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"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society - Friends of the Refuge

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Caption: CROW's Alison Hussey, donors Bill and Laurie Harkey, and DDWS' Birgie Miller

Harkeys gift \$1M each to DDWS, CROW

Sanibel residents Laurie and Bill Harkey recently made generous contributions to two island conservation nonprofits in a show of support for their programs and other efforts to protect wildlife. The couple donated \$1 million each to the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) and CROW (Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife).

"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 served a 30-year career in the U.S. Army before retiring.

Having visited Sanibel since 2002, the Harkeys were hooked on the beauty and conservation ethic of the island. They became homeowners and moved to Sanibel permanently in 2019 and immediately began volunteering their time and resources at CROW, J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge, DDWS, and other island organizations.

"We both came from community-minded families, and we were raised to believe in giving back, whether in time, money, or in-kind donations," said Laurie Harkey. "Several generations of both our families instilled this philosophy of community responsibility in their children. Because of

this influence, I became a licensed social worker so that I could practice this sense of community in my professional life. We are grateful that we are able to support our local nonprofit organizations, and it's gratifying to see the results of our good fortune."

"I can't say enough about the generosity of the Harkeys," said DDWS executive director Birgie Miller. "Bill serves on our board of directors, and they both volunteer and constantly step up to sponsor events and support our programming. This overwhelming show of generosity represents a combination of permanent endowment support, capital and land support, as well as some annual unrestricted support for the refuge. We couldn't be more delighted and grateful for the help with DDWS' support of the refuge's conservation and education mission."

"Bill and Laurie's philanthropy extends beyond these amazing contributions," said CROW executive director Alison Charney Hussey. "CROW has been and continues to be blessed by the Harkeys' support – their time, talent, and treasure. We look forward to expanding CROW's mission utilizing this extremely generous gift. They know the importance of allowing the organization to use the funds where they are best needed. Because of that and their generosity, our patients, our organization will thrive. Bill and Laurie are an inspiration to others to give when you can, to not wait until you're gone, to enjoy the influence of your gift and see the benefit and the inspiration it provides."

The Harkeys say they hope to inspire others to follow their lead in giving where and when the funds make the most difference and allow them to enjoy seeing their dollars making that difference.

"After consulting with our financial advisor, we decided to make these donations at this time rather than including them in our estate plans," said Bill. "We realized we could do this without any negative impact on our standard of living or our lifestyle, and at the same time we would be able to see the impact of our donations. While it is a wonderful thing to remember these organizations in your estate planning, nonprofits also need funds now. Why wait until you're gone to make an impact?"

CROW and DDWS are non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations for which all gifts are tax deductible. To learn more about the work of CROW, visit crowclinic.org; for more information about



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supporting the conservation mission at the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge, visit
dingdarlingsociety.org.

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