

# Heartland

## LIVING

October | November 2014



Your Lifestyle Community Magazine



# HARVEY OYER III

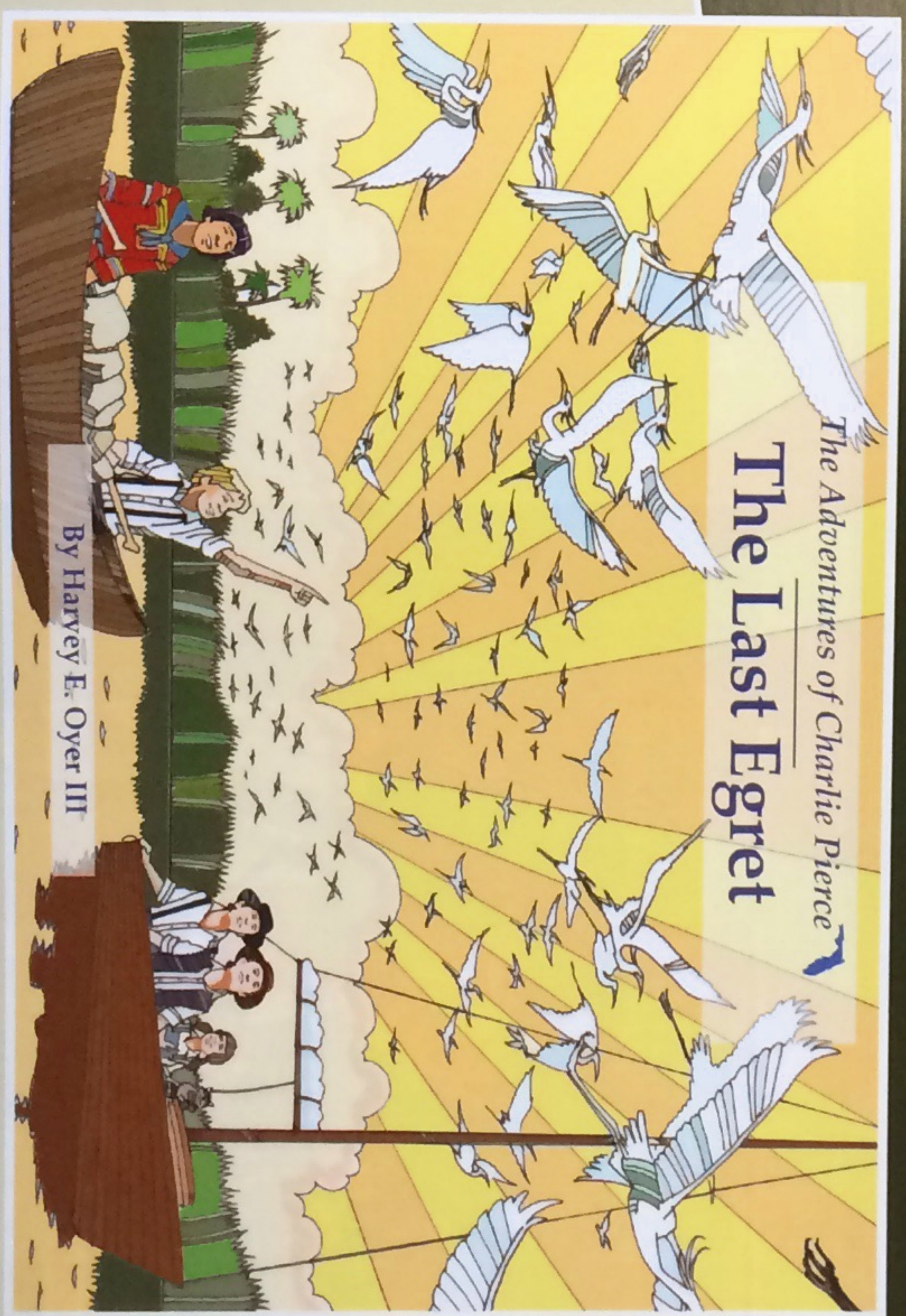
## Preserving Florida Heritage Through Children's Literature

By Audra Clemens  
Photos by Tiffany Etchison



As a practicing attorney Harvey Oyer III has many accomplishments under his belt. As an outstanding citizen, he is involved in many groups and serves on many boards throughout Palm Beach County. As a father and fifth generation Floridian, Harvey Oyer III has a passion for keeping his heritage alive with a ranching lifestyle and through writing children's books that loosely chronicle the life and adventures of his great granduncle Captain Hannibal Dillingham Pierce. ▶





Harvey Oyer III is a descendant of one of the earliest non-native American pioneer families to settle in Southeast Florida and his literature, *The Adventures of Charlie Pierce* showcases this. The three-series book collection honors the settler stories passed down through Oyer's family from one generation to the next. His books are said to be Florida's version of the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

In the late 1800s, south Florida was inhabited by Native Americans, newly freed slaves, naturalists, poachers and settlers alike. Beyond entertainment, *The Adventures of Charlie Pierce*, which consists of *The American Jungle*, *The Last Egret* and *The Last Calusa*, have historical and ecological elements that

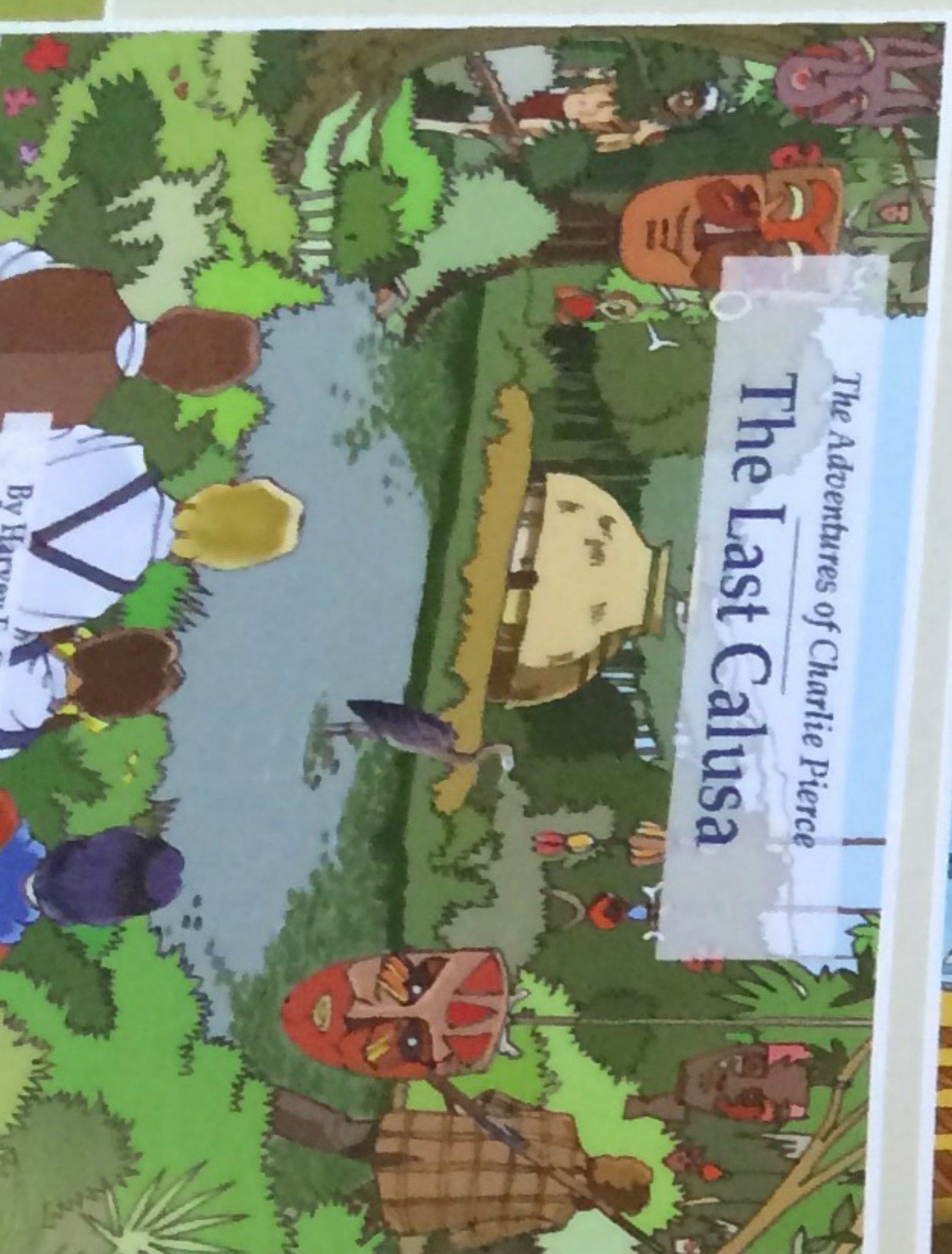




chronicle these folks and lives they lead during this time. The Last Egret, which is currently part of Fourth Grade Elementary curriculum in various school districts throughout South Florida, depicts the life of the nearly extinct birds in a time when their plumes were being hunted for international fashionistas.

Oyer is able to bring the stories to life by drawing inspiration from a journal that was kept by his great granduncle, which detailed the time he arrived in Florida from Chicago in 1872 to the Spanish shipwrecks he saw and hurricanes he went through. Oyer said he felt a social responsibility to preserve these stories and first-hand knowledge of Florida's history.

"I thought about going the academic route with my writing, or creating a coffee table book; but what is really important to me, is the preservation of the history of Florida—a state with ample history that has been lost over time. The best way I could do this was to tell these stories to children."







They are impressionable and they will grow up to be the new stewards of the land," said Oyer about the decision to write children's literature.

Some of these same reasons resonated with Harvey Oyer III and contribute to his decision to leave city life on the weekends and retreat to his Okeechobee ranch as frequently as possible.

"I want my children to know where their food comes from. I want them to see the cattle and see the fruit trees, not just assume their meals come from Publix," said Oyer. "Some people have a passion for rivers and the ocean; I have a passion for land and wide-open spaces."

Husband to country singer, Monique McCall and father to two daughters, Francesca, who was recently crowned Jr. Miss Speckled Perch in the Okeechobee Speckled Perch pageant; and infant Eve, who has just begun her precious life. It's easy to see that Oyer holds family and family values close to his heart, which may also be why his stories are so poignant with a passionate message. Through educating children - the next generation of Floridians - about the history and importance of the peninsula's ecosystem, Oyer is in fact leaving hope in the hands of children.

His book, *The Last Egret* has won numerous literary accolades, most recently collecting a Florida Book Award title and Florida Publishers Association title. Oyer is frequently requested at literary book fairs, school events, public festivals and academic conferences to discuss his stories and books in person. He's eager to share his knowledge with anyone who is interested in learning. For more information on Harvey Oyer III and how to request him for speaking events, or to purchase his books, please visit: [www.theadventuresofcharliepiecer.com](http://www.theadventuresofcharliepiecer.com).





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