



Everything New Orleans

## Woodlands Conservancy in Lower Coast Algiers competes for prize

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By

Woodlands Conservancy in Lower Coast Algiers is competing in the third annual CLASSY Awards. The winners, of 12 categories, will share more than \$150,000 in cash and prizes for their causes.



SUSAN POAG / THE TIMES-PICAYUNE United States Navy Seabees, based out of NAS JRB New Orleans in Belle Chasse help build a pavilion at Woodlands Conservancy, the former Woodlands Trail and Park, in Belle Chasse. The park is competing for a cash prize in the CLASSY awards.

Woodlands aims to preserve and develop habitat for wild animals and migratory birds. The project needs 100 Facebook "likes" by Tuesday to stay in the competition to win a cash prize and national exposure.

The CLASSY Awards recognize the top philanthropic achievements by charities, businesses, fundraisers and volunteers from across the United States.

Woodlands Conservancy manages 600 acres of forested wetlands, or 13 miles of nature trails and park, located within the

10,000 acres peninsula formed by Orleans and Plaquemines parishes.

Located just six miles from Gulf of Mexico water, this forest is likely to be the last remaining wetland between open water and the city of New Orleans within this century, according to the organization's website.

Millions of birds cross the Gulf each year, with 2.5 million stopping daily in Louisiana to feed and rest.

During the past year, Woodlands Conservancy restored 85 acres of forested wetlands to improve its nutritional value. Volunteers planted 4,360 native trees and seedlings and removed foreign plants that invaded the forest since Hurricane Katrina.

Non-native plants, such as the Chinese tallow, compete with native plants for resources, such as sunlight, space and nutrition. The foreign plants are not as nutritious as the native ones, so the birds are not fully nourished.

"It's like you are on a road trip, and you have a regular gas station to rest, refuel and eat at," Woodlands President Katie Brasted said. "If the birds don't have their regular gas station, they are not going to stop."

If Woodlands wins the prize, Brasted said, the money will be used to continue the work on the remaining 515 acres.

Besides restoration, the organization provides public opportunities for tourism and learning about the environmental issues that wetlands face, according to the website.

Winners will be announced at the CLASSY Awards Ceremony, a red-carpet event, in San Diego on Sept. 17.

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