

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release.

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Caption MARILYN: Marilyn Kloosterman, pictured with rangers Jeff Combs, Paul Tritaik, and Nate Caswell, won an award for 30 years of refuge volunteer service.

Caption 20YEAR: Refuge Manager Paul Tritaik (left) and Deputy Refuge Manager Nate Caswell (right) with 20-year award winners Ann Wollschlager, Shirley Bohnert, and Jim Sprankle

Caption TABLES: Nearly 300 volunteers keep the refuge open seven days a week in spite of government budget shortfalls.

Refuge, DDWS honor volunteers

“Ding” Darling Refuge and “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) celebrated their annual Volunteer Awards Luncheon on Feb. 10, 2017, at the Sanibel Community House.

“I want to thank you for making a huge difference to us in fulfilling our mission and serving our visitors,” Refuge Manager Paul Tritaik told the gathered volunteers.

“The Society would not be the Society without you because you make us look good,” said DDWS president and active volunteer Doris Hardy.

Refuge staff reports that in fiscal year 2016, 298 volunteers worked 47,232.5 hours at the refuge, representing a labor and benefits savings of \$1.16 million or almost 23 full-time employees.

“Refuge staff has been slashed by more than 50 percent in recent years,” said supervisory refuge ranger Toni Westland. “We would be facing cuts in visitor services, hours of operation, and maintenance if not for our wonderful volunteers. Thanks to our friends group for its super support of the volunteer program.”

DDWS formed in 1982 specifically to support a volunteer corps after the opening of the refuge's first visitor center that year. More than 11,000 people visited in the first month after the center opened, overwhelming a staff unaccustomed to dealing with the inquisitive public.

“Volunteers stepped in then to fill in the gaps left by inadequate federal funding, and they continue to do so even more today as funding further declines,” said Hardy.

Below is a list of volunteers who won awards for reaching hour and year achievement levels.

YEARS AWARDS

30 years: Marilyn Kloosterman

20 years: Shirley Bohnert, Marge Keller, Jim Sprankle, Alice Walzer, Ann Wollschlager

10 years: Mike Baldwin, John McCabe, Darst McNairy, Karl Werner, Pam Windust

HOURS AWARDS

10,000 hours: Jeanne Rankin

8,000 hours: Bill Rankin

6,500 hours: Doris Hardy

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5,500 hours: Norm Honest

5,000 hours: Is Cloak, Ed Combs

4,000 hours: Jack Wettstein, Patty Wettstein

3,500 hours: Carroll Branyon

3,000 hours: Anne, Bresslau, John McCabe

2,500 hours: Patsy Dicken, Robert Dicken, Malcolm Harpham, Mary Jo Hobbs, Alan Parker, Linda Parker

2,000 hours: Tom Edgar, Ginny Kopperl, Ken Kopperl

1,500 hours: Iver Brook, Joyce Jacobs

1,000 hours: Brian Mishell, Dolores Mishell, Marie Monick, Kathy Mustachio, Bill Overton, Greg Scherer, Helen Taylor

500 hours: Donna Adams, Mike Baldwin, James Bennight, Lyndon Borrer, Claudia Burns, Barb Guidotti, Jan Lucree, Bill Lupfer, Ilona Menzel, Nancy Riley, Garold Schudel, Ruth Schudel, Gerri Sylliaasen, Amanda Wilkinson

250 hours: Caroline Bergen, Stan Bunsick, Tom Flemming, Mary Hackett, Zdenko Krizan, Alice Lavimoniere, Gary Lavimoniere, Buck McDonald, Kim Milling, Mike Mullins, Mike Rice, Gus Santos, Anne Suss, Cathy Swerdlick, Ray Vasquez, Tom Ware, Wanda Werner, Grant Wilkinson, Jim Winn

150 hour: Sarah Ashton, Susan Beitel, Mark Banks, Muriel Blaisdell, Randi Elassal, Christine Mackenzie, Paul McKenney, Jen McSorley, Maureen Napier, Sherri Newes, Pat Rawert, Inge Santos, Vasanta Senerat, Frances Slane, David Trout, Pam Weiner, Dan Wexler, Diane Wien, Don Wildman, Grant Wilkinson, Jim Winn, Rich Yanke

ABOUT DDWS

As a non-profit 501(c)3 organization, DDWS works to support J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge’s mission of conservation, wildlife and habitat protection, research, and public education through charitable donations and Refuge Nature Shop proceeds.

To support DDWS and the refuge with a tax-deductible gift, visit dingdarlingsociety.org or contact Birgie Miller at [239-292-0566](tel:239-292-0566) or director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

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