

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Contact: Chelle Koster Walton

239-699-4754

ChelleTrav@aol.com

Caption:

‘Ding’ Darling announces second annual summer day camp

J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island has announced its second annual day camp program for the summer of 2016. This year the camp has been extended to six consecutive weeklong Nature Explorers Day Camp sessions, starting on June 20, 2016. Campers may attend only one session.

Each session will be limited to 14 middle school students (completed fourth, fifth, or sixth grade) from the Lee County and surrounding school districts or homeschool equivalent. Students attending Title 1 schools will receive preference. Lottery drawings will determine the remaining spots. Cost per one-week session per student is \$100. Financial assistance is available based on need.

The camp program was made possible by a \$15,000 grant from an anonymous donor to the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS). The donation covers costs of lunch and transportation for day campers, scholarships, T-shirts, digital cameras, and other program materials. It will also underwrite stipends for one education intern to assist with the program. Tarpon Bay Explorers will be assisting with water-related activities.

“The refuge feels that our Nature Explorers Day Camp fills an urgent need in our community,” said Ranger Becky Larkins, who oversees the program as refuge education specialist. “Existing day camps fill quickly, so we felt we could provide an excellent alternative that gets kids out in nature. By targeting Title 1 schools, we hope to reach children who cannot otherwise afford summer camps.”

Larkins designed day camp programming to reflect the mission and purposes set by the National Wildlife Refuge System. Weekly activities will include nature photography, wildlife observation, saltwater fishing, kayaking, a beach walk, nature sketching, biological research, biking, and nature crafts.

“Last year in our inaugural kickoff of our day camp program, students and parents told us that the experience was life changing,” said Larkins. “By adding two weeks this summer, we hope to influence even more kids with the message of nature.”

Students interested in applying for Nature Explorers Day Camp should visit dingdarlingsociety.org/day-camp for a printable application. To receive an application by mail, please call Larkins at 239-472-1100 ext. 236 or Toni Westland at ext. 237. Deadline for application is April 29, 2016.

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 proceeds.

To support DDWS and the refuge with a tax-deductible gift, visit www.dingdarlingsociety.org or contact Birgie Miller at 239-292-0566 or director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

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