

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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LOGO attached

Caption: The WoW urban mobile classroom starts its outreach journey.

WoW is here, debuts Dec. 12

The J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge welcomed its long-anticipated Wildlife on Wheels (WoW) urban mobile classroom on Nov. 29 and began team training the following day. Toni Westland, supervisory refuge ranger, and Sierra Hoisington, development officer for the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS), lead the WoW team as it prepares for its first in-the-field debut on Dec. 12 in an under-represented, urban Fort Myers community.

The public debut will take place near the Big Lots store at 4901 Palm Beach Blvd. from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Staff, including bilingual Spanish interpreters, will be conducting safe tours according to CDC guidelines throughout the day.

“We have been dreaming about the possibility of WoW for years, and it’s like an early Christmas present to finally get to explore it and share it with others in the community,” said DDWS executive director Birgie Miller. “It will help us spread the message about the beauty and calm of the refuge and nature to those who find it difficult to travel out to Sanibel Island to experience it themselves.”

The mobile classroom will be scheduled to visit schools, libraries, community centers, conservation-minded events, and under-represented communities in the five-county area to teach about water quality, the ecosystem, wildlife, and other topics that meet the refuge’s mission. In January, it will make its first school visit for one week at Tice Elementary.

Educator-driven curriculum will comply with STEM and Sunshine State standards for grades kindergarten through 12. Interactive learning stations interpret mangrove ecosystems, water quality, water conservation, pollution and plastic, animal scats and tracks, and Florida’s native animals.

WoW’s design, fabrication, and staffing has been made possible by private philanthropic support. DDWS is still seeking funding for ongoing travel and development needs. Contact Miller at 239-472-1100 ext.

232, 239-292-0566, or director@dingdarlingsociety.org to learn more. Visit wowding.org for information about the mobile classroom and its upcoming schedule.

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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