

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Contact: Chelle Koster Walton

239-699-4754

[ChelleTrav@aol.com](mailto:ChelleTrav@aol.com)

Caption: “Ding” Darling wants “every kid at the refuge.”

### **‘Ding’ Darling again issues free passes for fourth graders, tops charts last year**

As part of President Barack Obama’s Every Kid in a Park initiative, J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island is, for the second consecutive school year, issuing free annual passes to any fourth-grade student and homeschool equivalent.

The program began last school year, and “Ding” Darling staff was determined to get a pass into the hands of every fourth grade student in Lee County. They succeeded, issuing about 6,000 passes and winding up as the number one Refuge in the 560-plus refuge system. Among the combined public lands that issued these passes (parks, refuges, recreation areas, and forests), the “Ding” Darling team was a top leader.

“That is a true testament to the enthusiasm and commitment of our visitor services and education team,” said Birgie Miller, executive director of the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS). “They believe so strongly in the importance of making conservation stewards out of today’s youth, they went far above and beyond in promoting the initiative.”

This year’s passes will be issued and valid through August 2017 at any national wildlife refuge, national park or forest, and other federal land. Admission is free for every fourth grader with a pass, accompanying siblings up to age 15, and up to three accompanying adults.

Obtaining the free annual pass – a value of \$80 – requires fourth-grade students to print out a voucher at [everykidinapark.gov](http://everykidinapark.gov). Fourth graders can complete the voucher and take it to the fee booth at the refuge’s Wildlife Drive to receive their pass. They must present a printed voucher; electronic forms will not be accepted.

“We will promote the passes to the thousands of fourth graders who visit the refuge through our school programs,” said supervisory refuge ranger Toni Westland. “We will further promote it at “Ding” Darling Days’ free Family Fun Day on Sunday, Oct. 16.”

For more information on the Every Kid in a Park pass, please visit [everykidinapark.gov](http://everykidinapark.gov). For questions about obtaining a pass at “Ding” Darling, call 239-472-1100 ext. 237.

#### 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](http://www.dingdarlingsociety.org) or contact Birgie Miller at 239-292-0566 or [director@dingdarlingsociety.org](mailto:director@dingdarlingsociety.org).

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