

**HILLSBOROUGH DELEGATION THANKS THE COMMUNITY  
FOR SHOWCASING HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY AT THE STATE CAPITOL**

**by  
Representative Ed Homan, Chair  
Hillsborough County Legislative Delegation**

During the annual legislative session, various communities, state universities, and others hold “their” day in Tallahassee, to show folks in the Capitol what they are all about. This year, April 14, was Hillsborough County’s “day” to let “that little light of mine shine”....and shine and shine it did!

The Hillsborough Legislative Delegation hosts the “Flavors of Hillsborough” festival, and it is designed to showcase Hillsborough County to all who attend. The event was preceded by the flight of Ivan, a eurasion eagle owl, from Lowry Park Zoo through both Senate and House Chambers. Both a startling and awesome event, it certainly set the stage for things to come on the Senate Portico during the noon hour.

I express the Delegation’s appreciation to those from the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors who made Hillsborough’s big day happen. Your Legislative Delegation is so very proud of the way Hillsborough County was represented in Tallahassee as I provide this dialogue as a “snapshot” of some of the things that make this such a great place to work, live and raise a family. We’ve truly got it all!

The City of Tampa proudly displayed many of the exciting things happening in our thriving largest metropolis as did Hillsborough County Government and several other public agencies including the Tampa Port Authority, the City-County Planning Commission, and our MPO. Hillsborough State Attorney Mark Ober went and caught a mess of mullet, smoked them, turned them into his “magical mullet spread” and personally served them up to all comers. The H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute was there to provide information about the amazing work that it does as it also serves to anchor the burgeoning I-4 corridor at its western terminus. Lowry Park Zoo, celebrating being named America’s number one children’s zoo this past year, was on the Portico with Ivan and several other critters including a porcupine, and the Florida Aquarium looked to entice folks to our community with a pair of baby ‘gators (no, not the kind from that “other” university!) and displays of the exciting things folks can learn and do there.

The agricultural community, with a \$1.9 billion economic impact to our county, turned out in force—folks attending were served gorgeous tomatoes, ranging from Ruskin Royals to Santa Sweets (grape) and ugly ripers, fresh strawberry milkshakes, hundreds and hundreds of blooming azaleas were given away by our nurserymen, all were introduced to interesting water pouches (developed here in Hillsborough) which are being utilized by the public schools throughout the state and are annually reducing millions of

tons in solid waste by eliminating the use of cartons. Among those represented were the Hillsborough County Farm Bureau, FL Strawberry Association, Santa Sweets, Inc., the Tampa Bay Wholesale Growers Association and the Florida Growers, Nurserymen, and Landscapers Association, M & B Products, and the Ruskin Heritage and Tomato Festival.

There were close to a thousand fresh omelets (the FL Poultry Federation makes its home here) cooked on-site with the help of some wonderful “chefs” from the Future Farmers of America chapter from Riverview High School. Because of the “omelet demand” and because they are team players, Jeffrey Huggins, USF Director of Government Relations and Legislative Advocacy, and Kristin Waskiewicz, Public Information Specialist from the School District’s Office of Public Affairs, aptly demonstrated the *esprit de corps* and joined the cooking line as well!

The entire spectrum of public education system was represented as the School District of Hillsborough County, Hillsborough Community College, and the University of South Florida were on site. Also participating were folks from the Florida State Fair and the District 7 office of the Florida Department of Transportation. In addition to the great FFA kids from Riverview High School, the crowd was “wowed” by some members of the school’s steel drum band as well, energizing the crowd with its island rhythms. Yes, we did see some “dancing in the streets”!

The Ybor Chamber, the long-time sponsor of “Ybor Day” in Tallahassee, has joined the fledgling “Flavors,” and pleased the crowd with cubanitos, guava pastries, and café con leche. The Ruskin Seafood Festival served fresh shrimp that should certainly bring folks to their next event in South County, and CC Productions, which makes events happen at at least two of our big tourism venues, was also there, showing off what it does to entice folks to celebrations and festivals throughout our community.

We also had three great banners with pictures from our community which were provided with the help of OAI, and each member of the Delegation was given a ceramic tile with the Senate or House seal, donated for the event by Walling Enterprises/Aspire Attire. I also presented one of the tiles to Speaker Allan Bense. The banners and other signage at the event showed the new “Flavors of Hillsborough” logo which was developed with the assistance of county employee Ruslana Panov. HTV was also on site and will have a mini documentary of the event available soon.

Hillsborough’s shining light was also supported by Tampa Electric, Verizon, Batson-Cook Construction, and the Tampa Bay Builder’s Association. Premier Limousines helped bring the Riverview High teens to Tallahassee and return them safely home.

Most of Hillsborough’s legislators were able to get away to greet the throngs on the Portico which included many of the legislators from other areas of the state as well as visitors and staff from around the Capitol Complex. Also among the attendees were Attorney General Charlie Crist, former Mayor and former Governor Bob Martinez, and former Speaker Lee Moffitt.

We thank all of the Hillsborough Delegation staff members who turned out to help showcase Hillsborough. Special thanks go to Charlie Anderson from Senate President Tom Lee’s office, and Janet Roder, my district assistant, who knocked themselves out, going the extra mile and then some, to insure that the Delegation hosted a successful, “happening” event. Also helping out with preparations and on event day were staffers Shannen Mohr and Clay Parker (Sen. Lee’s office), Brooke McKnight (Rep. Glorioso), Keisha Pitts (Rep. Joyner), Lynda Barrow (Rep. Homan), Deanna Franklin (Rep. Traviesa), and Rafaela Amador (Rep. Henriquez) who drove up from the Tampa district office to support the Hillsborough effort. One of the Speaker’s Legislative Fellows and Tampan Chris Smith was allowed time off from his duties in the House to take photographs of the event, many of which will soon be online at [www.hillsboroughcounty.org/legislativelegation](http://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/legislativelegation).

We also thank Candace Hundley, director of the Office of the Hillsborough Legislative Delegation, who created and manages this event with the help of her administrative assistant, Marie Martinez. Candace has been with the Delegation for 30 years and exudes boundless energy and enthusiasm in her work for and with the Delegation, whether for “Flavors” or reporting on the annual appropriations bill or working with constituents or any of the myriad other responsibilities assigned to her. She is the definition of what every public servant should be, and we are fortunate to have this Hillsborough native here to help our light shine!

To all those who live in Hillsborough, take a few moments to revel that you live in this great county! “Flavors of Hillsborough” showed the breadth of lifestyles we enjoy, the services state and local government provide, the public education system in place to meet needs from kindergarten through graduate school, and the businesses that help keep our economic engine humming. April 14 was a great day for Hillsborough in Tallahassee — it is a great day for Hillsborough residents *every* day!