



THE BIG BENDER

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2026 Officers

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Presidents Message:



Springtime always feels like a fresh start. With the Easter season comes reminders of rebirth, forgiveness, and new life—and you can see it all around us this time of year. Flowers are blooming, the days are getting longer, and it's the perfect time to get outside and enjoy the beauty we're blessed with.

Right along with the season, our spring camping schedule has kicked off, and things are really hopping for Big Bend. We had a wonderful start with the Urban Rally in Bainbridge (be sure to check out the recap later in this newsletter). It was great spending time together enjoying the kind of fellowship that makes this group so special.

We have two rallies coming up soon—Paynes Prairie and Eastbank. Come enjoy the uniqueness that Paynes Prairie offers, and then celebrate the Kentucky Derby in Airstream style at Eastbank. Both promise to be wonderful rallies.

We'll also have a short business meeting during the Paynes Prairie rally, so keep an eye on your email for the details. Your participation helps keep our chapter strong and moving in the right direction.

Spring camping is one of the best times of the year, and it's always better when we share it with good friends

Enjoy the Easter season!

Amy Waymire

President,
Big Bend Florida Airstream Club

New member

David & Lane Jones BRN 31791
San Marco, TX/Panacea, FL

Up Next...

<p style="text-align: center;">Camping of the Prairie Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park April 10-12, 2026</p>	<p>The campground at Paynes Prairie is currently full. I've started a waiting list—please let me know if you'd like to be added. If you need to cancel your reservation, contact me so we can coordinate with someone on the waitlist.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Off to the Races Eastbank COE Park May 1-3, 2026</p>	<p>Make your reservations at recreation.gov, choose Section C.</p>

April 10-12 is rally time at Paynes Prairie State Park just south of Gainesville, FL and north of Micanopy, FL. Gainesville is, of course, the home of the University of Florida (Go Gators!) and, as such, has some interesting destinations. Among these are the Cades Museum for Creativity and Innovation named after the inventor of Gatorade. Near the museum is the First Magnitude Brewery and an excellent bike path known as the Gainesville to Hawthorne Trail. There are several other breweries and restaurants in the area

Paynes Prairie, named after the 19th century Seminole king, is a vast savannah (I refer to it as the northern Everglades) where the Timucuan people lived until the Spanish arrived. The Prairie is in a basin which is subject to flooding and from 1871 to 1891 it was known as Alachua Lake. It is the home to mass quantities of alligators, wild horses and cattle (remnants of Spanish herds) and bison. It is also a winter haven for the Greater Sandhill Crane. At the northern edge of Paynes Prairie is the Alachua Sink which has a boardwalk out into the Prairie. Depending on the water level, you can walk a path from the boardwalk into the Prairie. There are also trails from the campground itself.

Just a few miles south of the campground is the small, quaint "old Florida" town of Micanopy. If you saw the movie "Doc Hollywood" with Michael J Fox and Woody Harrelson, you will immediately recognize it. There are antique shops here as well as Pearls BBQ and Blue Highway Pizza along the highway.

Also, in NW Gainesville, is Santa Fe College where that weekend is the Santa Fe Arts Festival where our fellow club member will be displaying his amazing photographs.

We look forward to seeing y'all!

David Ludlow



Camping on the Prairie April 10-12

Thursday, April 9

If you plan to arrive early, starting at 4:30 PM there will be a meet and greet at site 42.

Friday, April 10

The day is yours to enjoy the beautiful surroundings of the prairie. We will provide plenty of information about local attractions and activities so you can make the most of your visit.

4:30 PM, please join us for a business meeting. This will be followed by our Happy Half Hour at 5:00 PM.

5:30 PM, Dinner featuring an Italian soup and salad night. A vegan option will also be available

Saturday, April 11

We'll start the day with a continental breakfast from 8:30 to 9:30 AM.

Around 10:00 AM, we will gather to visit the Visitors Center, which offers a wealth of information about the park.

The rest of the day is open for you to explore the area or simply relax and enjoy the park.

At 6:00 PM, join us for Bingo on the Prairie, where there will be prizes to be won. Please bring some munchies to share and get ready for a fun time.

Sunday, April 12

We wish everyone safe travels as you head down the road.

Silver in the City - Bainbridge

The City of Bainbridge truly rolled out the red carpet for our March rally. Thursday afternoon we rolled into the city parking lot, directed by our magnificent parkers, Chip Leavine and Chad Jones. Once everyone was settled in, it was time to start the festivities.

The T & S Foundation stopped by to pick up the Easter goodies we donated and shared a little about their mission. That was followed by Publix sub sandwiches, a rousing trivia game, and then a trip over to Smooth Brewing to round out the evening.

Friday morning several of us headed to St. John's Episcopal Church to drop off our donations and help with food distribution. Later that afternoon we were treated to a walking tour of the beautiful historic homes around downtown Bainbridge.

Friday evening found Big Benders visiting the Old Post Office and the Mailroom speakeasy before heading out to dinner at several local restaurants.

Saturday morning the Wilmoths treated us to mimosas and delicious apricot bread. The afternoon was filled with shopping, Mahjong, storytelling, and simply enjoying time together. Southern Philosophy was our final stop on the rally schedule.

Boondocking in a city parking lot brings a different kind of closeness—one everyone seemed to enjoy. Bainbridge even provided us with a golf cart so everyone could easily get around and enjoy all the town had to offer.



Region 3, Silver in the Sunshine State

By: David Ludlow

March 4-8, 2026, in Lakeland, FL, was the Region 3 Rally, aka, Silver in the Sunshine State. The campground is part of the Lakeland airport and so it was fun watching so many planes coming and going.

There were over 200 Airstreams so everyone immediately became friends. We even met a couple from Virginia who knew the couple from whom we bought our current Airstream.

The rally was jam packed with informative seminars including CPR, ham radio, how to run a rally, Starlink and many more. It was impossible to attend them all. Julie and I split up to attend the ones we were interested in.

Two evenings we had catered meals. One night was Italian and the other was BBQ. There was enough food for over 400 people to eat all they wanted with food left over. Bob Ealy, the Region 3 president, donated the leftovers to a local firehouse.

One of the best parts of the rally was a raffle which raised over \$4000 for two local charities. One charity is Aerospace Center for Excellence which helps students through 12th grade to learn all things aerospace including air traffic control, UAV basics, engineering, maintenance and much more. The other charity is Lakeland Volunteers in Medicine which is dedicated to bringing health care to the working poor, those who are working but still can't afford medical insurance. The care is given totally free of charge.

Outside the campground is an air museum with several airplanes outside, some very unusual.



Nominating Committee

A nominating committee has been formed to begin the process of identifying officers for 2027. The committee members are Elwood McElhaney, Chairperson, along with Dolores Jones and David Ludlow.

Volunteers are the backbone of our club, and our continued success depends on members who are willing to step up and serve. Please take a moment to consider what position you might be willing to help with, and let one of the committee members know if you are interested or would like more information.

Your willingness to serve helps keep Big Bend strong and thriving

Me? An officer in the Big Bend Club? No way!

By Gary Anderson

When I was approached to be an officer in the Big Bend Club I immediately started ticking off in my mind all the reasons I couldn't: I am working full time, have a business in which I have major responsibilities, I participate in other organizations that I am committed to, there are things I want to do in my own life and on and on and on. When thoughts are on that path one will convince themselves why something should not be done. In spite of all these thoughts the President gave me the "look" and I knew what the answer was going to be.

Yes. There are always challenges when accepting a new task, but many of these evaporated due to the willingness of club members to help. Perhaps the major responsibility was to schedule the monthly rallies. One of my objectives was to schedule campgrounds that the Club has not used in a while. Remember I was still working full time. I turned to the internet, club member input, and geographical locations that would seem fair to all members. Another bonus for me was that the current President was continually sharing records, timelines and coaching me to finish, prior to the due date, the small amount of paperwork that is necessary.

In summation, none of the reasons I initially thought about became true. What did happen is that I expanded my Airstream world. It provided amazing opportunities to meet and work with people from whom I learned so much about Airstreams, WBCCI, and the total RV'ing experience. I enjoyed my time as an officer of Big Bend and encourage others to take that leap. With a good positive attitude, I am confident one will not regret the move.

From the desk of the Historian - Jason Friedrich

As April approaches, we are looking forward to our rally at Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park in Micanopy, FL



I decided to take a look back and see other places where we rallied in April.

- 2016 Chehaw Park Campground - Albany, Georgia (rally cancelled)
- 2017 Cedar Key RV Resort - Cedar Key, Florida
- 2018 Salt Springs Recreation Area - Fort McCoy, Florida
- 2019 Silver On Main Street - Havana, Florida
- 2020 Silver On Main Street - Havana, Florida (rally cancelled due to covid)
- 2021 Region 3 Rally Tallahassee Fair Grounds - Tallahassee, Florida
- 2022 Stephen Foster State park - Fargo, Georgia
- 2023 Meaher State Park - Spanish Fort, Alabama
- 2024 Cedar Key RV Resort - Cedar Key, Florida
- 2025 Anastasia State Park - St. Augustine, Florida

Till we see each other again,
Happy Camping

Jason



2026 Rally Schedule

Dates	Campground	Where		Hosts	Reservation
April 10-12, 2026	Paynes Prairie Prsv State Park	Micanopy, FL	Camping on the Prairie	David & Julie Ludlow & Jessica Cassella	Campground Full
May 1-3, 2026	EastBank COE	Chattahoochee, FL	Off to the Races	Everyone	Window is open www.recreation.gov
Aug 22-27, 2026		Minot, ND	International		
September 10-13, 2026	Windcreek State Park	Alexander City, AL	Lake Life	Craig & Monica Brinkley	Window is open www.alapark.com
October 9-11, 2026	Pensacola RV Park	Pensacola, FL	Angels & Airstreams	Namans & Andersons	Window is open 1-850-944-1734
October 11-18, 2026	<i>Club Caravan</i>	Natches, MS - Lynchburg, TN	Tracin' & Tastin' Caravan	Chad & Dolores Jones	Currently Full
November 13-15, 2026	Coastline RV Resort	Eastpoint, FL	Not So Forgotten Coast Rally	Sammy & Chris Stockstill Jason Friedrich	Window is open 1-850-799-1016

Reservations are open for all campgrounds!
After securing your spot, don't forget to fill out the rally registration form at airstreamclub.org so your hosts can plan for your arrival.



2027 Rally Schedule

DATES	CAMPGROUND	WHERE	HOST	RESERVATIONS
February 11-14, 2027	Suwannee River Music Park	Live Oak, FL		sites saved -instructions pending
March 19-21, 2027	Tallahassee Car Museum	Tallahassee, FL	Brinkleys	sites saved- instructions pending
April 7-11, 2027	Region 3	Sevierville, TN		
April 15-18, 2027	Lake Pines	Columbus, GA		706-561-9675
April 18-29, 2027	Brews with Views		Stockstills	details to follow
May 13-16, 2027	TH Stone Memorial Sp	Port St. Joe, FL		window open 4-13-2026
June 26-July 1, 2027	International Rally	Rock Springs, WY		details to follow
September 16-19, 2027	Crooked River SP	Kingsland, GA		window open 8-16-2026 GA state park
October 7-10, 2027	Topsail Hill Preserve SP	Santa Rosa Beach, FL		window open 11-7-2026
November 11-14, 2027	Reed Bingham SP	Adel, GA		window open 10-11-2026 GA state park

*Note to date change for the April rally and Caravan





"If you don't know what else to do, drink beer." ~ Wally Byam

Visit us on the Web <https://airstreamclub.org/big-bend-florida>

 Like us on Facebook [Bend Florida Airstream Club \(Group\)](#)

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