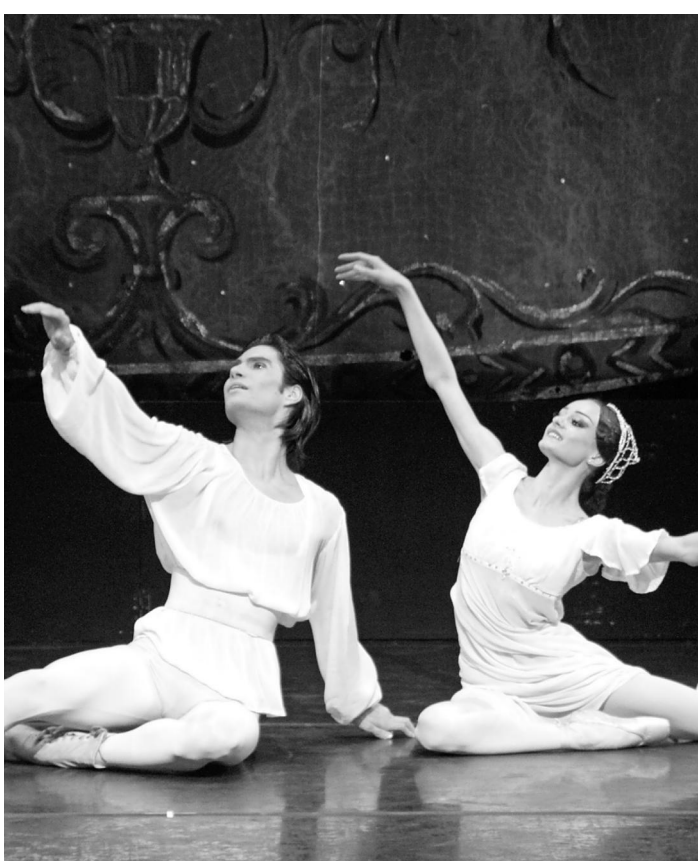


local news



Submitted photo

The Moscow Festival Ballet will perform "Romeo and Juliet" and "Carmen" Feb. 20-23 at The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center.

## Treat Your Sweetheart To 'Romeo and Juliet' And 'Carmen'

By KRISTEN FIORE  
Daily Sun Staff Writer

Ballet lovers or those looking for a belated Valentine's Day outing will soon have the opportunity to see two ballets in one night.

The Moscow Festival Ballet will perform both "Romeo and Juliet" and "Carmen" at 7 p.m. Feb. 20-23 at the Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center.

The Moscow Festival Ballet has toured all over the United States and Europe and is celebrated throughout both.

"We so enjoy what we do," said Alexander Daev, ballet master and director. "Being able to travel the world just makes it so much better, but we would dance anywhere, anytime because we love it so."

Daev said the Moscow Festival Ballet performs an abbreviated Tchaikovsky version of the two ballets.

"It has all the elements of the story but it goes quickly," Daev said. "The choreography is amazing, and audiences seem to love it wherever we go."

Most people are familiar with star-crossed lovers

Romeo and Juliet, but Daev said "Carmen" is a very different story.

"You'll see the conflict of love that could go three ways and how the decisions are difficult," Daev said. "Carmen" is sensual and fun. You'll see the classics of the bull fight and have fun watching the unique choreography."

Tickets range from \$20 to \$80 and can be purchased at thevillagesentertainment.com or at any Villages Box Office location.

Kristen Fiore is a staff writer with The Villages Daily Sun. She can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 5270, or kristen.fiore@thevillagesmedia.com.

## Sumter County Celebrates Black History Month

Local events bring African-American history to life through stories, performances and food.

By SARAH WILSON  
Daily Sun Senior Writer

From astronauts to activists, Sumter County is honoring Black History Month by bringing prominent African-American figures' stories to life between now and the end of February.

The Royal-based Young Performing Artists Inc. will host three events starting this week to honor the diversified accomplishments of African-Americans throughout history. And on Tuesday, the city of Wildwood will host a proclamation and reception honoring Black History Month.

"We're striving to remember the forefathers and mothers of African-American history and reflect on those who are more current and still making history today," said Beverly Steele, founder of YPA.

YPA's first event Friday will feature keynote speaker Grace Nelson, the wife of U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson, speaking at the Royal Community Center about black women astronauts.

On Feb. 22, YPA will present writer and author Ersula Knox Odom in-character as Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, the daughter of former slaves, founded Bethune-Cookman University in Daytona Beach.

Odom will bring Bethune to life at Ebenezer AME Church in Royal.

Steele said her nonprofit has hosted Black History Month events each February for a decade, each year offering a

### SPEAKER DETAILS

**Friday:** Keynote speaker Grace Nelson will present "Black Women Astronauts" at 2 p.m. at the Royal Community Center, 9569 County Road 235. The event is free, but space is limited. Call 352-748-0260 to make a reservation.

**Tuesday:** The city of Wildwood will host a reception and presentation commemorating Black History Month from 5:15 to 6 p.m. in Room 124 at Wildwood City Hall, 100 N. Main St., Wildwood. For information, call Erika Corley at 352-461-0134.

**Feb. 22:** Ersula Knox Odom will present an in-character performance of Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune as part of the Florida Humanities Council's African-American Series titled "Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune Comes To Life." This event will begin at 6 p.m. at Ebenezer AME Church, 390 E. County Road 462, Royal. Call 352-748-0260 to make a reservation.

**Feb. 24:** Young Performing Artists will host Sumter County's second annual Soul Food Fest from 5 to 9 p.m. at Wildwood Country Resort, 5604 Heritage Blvd., Wildwood. Tickets are \$30 and can be purchased online by searching "Soul Food Fest Wildwood" on eventbrite.com or by calling 352-748-0260.

different look at the impact African-Americans have made both throughout history and in modern times.

"That's one of the beauties of history — that you can look

at it in many different ways," Steele said.

YPA will cap off its Black History Month celebrations with its annual fundraiser, Soul Food Fest, on Feb. 24 at

Wildwood Country Resort.

The event will feature live music and a soul food-filled menu offering everything from collard greens to cornbread and cobbler.

Steele said the event gives the surrounding community an opportunity to experience and celebrate African-American culture with their neighbors.

Wildwood City Commission members, city staff and local residents will come together Tuesday at Wildwood City Hall for a presentation and reception to commemorate Black History Month.

Each of these events, Steele said, provides an opportunity for community members to explore African-American history more in-depth than they may have before.

"It sometimes takes a little special focus, or a little special event to highlight more of what's recorded in history," Steele said.

Sarah Wilson is a senior writer with The Villages Daily Sun. She can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 5401, or sarah.wilson@thevillagesmedia.com.

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