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We are GFLUG—the Greater Florida LEGO Users Group. Because our membership extends throughout the state, our name is meant to encompass all of Florida. Currently, we are the only Registered LUG in our state.

This year we are extremely excited to be celebrating our 20th year together as a LUG. In 2000, our founding member, Robin Werner, had a small LEGO train display set up at a local retail hobby shop, Tent Show & Sale. A couple of other people also said they enjoyed LEGO trains and setting up layouts, and they were talking to a few other friends on LUGNET. Initially, four people got together and formally inaugurated a LEGO Train Club and the Greater Florida LEGO Users Group. Although the original purpose of the club revolved around train layouts, our membership grew to include adult LEGO builders with a diverse skill set and variety of interests from robotics to mosaics.

Our LUG has never strayed far from its original purpose of functioning as an Adult Fan of

LEGO (AFOL) hobby group and to serve as good stewards for the LEGO brand. This simple mission has served our membership well over the years. Our club has remained strong and we have retained many of our long time members. Our members come from a variety of interests and backgrounds—our membership includes several theme park engineers, business leaders, a LEGO model builder, an architect and a few educators. We have more than our fair share of FIRST robotics coaches who enhance our technical capabilities and connect us to our local Makerspaces.

Our membership and project goals grow right along with some of LEGO's product lines. Several of our members are expanding their displays to include lighting, LEGO's Super Heroes and Harry Potter. Our LUG is currently talking about a large collaborative project utilizing Project Support, which would be a first for our Group. Our LUG also primarily appears at large-scale shows and we have discussed the importance of seeking smaller venues and display opportunities without a gate charge to reach a new and different audience.

We keep a very modest budget for our small LUG. It is funded both by membership dues and by revenue generated from our show participation. These funds offset our expenses for club storage of assets, such as tables, stanchions, signage, and playbricks.

Living in Florida, we are starting to recruit new AFOLs who are moving here to retire, so we welcome that pipeline of seasoned AFOLs with large LEGO collections to the sunshine state! We continue to pursue community outreach

opportunities and other ways in which we can share the LEGO brand locally.

COVID-19 has resulted in the cancellation of four shows to date, with two of those being events that would have generated revenue for us to help offset expenses. Several of our members have also experienced being furloughed or permanently laid-off, so we are periodically checking in with everyone online. We've moved our summer meet-ups to Zoom and these have been well-received, especially by those of our members who consistently miss out on weekend meet-ups due to work conflicts. We've also had two month-long build contests to encourage our members to keep active.

Our LUG has a great relationship with TLG and especially our local LEGO Store, which for us is the Flagship Disney Springs store. Our LUG continues to promote the value of the 'Window Into the Community' Display. We have been long-time caretakers of our Window. We would love to see this program reinstated across North America as most families do not travel to a fan convention and a Community Window may be the only opportunity some kids have to see a





large creative LEGO build in person. Because of our positive experience with the Community Window program, GFLUG continues to advocate for its expansion and increased participation by more LBR stores who recognize its impact and the opportunity to connect to their local community and surrounding AFOL fanbase. We are able to track via our social media who finds us as a result of the Window Build. They wind up following us on Facebook where we actively post Store info, PAB wall updates, monthly builds, etc. which generates customers back in to shop LBR.

One thing you may not know about us is that our LUG served as the beta testing ground for what became the popular Brickworld Boat Race. We made decorative boats, innovative boats, fast boats, and boats that sunk, all in an effort to see if this would be a fun doable event.

Our LUG has also been very fortunate to work with TLG and the local Marketing Office on many special events over the years. From helping with Florida LBR openings and building ribbon models, to working on large displays for Star Wars Celebration, they have all been rewarding. One event stands out among the others over the last twenty years, and that was being asked to represent TLG at the Build The Future Event in cooperation with NASA and the last shuttle launch. This once-in-a-lifetime experience was a great weekend with LEGO, building and sharing our love of all things STEM!

Our LUG has faced several economic challenges during the Stay At Home Order(s) in Florida. Right away, we had several members who work in the Theme Park industry who suffered work reduction hours or were furloughed. Other members have

experienced layoffs from their employers as the COVID-19 crisis has not abated this summer and number of cases in Florida have continued to rise.

Our LUG also does 10-12 Public Event Shows a year. It is normally how we socialize as they happen almost every month. With these events postponed indefinitely or cancelled, some of our consistent revenue for 2020 is gone. We did have a cushion, so we are okay financially going into 2021, but it's definitely having an impact as far making any large group project plans or large individual MOC building.

Finding the motivation and resources to keep building is hard. Everyone is challenged during this Pandemic in a different way and we just try and meet all our members where they are in the moment. We offered LUGBULK assistance to anyone who felt they might need to opt out this season. We are doing small building challenges to keep members interested but that aren't too demanding. At each Virtual Meeting, we are raffling LEGO sets and holding drawings. We are finding good ways to stay engaged and sharing and using ideas from other LUGs.

One of the bright spots has been the ability to Meet-Up, virtually. Just like many other LUGs, we are steadily embracing this new format and have seen some distinct benefits. In our first Virtual Meet-Up in April, the majority of the members who participated were individuals we had not seen at a Public Weekend Show for some time. These members have conflicts on weekends for work and family. Our LUG also encompasses the entire state of Florida, which could mean a 5 hour round trip drive to a Meeting for a member. So these new Virtual Meet-Ups are very inclusive and we plan to do more of them, once we determine the easiest Platform for our LUG. We had also welcomed several new members right before the Stay At Home Orders, so Facebook and our Virtual Meetings have allowed us to be active with our newer members.

