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"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society - Friends of the Refuge

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Caption: WoW (Wildlife on Wheels) tours, guided hikes, carnival games, and other family activities will introduce the greater community to the refuge on "Ding" Darling Day, April 24.

'Ding' Darling Day takes Conservation Carnival to Lakes Park

To further its mission to reach and connect with underserved urban communities, the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge migrates its 33rd annual "Ding" Darling Day celebration to Lakes Park in Fort Myers on Sunday, April 24. This year, the refuge will jointly observe Earth Day, which falls two days earlier on April 22, with "Ding" Day.

The refuge and "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) have been keeping in sync with the Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership, a national refuge system-wide initiative to encourage community connection. The WoW (Wildlife on Wheels) project was the first big step refuge educators took toward spreading the word about conservation beyond refuge borders. Since December 2020, it has reached nearly 10,000 students, parents, and other adults across the region.

WoW will be at the center of the free "Ding" Darling Day at Lakes Park. Besides tours of the mobile nature experience, the refuge and DDWS have planned a full day of Conservation Carnival activities from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Special free outdoor activities include carnival games, prizes, Earth Day crafts, artist-in-residence programs, guided bilingual birding walks, a biking tour, snow cones, and educational interactions with other local conservation organizations.

“We look forward to reinventing ‘Ding’ Darling Day to make that connection actually out IN the community,” said supervisory refuge ranger Toni Westland, who chairs the event’s committee. “We’re still ironing out details, but expect fun and enrichment for the entire family.” Watch dingdarlingday.com for details as they unfold.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS), and Tarpon Bay Explorers cosponsor “Ding” Darling Day with generous support from the local community and businesses.

DDWS seeks sponsors for the event, which will be highly publicized throughout the Southwest Florida area. Contact April Boehnen at april@dingdarlingsociety.org or 239-472-1100 ext. 4 for more information.

Sponsors to date include: **Great Egret:** Doc Ford's Rum Bar & Grille; **Great Blue Heron:** Island Sun, John R. Wood Properties; **Reddish Egret:** Bank of the Islands, Media Source, Mike & Terry Baldwin, Mitchell's SandCastles; **Snowy Egret:** Florida SouthWestern State College Foundation, Florida Weekly, John & Anette Gritti, Jensen's Twin Palm Cottages & Marina Resort, Kearns Restaurant Group, McCallion & McCallion Realty, Parker Waichman LLP, Sanibel Moorings Resort, Southern Snoballs, Tarpon Bay Explorers.

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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