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"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society - Friends of the Refuge

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Caption: Bill and Laurie Harkey's permanently endowed fund will support internship programs for years to come.

Harkeys establish first permanently endowed intern fund at 'Ding'

Sanibel residents Laurie and Bill Harkey recently set up the Harkey Development & Communications Intern Fund with the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS). The first permanently endowed internship fund at the refuge, it will guarantee ongoing funding for one intern annually.

"Laurie and I have always been fans of the outdoors and wildlife, and this is a way to support public education and environmental and wildlife protection while we are still around to see the results," said Bill Harkey, who serves on the DDWS board of directors. "We see what these internships do for the students and their future careers but also what they do to help both the refuge and friends group in their important conservation work. The interns bring a fresh perspective and are mentored to be our next conservation stewards, wherever their career takes them."

Having visited Sanibel for many years, the Harkeys were hooked on the beauty of the island. They became homeowners and moved to Sanibel permanently in 2019 and immediately began volunteering their time and resources at the refuge, CROW, and other island organizations.

"This is a huge deal for us – the true gift that keeps on giving," said DDWS executive director

Birgie Miller. “It requires a contribution of \$200,000 or more to invest in internships that continually support refuge conservation and education into perpetuity. For us, as the refuge’s fundraising arm, that means security in knowing our mission will live on.”

DDWS supports more than a dozen interns each year to assist refuge and DDWS staff with education programs, visitor services, biology research and philanthropy.

“The Society’s intern program is crucial to the refuge’s mission,” said Harkey. “We have witnessed firsthand the challenges at the refuge with staffing and managing the nearly one million annual visitors, visiting school children, and overall conservation work. It has been inspiring to see the work the society does to help the refuge accomplish its mission, and, as a result, we wanted to help by funding this internship.”

For more information about supporting the refuge internship programs, contact Lynnae Messina at 239-472-1100 ext. 233.

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 239-292-0566 or director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

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