

“At Your Service” Article – July 1st, 2005
By: Senator Ken Pruitt (R-Port St. Lucie)
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“A June to remember”

What an excellent month of June it was for the future of research and education in St. Lucie County. On the long path to becoming the ‘Research Coast’ for the State of Florida, St. Lucie County has just taken three giant strides.

On Thursday, June 9, the Florida Board of Governors approved the requests to establish the Treasure Coast Research, Education, and Development Authority. With board approval, the new authority can begin to develop, operate, manage, and finance different aspects of the 1,800 acre development and research park slated for Kings Highway.

Ideally, this new authority will bring together a number of entities already based in the area to form a research hub for the county. Anchored by the surrounding U.S. Department of Agriculture’s horticultural research lab and the UF/IFAS Indian River Research and Education Center, the park will be a vital addition to becoming the premiere research and education region in Florida.

A week later, on Friday, June 17, Governor Jeb Bush signed into law, a measure calling for the creation of the St. Lucie County Research and Education Authority (REA). Different from the newly created research park authority, the REA would be an independent special district created to promote and recruit research and education based opportunity to the area.

The county-wide authority will be a powerful stimulus for advancing research and education opportunities in our area, working in conjunction with the budding research park. The effort spearheaded by State Senator Ken Pruitt and sponsored by State Representative Gayle Harrell has yet to see final approval and it will now be presented to the voters of St. Lucie County by referendum in the 2006 general election.

Lastly, a unique partnership that will be a model for the entire state was announced on Wednesday, June 22. The St. Lucie County School Board, Florida Atlantic University, and Core Communities announced the plans for an innovative lab charter school to be constructed at Tradition in St. Lucie West. The K-8 school, which will house approximately 1,600 students, will be a catalyst for students to experience the many area research and educational opportunities the Treasure Coast has to offer.

There is no doubt that we are moving in the right direction. As a community, we are pulling together and the ‘Research Coast’ concept is slowly taking form as a reality. We may be years away from building a community that thrives on research and education. But it is events like these that lay the sturdy foundation to build upon.