

David M. Iglesias

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Dear "Ding" Darling Family,

It isn't easy to put in words how honored and thankful I am for the opportunity of working in "Ding" Darling. The experience with the WoW has been one of the most rewarding in my life. It was not only my first approach to the American culture, but it showed me how big the heart of the American people could be. To be able to accomplish such impressive work only through donations is impressive.

As a Latinx and immigrant community member, seeing how outreach programs like the WoW help include my communities gives me hope and pushes me to keep working in a more inclusive and diverse society. While working with the students, I have been touched by their stories, and I can relate to them because I understand how challenging it is to move to another country. It gives me joy to see how happy the students get when they can understand science in Spanish. The WoW is definitely changing lives in the SWFL community, and it is a program that is necessary for the improvement of our society.

I will always treasure this experience not only for the beauty of the refuge and the island but for the fantastic people I meet here. Melissa, Toni, Randi, Sandi, and Janet welcomed me and had a lot of patience while I was adapting to a new country and a new language. Their guidance helped me improve my teaching skills and will help me navigate my life in the United States.

I have learned so much during this internship, from the ecology of SWFL, the refuge system, to even Star Wars (thanks to the interns). I will take all the knowledge and skills that I have acquired to my PhD program in Chicago. The teaching skills will help me communicate with my students, and the experience of working with different communities will help me in my journey toward my PhD.

Yo siempre estaré orgulloso de llamar a "Ding" Darling mi primer hogar en los Estados Unidos y espero tener la oportunidad de regresar al este paraíso.

(I will always feel proud to call "Ding" Darling my first home in the United States, and I hope I get the opportunity to return to paradise.)

David M. Iglesias