

Riverside Conservancy – Meet Lisa D. Mickey

Lisa Mickey is a ninth-generation North Carolinian who lives in New Smyrna Beach, Fla. Her ancestors were Moravian colonists who settled Salem, which became Winston-Salem years later.

She grew up hiking and rock climbing in the Sauratown Mountains in nearby Hanging Rock State Park as a teenager and spent summers at the North Carolina coast, where she became a proficient crabber and ocean advocate.

Mickey began her professional writing career at age 15 as a “Teen Page Correspondent” for the *Winston-Salem Journal* newspaper, writing teen-focused articles and penning a full-page, main-section feature story about canoeing on the New River.

She majored in English and played varsity field hockey at High Point University, where she served as the campus newspaper editor for two years.

After graduating, Mickey began working as a newspaper staff reporter in North Carolina, reporting on everything from education, crime and zoning commission meetings to writing human-interest features and obituaries. Once, she covered an actual moonshine raid in rural North Carolina, as well as a highly publicized murder trial in a small, packed county courthouse that taught her she did not have the stomach for criminal news.

At *The Times* in Thomasville, N.C., she wrote features, covered education and golf, and served as the Friday-night national news desk editor. She placed first in the North Carolina Press Association’s 1984 awards for investigative reporting with a story on social security disability compensation.

She went to the *Greensboro News & Record*, where she worked as a staff feature writer before transitioning over to sports as a staff sports writer -- covering golf, tennis, ACC basketball, professional cycling and non-revenue collegiate sports.

During that time, Mickey took graduate classes in literature at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro, while writing a weekly column, producing at least one weekly feature and covering various sports throughout the state for the daily newspaper. She was awarded the 1989 Women's Sports Foundation's National Journalism Award for a feature story on eating disorders and compulsive exercise.

Mickey left the newspaper industry and her home state to work as a senior editor for Meredith Corporation's *Golf For Women* magazine in Oxford, Miss., which relocated nine months later to Lake Mary, Fla. She covered the LPGA Tour, collegiate and amateur golf, wrote about golf equipment and technology, edited a rules column, and wrote human-interest features for the magazine before leaving to work as a senior editor for *The New York Times* Magazine Group's *Golf Digest* Company in Trumbull, Conn. She returned to *Golf For Women* eight years later as a senior editor when it was purchased by Conde Nast and moved to New York City.

At the *Golf Digest* Company, Mickey traveled 25 weeks of the year, covering the LPGA Tour, writing about women's collegiate and amateur golf and handling the magazine's technical/equipment writing. During that time, she co-authored *Champions of Women's Golf*, which was a Ben Franklin Book Award winner in 2001 as the best new recreation/sports book.

Mickey returned to Florida to work as the LPGA Tour's senior writer. She traveled most of the year throughout the nation and internationally with the LPGA and the tour's developmental tour of young professionals from 29 nations. She wrote stories about the players, taught English to young international pros and handled media requests at tournament sites, winning three Golf Writers Association of America annual feature awards (from 2007-2011).

Mickey left the LPGA in 2012 for freelance writing roles with *The New York Times*, *ESPN.com*, *The Observer* (U.K.), *The Sunday Scotsman* (U.K.), *Golf Channel.com*, *Virginia Golfer* magazine, *Ladies Links Fore Golf* magazine, The Legends Tour, LPGA.com, the United States Golf Association, the Marine Discovery Center and the *Audubon Florida Naturalist* magazine.

She still writes magazine golf features and now covers environmental aspects of golf for the United States Golf Association, including such topics as water conservation, sustainability in golf course design and turf grass research.

Mickey is a staff writer and certified Advanced Florida Master Naturalist/Land Steward at the Marine Discovery Center, where she leads weekly boat eco-tours and serves as an instructor in the Florida Master Naturalist Program.

She provides written content for Riverside Conservancy, serves as a board member with Friends of Canaveral and is an active member of Halifax River Audubon.

Here's what Riverside Conservancy staff writer Lisa D. Mickey says about her role with the organization:

Q: How did you get involved with this nonprofit?

A: I have long been involved in numerous conservation initiatives in New Smyrna Beach and was aware of the good work being done here in this fairly new organization. When Kelli McGee asked me to help provide written content for Riverside Conservancy, I was excited to get involved.

Q: How does your background as a professional writer and Florida Master Naturalist help with the work that's being done at Riverside Conservancy?

A: I have a long journalistic history of covering a wide variety of topics and for the last decade, I have focused most of my energy on environmental writing. As a certified naturalist and longtime eco-tour guide at the Marine Discovery Center, as well as an instructor in the University of Florida's Florida Master Naturalist Program, I have experience breaking down scientific concepts into digestible bites for the average citizen. If we want local citizens to get involved in conservation, we have to help them understand what is needed in understandable language and show them how to embrace taking action.

Q: What excites you the most about Riverside Conservancy?

A: What excites me is the thought of an entire community potentially seeing the value of preserving and restoring shoreline with this nonprofit serving as the catalyst and resource to guide those efforts.

Q: What can you envision 10 years from now for Riverside Conservancy?

A: Many people want to “do the right thing” environmentally because it’s the prudent and responsible thing to do. Others need incentives. I think increasingly, local citizens will see the value in preserving and protecting shorelines in perpetuity, especially if there are tax benefits, and potentially, benefits when it comes to homeowners’ insurance. We have to continue to educate the public about how living shorelines offer optimal protection for their largest investment – their waterfront home. If we can get them to fully understand that, and the incentives are there, it would be reasonable to think that more of our community will get onboard with shoreline conservation.

Q: What makes you most proud of what has been accomplished at Riverside Conservancy?

A: I am most proud of how three citizens – Riverside Conservancy founders Tom Barratt, Art Litowitz and Greg Wilson -- cared enough about our community to establish an organization designed to educate and energize local residents about preserving and protecting shoreline. I am also proud that Riverside Conservancy is led by Kelli McGee, who has a broad vision of what is needed and how the organization can guide the appropriate efforts. Kelli is a skilled grant writer, which is essential for a nonprofit, and she is experienced and knowledgeable about who does what on the local, regional, state and federal levels. How fortunate are we to have someone with her background at our helm who completely understands the legal, political and scientific intricacies of various entities working together to get things done?

Q: How does your other work on the lagoon give you special insight into what is needed to conserve and protect this estuary?

A: I talk about the Indian River Lagoon all the time on my eco-tours with nearly 100 people a week from throughout the nation and the world. Our lagoon is considered as the most biologically diverse estuary in North America and yet, we have allowed the water quality to diminish to a level in which one of our most charismatic mammals – the Florida manatee – is starving to death. With massive seagrass loss, we have destroyed the manatee’s food source, as well as crucial habitat for juvenile fish and organisms that form the base of the lagoon’s food chain. I understand that if citizens of Florida don’t demand improved water quality in this lagoon and

push elected officials to take action, we will see our precious estuary take the same downward crash experienced by such estuarine systems as Tampa Bay and the Chesapeake Bay. It took many years and massive resources to bring back those estuaries. The same is happening here right now. It has to be a priority on the state level to save it and groups like Riverside Conservancy are needed to advocate for cleaner water, healthy estuarine habit and species, and shoreline preservation.