

2008 CITIZEN OF THE YEAR – MARY GAY CHAPLES

When you want to know what is happening in the town where better to look than a small maroon pick-up with Mary Gay at the wheel. With her long hair flowing or pulled back in her signature pony tail, she is on the road and into action with the residents in the Town. She is taking the pulse of the town and regularly lets her ad hoc investigative reporting be known to Town Council Members, the Town Administration or Law Enforcement. She is the preverbal eyes and ears of the Town. A council member once coined that she is a "reconnaissance ant"; always on the move and looking into everything.

Mary Gay is a tireless volunteer who attends every Town Council meeting where she is well versed on the issues and willing to share with the Council members.

In addition to being the eyes and ears of the town, she is the proprietor of The Chaples Farm; a working agricultural concern and wildlife habitat. Her family was one of the first to settle in the west county area when dirt roads along levees and irrigation ditches were the only way to navigate this area. She has witnessed the paving and ultimate urban sprawl that came after Interstates were built and has used her pioneering spirit to benefit the Town working to "preserve our rural lifestyle."

She serves as the Chair of the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Advisory board which oversees 110 acres of public space in the Town. Each venue is

meticulously attended to by the board with Mary Gay at the helm. Her interest in preservation of local history from homes of historic significance to the local Indian burial grounds is on the parks agenda. Through her efforts the Town was able to acquire two homes of historical significance which were destined for destruction. They are now installed at the Southwest Meadows Sanctuary; a 23 acre open space adjacent to the Town's planned Public Safety Facility and Town Hall. Recently Mary Gay was recognized for her efforts to preserve the town's history by the Broward County Historical Commission.

Chaples will be the first to say she does not want the glory, and is a behind the scenes type of person, but her enthusiasm for doing the right thing and getting into the middle of anything Southwest Ranches is her passion.

The Chaples farm is right down the road from Town Hall and Mary Gay makes her rounds to report in and check the status of her commitments with Town Staff and Administration regularly.

As a Tree City USA, Southwest Ranches was concerned about abuse of its prized tree canopy. Chaples teamed with local landscape architects and Council Members to enforce the Town's Tree Ordinance. She has also planned a competition to beautify a roadway expansion, organizing local nursery owners and growers to volunteer their services.

Mary Gay has taken on a new obligation this year as a volunteer in the COPS (Citizens on Patrol) for our Sheriff's Department. In this regard she has dedicated herself to the Town's vulnerable population making sure everyone is

registered and will be accounted for in the event of a natural disaster. This woman is tireless; a wife, matriarch to an extended family, caretaker to her mother of 100 years, and she still makes time for helping others.

In a Town of old timers and new settlers, striving to maintain its rural lifestyle, the Town of Southwest Ranches is more colorful with her presence. **A true original, who is committed to her fellow ranchers which is why Mary Gay Chaples is deserving of the Florida League of Cities Citizen of the Year Award.**

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**RE: Citizen of the Year Nominee— Mary Gay Chaples
Town of Southwest Ranches**

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my pleasure to write to you in support of Mary Gay Chaples, the Town of Southwest Ranches nominee for Florida League of Cities Citizen of the Year.

As a resident of the Town of Southwest Ranches and an elected official representing Southwest Ranches, I am well aware of Mary Gay Chaples activities on behalf of the Town. Her commitment to the Town's motto of "Preserving our Rural Lifestyle" is paramount in her day to day activities. Through her volunteer efforts she is an active proponent of maintaining the community's heritage and historic sense and is well deserving of the award. Her endeavor to create an environmentally accurate Historic Settler Village for both preservation and educational purposes is commendable. This project combines the historical, cultural, architectural, and natural components of South Florida in an educational and recreational environment.

I have had the opportunity to observe Mrs. Chaples as Chair of the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Advisory Board. Her efforts to establish our parks, restore landmarks within our parks property and actively work with residents for our tree canopy preservation is commendable.

It is with great enthusiasm that I support her nomination for Citizen of the Year. I sincerely encourage your favorable consideration of this nominee.

Sincerely,


Jeff Nelson
Vice Mayor

Mayor, Mecca Fink · Vice Mayor, Jeff Nelson

Councilmember, Steve Breitzkreuz · Councilmember, Aster Knight · Councilmember, Don Maines · Town Administrator, Christopher J. Russo