

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Caption: *Jim Sprankle's tri-colored herons sculpture will raise money to support "Ding" Darling and Golisano Children's Hospital.* (Photo credit Skipp Tutor)

Sprankle sculpture goes up for auction to benefit two island charities

[March 16, 2017-Sanibel Island] The life-size sculpture "Ding's Darlings – Two Tri-colored Herons" by famed island wildlife sculptor Jim Sprankle goes up for auction for SanCap Cares' 17th annual Island Celebration on April 9, 2017, to benefit Golisano Children's Hospital. The intricate piece, depicting a pair of mating birds, is a top feature of the event's live auction, and all funds raised by its sale will be split 50-50 between Golisano Children's Hospital and the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS).

Brenda and Dewey Tate, former Sanibel Island residents, donated the 3-foot-high sculpture. "Dewey and I were drawn to Sanibel years ago because of the 'Ding' Darling National Wildlife Refuge," said Brenda Tate. "We met Jim and Patty Sprankle soon after migrating to Sanibel from Atlanta. We simply fell in love with Jim's amazing wood carvings and his generous spirit. Jim created 'Ding's Darlings' for us in 2001, and they have been happy members of our family since."

Upon recently leaving the island and downsizing, the Tates decided it was time for their "darlings" to fly home to Sanibel. "We are so grateful to Amanda Cross and the entire SanCap Cares team for making this possible," said Tate. "I'm confident 'Ding's Darlings' are flapping their wings with joy to help benefit two of our favorite causes – Golisano Children's Hospital and 'Ding' Darling."

"I am so pleased that the piece, which took me more than six weeks to carve, is fulfilling a destiny with two of my favorite island non-profits," said Sprankle.

"The SanCap Cares committee and wildlife society share not only a place in Jim's and the Tates' hearts, but also a philosophy that island non-profits work better by combining forces," said Amanda Cross, this year's honorary chair of the SanCap Cares fundraiser. "Sanibel is an incredibly philanthropic community, and we know that many support multiple organizations. We are happy to include 'Ding' Darling in this effort."

Sprinkle has donated works of art for most of SanCap Cares' live auctions, Cross added. "In 2015, he surpassed the quarter-of-a-million mark for money raised to support the children's hospital with his generous donations -- an achievement for which we are incredibly grateful. This year's piece is the largest and most valuable we have had the honor to auction in our 17 years."

"Jim's contributions to 'Ding' Darling are immeasurable," said Birgie Miller, DDWS executive director. "He served as board president for many years, has volunteered since 1997, and has donated dozens of sculptures and his famous 'Sprinkle Feather Club pins' for charity auction. In addition, a showcase full of his hand-carved duck decoys, each sold for sponsorship, and a whole flock of his bird sculptures decorate and educate at our 'Ding' Darling Visitor & Education Center."

This year's SanCap Cares starts at 5:30 p.m. on April 9 at the Sanctuary Golf Club on Sanibel Island. It includes dinner and silent and live auctions. The tri-colored herons sculpture will be on display at The Sanctuary Golf Club (2801 Wulfert Rd.) starting April 1. People who are interested in placing bids by phone before or during the event, should contact Cross at SanibelCaptivaCares@gmail.com or 239-472-2082.

"We are so grateful to SanCap Cares for including us in this fundraising endeavor," said Miller. "We like to think we are both working for the health of our children, in keeping with the refuge's mission to educate children about the environment and get them outdoors to keep active and live happier, healthier lives."

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 dingdarlingsociety.org or contact Birgie Miller at 239-292-0566 or director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

ABOUT GOLISANO CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

Golisano Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida, named a "Top Hospital" by The Leapfrog Group in 2016, is the only acute care children's hospital between Tampa and Miami. Part of Lee Health, the children's hospital opened in 1994 within HealthPark Medical Center. In 2012, the hospital was renamed Golisano Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida after B. Thomas Golisano's generous donation to the capital campaign to build a new, state-of-the-art facility. The new, 300,000-square-foot, 128-bed Golisano Children's Hospital, is set to open in the spring of 2017. For more information, visit GolisanoChildrensSWFL.org.

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