

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release  
Contact: Chelle Koster Walton  
239-699-4754  
[ChelleTrav@aol.com](mailto:ChelleTrav@aol.com)

Caption DOCFORDS: Doc Ford's Rum Bar & Grille is again title sponsor for the 2018 tournament.

Caption BIRGIEMARTYTONI: Marty Harrity wearing a tarpon jacket, with DDWS executive director Birgie Miller and supervisory refuge ranger Toni Westland.

Logo attached

### **Doc Ford's co-sponsors seventh annual tarpon tournament**

A fat purse and the new allure of winning a coveted tarpon jacket promise to make the seventh annual "Ding" Darling & Doc Ford's Tarpon Tournament on Friday, May 11, 2018, the hottest competition on the water.

Doc Ford's -- with locations on Sanibel Island, Captiva Island, and Fort Myers Beach -- has again committed to being the title sponsor for the 2018 tournament, along with the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS). Proceeds will benefit wildlife and conservation education at J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island.

The tournament pays out 100 percent of the entry fee (\$500 per boat of four, \$150 per extra angler, up to six total in a boat) as tournament awards. This year, 55 spots in the tournament were filled within two hours of opening registration online. Interested parties can contact DDWS executive director Birgie Miller at 239-472-1100 ext. 4 or [director@dingdarlingsociety.org](mailto:director@dingdarlingsociety.org) to add their names to a waiting list.

Last year, Marty Harrity, co-owner of Doc Ford's, added a new incentive to taking first place in the tournament. He introduced the "tarpon jacket," a pink sports jacket swimming with tarpon. Mike Billheimer, one of the tournament's anglers and a fellow island restaurateur, had found it for him.

“It’s kind of like the Masters tournament in golf,” said Harrity. “The winning captain gets to wear the ‘tarpon jacket.’”

“Doc Ford’s has been a faithful supporter of our efforts at ‘Ding’ Darling, helping greatly to bolster refuge programs and research to balance federal budget shortfalls,” said Miller. “Last year we raised \$80,000 for the refuge as a result of sponsorships, donations, and auction proceeds. In its six years of existence, the tourney has raised \$330,000. We’re so grateful to Doc Ford’s for this huge effort in our behalf.”

For more information on the tournament, visit [www.dingdarlingtarpontourney.org](http://www.dingdarlingtarpontourney.org). Anyone interested in becoming a tournament sponsor should contact Miller at 239-472-1100 ext. 4 or [director@dingdarlingsociety.org](mailto:director@dingdarlingsociety.org).

Tournament sponsors for 2018 include: **Title Sponsor:** Doc Ford’s Rum Bar & Grille; **Champion Sponsor:** Nimrod, Raiser’s Edge; **Premier Sponsors:** Mark & Gretchen Banks, Diversified Yacht Services; **Presenting Sponsors\*:** Custom Tees, Joseph M. Kelley Plumbing & Heating, Stockyard Bricks; **Platinum Sponsors:** Captiva Diva, Mabry Brothers, Inc., Organized Chaos, Suncoast Beverage Sales; **Gold Sponsors:** Andrew Thompson Co., Fort Myers Marine, HighTower Advisors, The Historic Bait Box, Island Condo Maintenance, Jensen’s Marina, Law Office of Christopher G. Hill PC, Law Office of Janet M. Strickland PA, Misty Wells’ “Let’s Take It Outside,” On Island, R.S. Walsh Landscaping, Shell Point Retirement Community; Trophy Case of Fort Myers, Whitney’s Bait & Tackle, Wilbur Smith Attorneys at Law; **Silver Sponsors:** Anisa Stewart Jewelry, Florida Weekly, Gresham Family, Island Inn, Tarpon Bay Explorers.

#### 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](http://dingdarlingsociety.org) or contact Birgie Miller at 239-472-1100 ext. 4 or [director@dingdarlingsociety.org](mailto:director@dingdarlingsociety.org).

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