

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release.

Contact: Chelle Koster Walton
239-699-4754
ChelleTrav@aol.com

Caption: Images available upon request

Refuge awards volunteers

This year the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge personally awarded volunteers after staff announced the cancelation of the annual Volunteer Awards Luncheon because of COVID-19.

“While I’m disappointed that I will not be able to publicly recognize the extraordinary efforts of so many volunteers and their commitment to the refuge and our natural resources, I also want to be proactive and heed the advice of professional public health experts,” wrote acting refuge manager Kevin Godsea in a letter emailed to all volunteers. “We will simply need to find other ways to honor our dedicated volunteers this year.”

Refuge staff reports that in fiscal year 2019, 311 volunteers worked 37,397 hours at the refuge, representing a labor and benefits savings of more than \$900,000, equivalent to 18 full-time employees.

“I just find it amazing that when supervisory refuge ranger Toni Westland started here about 15 years ago, there were about 600,000 visitors each year and less land to manage with 22 staff members,” said Birgie Miller, executive director of the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS). “Today we have 11 staff members to handle a million visitors and more land.”

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 Miller.

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

YEARS AWARDS

20 years: Tom Fleming, Joyce Jacobs, Peggy Hupfeldt, Marian Pool

10 years: Joyce Barney, Carolyn Bergen, Sue Danford, Tom Hoopes, John MacLennan, Alan Parker, Linda Parker, Greg Scherer, Garold Schudel, Ruth Schudel, Cindy Seaman, Roger Tosch

HOURS AWARDS

9,000 hours: Doris Hardy

8,500 hours: Marilyn Kloosterman

5,500 hours: Jack Wettstein, Patty Wettstein

4,500 hours: Terry Baldwin, John McCabe

3,000 hours: Malcolm Harpham, Ben Klaus, Mary Klaus

2,500 hours: Mike Baldwin, Jeanne Tyrer

2,000 hours: Mike Baldwin, Charles Dunham, Arland Oleson

1,500 hours: Shirley Bohnert, Sue McIntyre, Jim Newes, Helen Taylor

1,000 hours: Stan Bunsick, Gary Dutton, Marion Evans, Michael Galloway, Barb Guidotti, John MacLennan, Ilona Menzel, Nancy Riley, Pam Windust

500 hours: Susan Beittel, Carolyn Bergen, Carl Greenbaum, Sandy Greenbaum, Christine Mackenzie, Paul McKenney, Peter Meekin, Sherri Newes, Francie Slane, Anne Suss, Tom Ware, Pam Weiner, Wanda Werner

250 hours: Genia Alperin, Paul Andrews, Sarah Ashton, Carole Ecker, Mike Ecker, Carl Greenbaum, Sandy Greenbaum, Sonya Keene, Wendy Kindig, Herb Lawrence, Janet McLaughlin, Kimberly Powers, Mary Rice, Robert Roth, Ross Spencer, Kathleen Wilson, Judy Wright

150 hour: Katie Baker, Bud Dansby, Brenda Epperson, Randy Epperson, Diane Esslinger, Rose Flaherty, Brett Gooch, Jane Gieryic, Carl Greenbaum, Sandy Greenbaum, Lisa Hutchins, Joanne Prestia, Vince Thomalla, Diana Wideman, Judy Wright

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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