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"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society - Friends of the Refuge

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Caption: Harkey Development & Communications Intern Hayley Caylor will assist DDWS with its work supporting refuge education, research, and conservation programs this season.

DDWS welcomes latest intern

Hayley Caylor recently arrived from Seminole, Fla., to help J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge with staff shortages in the coming season as the Harkey Development & Communications Intern with the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS).

Originally from Fredericksburg, Va., Caylor graduated from Eckerd College in St. Petersburg this May with a degree in environmental studies and a minor in sustainability. In Seminole, she worked as a shorebird steward intern, monitoring black skimmers on Pinellas County beaches.

Sanibel residents Laurie and Bill Harkey support the position with DDWS’ first permanently endowed internship fund, which 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.

"I'm so grateful to the Harkeys for making my term at 'Ding' Darling possible," said Caylor. "I think my favorite part of the refuge is just how many species there are. You never know what

you're going to see. It is incredibly exciting to be in a place that puts wild Florida first and that is actively working to protect these priceless natural spaces that have disappeared in other parts of the state. I've only been on the island for a few days so far, but I can already tell that both Sanibel and the refuge are very special places. I can't wait to explore some more.”

“Our interns bring youthful energy, enthusiasm, and creativity to the refuge team and in turn learn about nonprofit and refuge operations,” said DDWS executive director Birgie Miller. “Our friends group works hard to assist the refuge, through monetary support, with conservation work and messaging, community outreach, and programmatic and staffing needs. These are all important skills our interns learn and take with them into their professional lives.”

Caylor looks forward to blending her background in environmental science with her love for communication to design meaningful social media and event materials. “It means a lot to be able to contribute to an organization that has such a powerful role in protecting the species and habitats here on Sanibel and educating all about their importance,” she says.

“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.”

For more information about the refuge’s internship program and to make a donation in support of it, 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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