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"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society - Friends of the Refuge

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Contact: Chelle Koster Walton

239-699-4754

ChelleTrav@aol.com

Caption: Nature Store2 will carry old favorites and new surprises.

Caption: Ann-Marie Wildman manages DDWS' Nature Store operations.

DDWS to launch Nature Store2 on Sanibel Island

With the reopening date of the “Ding” Darling Visitor & Education Center still uncertain, the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) has decided to launch a second Refuge Nature Store off-campus on Sanibel Island. The opening of Nature Store2 is slated for mid-November at 2250 Periwinkle Way in Sanibel Square.

“Because the Visitor & Education Center has been closed since March, we have suffered significant financial losses with our flagship store shuttered,” said DDWS executive director Birgie Miller. “All profits from that store support the refuge, so, consequently, wildlife and research projects could suffer with continued, prolonged lack of income. On average, more than 200 visitors entered the store each day when the center was open. Besides store earnings, the closure has negatively impacted donations that resulted from those visits.”

By beefing up its new ShopDingDarling.com online store, DDWS has been able to keep staff employed and some cash flowing into coffers. The success of the online store, however, has outgrown the storage and fulfillment space at the flagship store, which is one main reason for launching Nature Store2.

“We are fortunate to have a strong fan base for our store,” said Nature Store manager Ann-Marie Wildman. “But our refuge support thrives on the ability to reach customers and potential donors personally, not only for purchasing, but also for educating the public about the refuge’s mission and importance.”

The new 1,500-square-foot store will feature a monitor streaming images of the wildlife, scenery, and available activities at the refuge. Although it will carry some of the same popular items available at the flagship store and ShopDingDarling.com, it will be more art-oriented.

“It will feature some items that can only be purchased at the Nature Store2 location,” said Wildman. “We will also have more space to allow artists to meet the public, and we will have more special events and book signings at the new location.”

Nature Store2, like its mother store, will carry nature-specific items, sustainable gifts, and educational merchandise, much of it made in the U.S.A. and by local artists and artisans. Popular inventory includes books, children’s games and toys, logo apparel, jewelry and accessories, and green and other home décor items. Visitors can learn more about “Ding” Darling at Nature Store2 through brochures and staff and volunteers trained at the refuge.

“This location will not only be our online fulfillment center but will also be an opportunity to create a unique shopping experience for those who otherwise would never make it to the refuge,” said Wildman.

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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