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EDITORIAL

Kathy and Wes

This community is blessed with a large number of talented, committed men and women who work relentlessly to protect the environment and preserve as much of our natural assets as possible. This week, tragically, we lost two of our most talented and most relentless green advocates.

On Tuesday, Dr. Kathy Cantwell passed away after a battle with brain cancer. We can think of no other individual who has been more involved over the past quarter century in the ongoing struggle to preserve the best of our natural treasures.

As a founder of Alachua County Forever and a member of the Putnam Land Conservancy, Cantwell championed the acquisition of thousands of acres of sensitive lands in those two counties.

A long-time leader of the Suwannee-St. Johns Group Sierra Club and Women for Wise Growth, she involved herself in the ongoing fight against poorly planned development and in initiatives to keep the region's air clean and water bodies unpolluted.

That Cantwell did all of that, and more, while confined to a wheelchair — the result of a tragic bicycling accident that crushed her body but never her spirit — makes her legacy all the more impressive.

It was absolutely fitting that Dr. Cantwell would choose to be the first one buried in the newly established "green cemetery" at Prairie Creek Preserve.

Then, on Thursday, came the jarring news that Wes Skiles, the High Springs filmmaker and environmental activist, had died while diving off Boynton Beach on a project for National Geographic.

Skiles' work photographing and filming Florida's springs, rivers and underwater caves opened viewers' eyes to a hidden world that most never knew existed.

He was determined to show the world the exquisite beauty of Florida's springs even as he sought to warn against their slow pollution as a result of negligent stewardship.

"Wes showed us that the springs are the canaries in the coal mine, showing us how we are damaging our natural resources," Gainesville artist Annie Pais told The Sun this week.

Even in a community blessed with a wealth of talented and committed environmental activists, the loss of Dr. Kathy Cantwell and Wes Skiles in the same week is a hard blow.

They are too soon gone, but will long be remembered for what they did here.