Venice Urban Forest Celebrates Forestry Award!

Venice Area Beautification, Inc. (VABI) wins "**2020 Friends of Our Urban Forest Awards Program"** sponsored by the Florida Urban Forestry Council and The Florida Forest Service. VABI's Venice Urban Forest was awarded **"Outstanding Project"** in recognition of a public project that demonstrates tree preservation, tree planting, tree maintenance, or environmentally-sound planning or design.

The Florida Urban Forestry Council (FUFC) is a statewide, non-profit organization with a diverse membership of municipalities, arborists, utility foresters, community tree board members, tree advocates, volunteers, horticulturists, landscape professionals, and interested citizens who care about trees in their communities. The Friends of Our Urban Forest Awards program recognizes achievements of organizations and individuals in their efforts to manage, promote, educate, and advocate for urban forests in their communities.

The purpose of the Venice Urban Forest project is to grow hundreds and ultimately thousands of trees and understory plants to provide food and shelter to birds and animals. Cooling and much needed carbon sequestration, oxygen generation and storm water absorption are also essential benefits to the Venice Urban Forest. Only Florida native trees and shrubs are being planted so that the forest provides habitat specifically for migratory songbirds and native wildlife. Another benefit is the greenbelt provides a natural buffer that helps to filter polluted stormwater runoff before it flows into the waterway.

The nearly 2-mile stretch of land that was formerly used as a railroad line runs from East Venice Avenue to Center Road. More than 1,200 trees have been planted since April 2018 in addition to more than 36 different species of native plants. The ongoing effort is attracting diverse wildlife including a wide variety of birds. The last count of birds by the Audubon Society found more than 81 species including migratory songbirds.

For donations and volunteer opportunities, learn more about the nonprofit group at VeniceUrbanForest.com.