

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Caption: Girls ages 11 to 17 worked on a nature mural as part of their outreach activities at “Ding” Darling.

‘Ding’ artist ‘in residence’ leads art outreach with PACE

As part of his eight-week artist “in residence” program at the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island, wildlife artist Ed Anderson welcomed the PACE Center for Girls – Lee County to the refuge on June 21.

“Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) is sponsoring the artist “in residence” program, with support from the S. Kent Rockwell Foundation, as part of the refuge’s ongoing 75th anniversary celebration.

Funding for the PACE visit also came from the Gardner Families, which covered the cost of transportation, lunch, art supplies, T-shirts, and other goodies for the 39 young ladies who attended.

The attendees, ages 11 to 17, spent the day circulating through five stations where they could work with Anderson on an art mural project and experience the refuge Visitor & Education Center, Indigo Trail, Wildlife Education Boardwalk, and other facets.

“The girls were thrilled with their visit,” said Lynnae Messina, DDWS associate executive director, who organized the program. “Despite the fact that the air-conditioner wasn’t working, the PACE program director has expressed her pleasure at the program’s success and a desire for future outreach partnerships. We look forward to that as part of the refuge’s mission to educate about conservation through art, science, and curriculum.”

PACE Center for Girls is a gender-specific education program for at-risk young women in Fort Myers. Since 2007, it has served more than 700 students.

Earlier this month, Anderson and DDWS took his art outreach program to Quality Life Center of

Southwest Florida to also connect with at-risk students. Together with the students, the artist created a wildlife mural that will become part of the center's new addition.

“Our refuge was created by conservation artist Jay Norwood ‘Ding’ Darling in 1945, so it’s more than fitting that we begin celebrating our 75th anniversary with interpretive art programs,” said supervisory refuge ranger Toni Westland. “Darling, who created the Federal Duck Stamp program, designed the first duck stamp and the refuge system’s Blue Goose logo. He won the Pulitzer Prize twice for his popular political cartoons throughout the 1920s and 30s.”

Anderson’s fine art hangs in the homes of collectors and has been published in publications around the United States including *Gray’s Sporting Journal*, *Backcountry Journal*, and, locally, *Gulfshore Life*. In the interest of conservation, he has donated his work to DDWS, Bonefish & Tarpon Trust, Captains for Clean Water, and various other non-profits. He has been visiting Sanibel Island since his childhood, for more than 40 years.

To find out more about Anderson’s work, visit edandersonart.com. To keep up to date on the refuge’s 75th anniversary celebration, visit ding75.org. To support field trips to the refuge and learn of other opportunities to inspire the next generation of conservation stewards, contact DDWS at 239-472-1100 ext. 4.

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 profits.

To support DDWS and the refuge with a tax-deductible gift, visit dingdarlingsociety.org or contact Birgie Miller at 239-472-1100 ext. 4 or director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

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