

## **Edison & Ford Winter Estates Receives Award**

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### **Edison & Ford Winter Estates receives National Trust for Historic Preservation award**

LEE COUNTY, FL- The National Trust for Historic Preservation has honored the Edison & Ford Winter Estates in Fort Myers with the Trustee Emeritus Award for Excellence in the Stewardship of Historic Sites. The project was one of 21 national award winners honored by the National Trust on Oct. 23 during its 2008 National Preservation Conference in Tulsa, OK.

Among the top 10 most visited historic homes in the U.S., the Edison & Ford Winter Estates hosts more than 225,000 visitors who travel to The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel in southwest Florida each year.

"Through its extraordinary leadership, The Edison & Ford Winter Estates has ushered in a new era of restoration excellence," says Richard Moe, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. "Combining conservation with program development, they have raised the standard for the stewardship of our cultural heritage."

More than a hundred years ago, Thomas Edison and Henry Ford, two of history's most inventive and influential geniuses, were good friends and next-door neighbors with adjacent winter homes. Today, the place they loved is a sprawling complex of buildings and gardens managed by the nonprofit Edison & Ford Winter Estates, Inc.

"The Edison and Ford Winter Estates play a major role in the rich history of our area," says Suya Davenport, executive director of the Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau. "Our visitors have an opportunity to experience these beautiful homes on the Caloosahatchee River and to have a glimpse of life as it was for these two famous friends."

Over the years, millions of visitors and Florida's rain and humidity compromised both estates. By 1993, they suffered from major water and termite damage. The organization spent \$10 million over three years in an effort that rescued the site from deterioration and reinvented it as a premier education center and community resource. The rehabilitation initially called for the emergency preservation of the historic wood buildings but expanded to include shoreline, seawall and landscape restoration. With guidance from a comprehensive master plan, nine buildings and almost 20 acres of lush tropical gardens were returned to their original 1929 appearance.

"Today the site's future looks as bright as its award-winning restoration," said Chris Pendleton, president and CEO of the Edison & Ford Winter Estates.

"Thanks to the care of many individuals and organizations that have celebrated, restored, preserved and protected the genius of Thomas Edison and Henry Ford, who created and originally developed the adjacent tropical retreats known today as the Edison & Ford Winter Estates."

The Edison & Ford Winter Estates is open daily, year-round from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. For information on planning a visit, log onto [www.efwefla.org](http://www.efwefla.org) or call (239) 334-7419.

The National Preservation Awards are bestowed on distinguished individuals, nonprofit organizations, public agencies and corporations whose skill and determination have given new meaning to their communities through preservation of our architectural and cultural heritage. The winners of the National Preservation Awards will appear in the November/December of Preservation Magazine and online at [www.PreservationNation.org/magazine](http://www.PreservationNation.org/magazine).

For information on planning a visit to The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel, visit [www.FortMyersSanibel.com](http://www.FortMyersSanibel.com).

Editors' Note: The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel include: Sanibel Island, Captiva Island, Fort Myers Beach, Fort Myers, Bonita Springs, Estero, Cape Coral, Pine Island, Boca Grande & outer islands, North Fort Myers, Lehigh Acres. Images available upon request.

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