

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Contact: Chelle Koster Walton
239-699-4754
ChelleKWalton@gmail.com

Caption: Bella Signs & Designs, Congress Jewelers, and, Mabry Brothers, Inc., are among the Platinum Sponsors for the 2017 tournament.

Logo attached

‘Ding’ Darling announces Platinum Sponsors of sixth annual tarpon tournament

“Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) hosts the sixth annual “Ding” Darling & Doc Ford’s Tarpon Tournament on Friday, May 19, 2017. Proceeds from the “catch, care, and release” tournament will benefit wildlife and conservation education at J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island.

Because the tournament pays out 100 percent of the entry fee (\$500 per boat of up to four) as tournament awards, DDWS raises money exclusively through sponsorships and a silent auction during the captain’s dinner on May 18 at Doc Ford’s Rum Bar on Fort Myers Beach. It recently announced five sponsors at the “platinum” level: Bella Signs & Designs, Congress Jewelers, Florida Weekly, Mabry Brothers, Inc., and Suncoast Beverage Sales.

The “Ding” Darling-Doc Ford’s Tarpon Tournament pays homage to the refuge’s tarpon legacy: The first recorded tarpon caught on a rod-and-reel happened in Tarpon Bay in 1885.

“The refuge system has a long tradition of mindful fishing, and this event keeps in stride with the refuge’s mission to educate about ethical sportsmanship and resource conservation,” said DDWS executive director Birgie Miller. “We thank all of our wonderful sponsors for helping us bolster refuge programs and research to balance federal budget shortfalls.”

Last year, DDWS raised \$55,000 for the refuge as a result of sponsorships, donations, and auction proceeds. In its five years of existence, the tourney has raised nearly \$250,000.

For more information on the tournament, visit www.dingdarlingtarpontourney.org. To learn about becoming a sponsor or donating an auction item to raise support for the overall conservation efforts at the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge, including water quality and education, call Birgie Miller at 239-292-0566.

Tournament sponsors for 2017 include: **Title Sponsor:** Doc Ford’s Rum Bar & Grille; **Premier Sponsors:** Diversified Yacht Services, Nimrod, Raiser’s Edge; **Presenting Sponsors:** Mark & Gretchen Banks; **Platinum Sponsors:** Bella Signs & Designs, Congress Jewelers, Florida Weekly, Mabry Brothers, Inc., Suncoast Beverage Sales; **Gold Sponsors:** Senator Lizbeth Benacquisto, Captiva Diva, Fort Myers Marine, The Historic Bait Box, Island Inn, Island Sun, Jensen’s Marina, John Grey Painting, Law Office of Janet Strickland PA, Lee County Sports Development, Media Source, Nautical Mile Magazine, On Island, Organized Chaos, Trophy Case of Fort Myers, VIP Realtors, Whitney’s Bait & Tackle, Don & Ann-Marie Wildman; **Silver Sponsors:** Anisa Jewelry Designs, Bailey’s General Store, Dex Imaging, Inc., Fort Myers Brewing Company, Gresham Family, Gulf Star Marina, Lighthouse Recovery Institute, Misty Wells’ “Let’s Take It Outside,” Must Do Visitor Guides & MustDo.com, Sanibel-Captiva Community Bank, Sanibel Gear, Sanibel Island Fishing Club, Semmer Electric/Bonita Bill’s Waterfront Café, Wilbur Smith Attorneys at Law.

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.

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