

PRESS RELEASE



For immediate release

Contact: Chelle Koster Walton

239-699-4754

ChelleKWalton@gmail.com

Caption: Students, teachers, and the “Ding” Darling team “dug into” the Pocket Refuge program with both hands.

Oct. 31 deadline for ‘Ding’ Darling Pocket Refuge grants

Each year since 2005, the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge, in partnership with the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS), has awarded conservation grants to local teachers for science projects related to studying the environment. For the 2021-22 school year, the Environmental Education Grant Program transitioned to Pocket Refuge grants at eight Lee County district schools to teach students about the importance of pollinators and the habitat that sustains them.

In the 2022-2023 school year, “Ding” Darling again offers grants to five schools in Lee County. Interested schools (grades K-12) may apply up until Oct. 31, 2022. Selections will be made in November for gardens to be planted by May 2023. Educators can visit dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/pocket-refuge-grants for a link to the grant application.

Working with district Environmental Education Resource Susan Hassett, DDWS last year distributed a total of \$12,000 (\$1,500 to each of the schools) to buy supplies to create native pollinator gardens from a menu of native plants, bird houses, trail cameras, solar-powered fountains, and other enhancements. Schools submitted proposals for building their gardens and maintaining them for two years.

“Besides teaching kids the importance of pollinators, the Pocket Refuges are being used as mini field trips outside the classroom, where teachers can address different class subjects in an experiential way,” said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland, who helped coordinate the program.

“We are all very grateful for the leadership and generosity of the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society to invest in a new learning experience for our students,” said Hassett. “The students who came out last school year to help plant with their teachers, families, and community forged new connections that will

Protect. Educate. Inspire.



reap benefits for a lifetime. Thanks to ‘Ding’ Darling for creating a more beautiful Lee County, both visually and experientially.”

For more information about applying for a grant or supporting the Pocket Refuge program, contact Sierra Hoisington, DDWS Associate Executive Director, at shois@dingdarlingsociety.org, 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 239-472-1100 ext. 4 or director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

###

