Tallassee Park Project Team launches new mobile and web application
Tallassee Park Guide's new app uses interactive and collaborative methods for learning

ATHENS, Ga. – On April 25, the Tallassee Park Guide, an iOS, Android and web application, went live. The Tallassee Park Project Team worked in conjunction with Oconee River Land Trust to create this app as a means for people to connect with Tallassee Park and better understand the park's importance. This app's primary target audience is middle school students, but it was designed in a way for anyone interested in nature to have usability and be able to immerse themselves in the app's various features. The features include, games like scavenger hunts and GPS location specific games depending on the destination you reached in the park, alongside curated information like a GPS pin map with pictures and information and various points of interest maps for indigenous settlement signs and moth, butterfly and plant species.

The initial product launch will only be for the Burney-Harris-Lyons Middle School students. The Tallassee Park Project Team wants to see if this app will generate interest in the students to go out in nature and learn in an interactive and collaborative way. Many middle school students are stifled being in a classroom all day, so this app is a means for them to branch out, be creative and learn through nature and technology. Since this app will use integrative strategy and technology, the Tallassee Park Project Team predicts that it will influence more students to enjoy the learning process and retain more from the experience as well.

"Working with the Oconee River Land Trust has been an amazing opportunity," said Jack Towery from the Tallassee Park Project Team. "Creating this app allowed us to bridge the gap that sometimes lies between education and fun. We hope it shows people how important parks like these are, and why they need to be protected by groups like the Oconee River Land Trust."

Currently, only the students and faculty of Burney-Harris-Lyons Middle School have access to this app. The general public will only have access to the app once the park is open to everyone. This is when the app will have a secondary launch, and will be found in iOS and Android app stores. Its success will then be measured through its usage and future developments per people's reviews.

"I've always liked science, but I hated learning about it just through PowerPoint slides. This app makes me excited to learn, and I hope that all my classes can find a way to incorporate interactive technology to make learning more fascinating," said Jane Doe, a seventh-grade student from Burney-Harris-Lyons Middle School.

With the kickoff of the app in its first phases, it will be some time before the Tallassee Park Project Team can determine its success and what developments to make for the future. For more information, please visit www.oconeeriverlandtrust.org.

FAQs

Q: How can I start using the Tallassee Park Guide mobile application?

A: The app is available for download on the App Store and Google Play. However, the park is currently not open to the public, so the app is password protected for only ORLT staff and other authorized parties (i.e. Burney-Harris-Lyons Middle School students and staff) to use. Once the park is open to the public later this year, the app will be accessible for all users and park goers.

Q: Is there any cost to the Tallassee Park app?

A: Tallassee Park is a community resource is free and open to the public of Athens. The same goes for our application. The app will never have any cost associated with it.

Q: Are there ads on the Tallassee Park app?

A: No. The Tallassee Park app is funded by SPLOST 2020 and the Athens Clarke County government. Features of the app are additionally target at middle school students, and targeted advertising and user data collection is not permitted with minors.

Q: Who is the Tallassee Park app targeted at?

A: The Tallassee Park app is aimed at the entire community of Athens, with a special focus on engaging middle school students. Anyone can use the app as a resource to engage with Tallassee Park, its scenery, and its history.

Q: What makes this technology so interactive since that was mentioned many times?

A: There are various features that make this app interactive for users. For example, there are games that are geo-location specific. This means, when you are walking around the park and you are on the app, notifications will pop up as you hit different locations that are programmed to register and will guide you to play a game based on that location. Games can include spotting a certain animal that usually is there and taking a picture of it, creating a TikTok video that will be submitted for a prize, etc. Other interactive features include curated information that comes from the public like pictures, videos or cool finds that can be added as points of interest or fun finds on the map.

Q: What languages does the app come in?

A: Right now, the app is only in English. This can be a problem to the diverse populations that come and visit our park. As more people join the team, it is foreseen to increase the number of languages the app comes in.

Q: What kind of maps will we be able to see with the app for when we are walking around the park?

A: We have various types of maps. The first one is a general one that just takes you around the trails. Other ones are point of interest maps for insect, animal, and plant spotting. We also wanted to curate information or things the public finds, so there is a map dedicated to fun finds from other people. These maps have pictures and information for users to follow and learn from.

Q: How can middle school teachers use this app for lessons?

A: The app features curated activities that teachers or even parents can use to coordinate and plan activities in Tallassee Park. Activity descriptions will include procedures/rules, materials, age group information, and location information. These activities will remain accessible to teachers even when outside of the park, so that activities can be planned before their trip to the park with their students.

Q: Is the app accessible in all areas of the park?

A: Yes. The app caches data and stores it on your mobile device for offline use. Not all areas of Tallassee Park have great signal for all users on all carriers, and our app accounts for that. Once the data is cached on your device, you will still be able to use your location and navigate to points of interest without a cellular data connection.

Q: Do I have to be in the park to use the app?

A: No, the app is accessible from anywhere, including games, activities, and information about the park. However, if you are not within the bounds of Tallassee Park, you cannot access directions to specific points of interest.

Q: Does the app have information about ADA accessibility in the park?

A: In addition to the signs posted in the park guiding ADA accessibility, the app will feature information about accessible parking and trails.

Q: Does the app make engaging with the park safer?

A: The app features maps and other navigation features that allow users to safely navigate trails within the park. The app also contains information about different species that may live within Tallassee Park if they pose any potential harm or danger to park goers. Remember to always call 911 if you find yourself in an emergency situation within the park.

Q: What does Tallassee Park and the Oconee River Land Trust do with my data?

A: The majority of user data remains on your local device and is not sent to our servers. The only personal data we store is your name if you choose to submit a point of interest that you find within the park, which you may also choose to make anonymous.