour Chair Renee Betancourt and committee members Carolyn Reyes, Monica Fidel, Sweet Pea Ellman, Alexis Ehrenhaft, Marlin Ebbert, Sheila Revell, Ilaria Belloni Barro and Bonnie Hutton to make the event a success.

The next Villager event is the annual Garden Tour on Saturday, March 3, 2018.

The Villagers, Inc. is Florida’s oldest historic preservation organization. Learn more about upcoming events, past projects and membership opportunities at <http://thevillagersinc.org>.

Broward Performing Arts Foundation’s Annual Reception Salutes Benefactors



Robert Lochrie, Jack Loos. [Photos courtesy of Downtown Photo]



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