

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release.

Contact: Chelle Koster Walton
239-699-4754
ChelleTrav@aol.com

Caption: Robin E. Kirk

Caption: Bill Hardy with wife Laurie.

DDWS board welcomes new members

The “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) Board of Directors recently welcomed two Sanibel Island residents as new members: William (Bill) H. Harkey and Robin E. Kirk.

Harkey, a fifth-generation California “farm boy,” grew up on a peach and prune ranch in northern California. After graduating from Oregon State University in 1971, he began a 30-year career in the U.S. Army, finishing as the director of public affairs at the United States Military Academy, West Point, NY, before he retired.

With his wife, Laurie, Harkey began visiting Sanibel in 2002, and by 2019 they became permanent residents. He participates actively in the Rotary Club of Sanibel-Captiva and is an avid golfer.

"Laurie and I have always been fans of the outdoors and wildlife," says Harkey, adding that they have witnessed the great impact the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge has had on wildlife populations since they first started visiting. “The refuge’s mission of public education and environmental and wildlife protection is vitally important, but with the cutbacks in federal staffing and resource support, the role of the society is even more crucial. I consider my serving on the society board an opportunity to give back and to help continue the vital work it does. It’s a great calling, and I welcome it."

Kirk grew up in the Ozark foothills of Arkansas with a love for nature and education, which led to an elementary education degree from Harding University in Searcy, Ark. Her deep passion for

nature and getting children to read resulted in volunteering for the Cuyahoga Valley National Park in Ohio, where she worked with school groups. Later, Kirk served as a seasonal park ranger and self-published children's nature books that would encourage children to read and get outside.

“Upon visiting Sanibel in 2005, I fell in love with the conservation ethic and wanted to be a part of it,” she says. “Ding’ Darling provides the very opportunity to continue to learn about the natural world from the ground up to the top of the tallest mangrove trees. Now, as a full-time Sanibel resident, I love being a part of this organization and supporting ‘Ding’ in the many ways available, including the education of young explorers.”

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 239-292-0566 or director@dingdarlingsociety.org

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