

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Caption:

‘Ding’ artist ‘in residence’ takes art outreach to Quality Life Center

As part of his eight-week artist “in residence” program at the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island, wildlife artist Ed Anderson recently created a wildlife mural with at-risk youth at Quality Life Center of Southwest Florida in Fort Myers. “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) is sponsoring the artist “in residence” program as part of the refuge’s ongoing 75th anniversary celebration.

About 15 kids ages six to 12 participated with Anderson in the mural project at Quality Life, creating an 8-by-8-foot tableau of a snowy egret and fish in the mangroves, a common scene at “Ding” Darling. Once Anderson finishes touching up the mural, it will return to the Quality Life to become part of the center’s art room.

Quality Life Center, incorporated in 1992, strives to strengthen and instill pride in family and community through programs and services that cultivate discipline, self-development, confidence, and cultural awareness. It operates from the premise that “if a child receives love, develops a healthy respect for the Creator, and has a positive self-image, then society will have a child who is prepared to meet life’s challenges,” says its web site. It strives to develop a winning spirit and positive attitude that will help children attain a quality life.

“Ed truly brightened the faces of the kids he mentored with art at Quality Life,” said Refuge Ranger Monica Scroggin, who assisted with the mural creation. “The mission of the refuge is to find ways to introduce kids to wildlife in many different ways, and art is an important one of them. This was a team effort that tied in directly with Quality Life’s positive philosophy.”

Coming up later this month, Anderson will lead an art workshop at the refuge for the PACE Center for Girls – Lee County, sponsored by the Gardner Families. Also, DDWS will be providing a fully funded field trip for Quality Life Center to the refuge in July, including transportation to “Ding” Darling and

on-site programming.

“Our refuge was created by conservation artist Jay Norwood ‘Ding’ Darling in 1945, so it’s more than fitting that we begin celebrating our 75th anniversary with interpretive art programs,” said supervisory refuge ranger Toni Westland. “Darling, who created the Federal Duck Stamp program, designed the first duck stamp and the refuge system’s Blue Goose logo. He won the Pulitzer Prize twice for his popular political cartoons throughout the 1920s and 30s.”

Anderson’s fine art hangs in the homes of collectors and has been published in publications around the United States including *Gray’s Sporting Journal*, *Backcountry Journal*, and, locally, *Gulfshore Life*. In the interest of conservation, he has donated his work to DDWS, Bonefish & Tarpon Trust, Captains for Clean Water, and various other non-profits. He has been visiting Sanibel Island since his childhood, for more than 40 years.

To find out more about Anderson’s work, visit edandersonart.com. To keep up to date on the refuge’s 75th anniversary celebration, visit ding75.org. To support field trips to the refuge and learn of other opportunities to inspire the next generation of conservation stewards, contact DDWS at 239-472-1100 ext. 4.

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.

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