



Protect. Educate. Inspire.

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Caption: Dr. Geraldine Oades-Sese was a principal investigator in a large-scale resilience study for Sesame Workshop's childhood resilience initiative, "Little Children, Big Challenges."

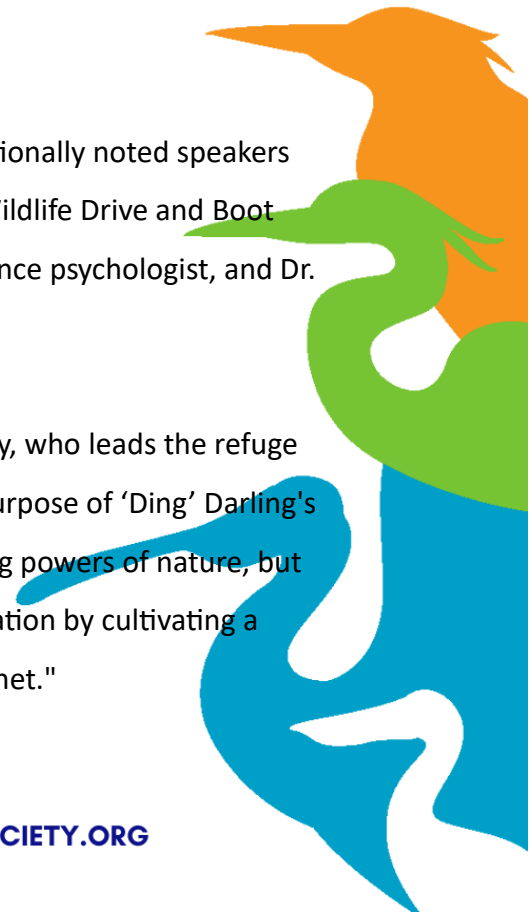
Caption: Dr. Joseph Blanda was keynote speaker for the inaugural 2022 Wellness Week.

DDWS to celebrate Nature Wellness Week May 3-9

As part of National Mental Health Month, the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island, with support from the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS), has announced Nature Wellness Week 2023. The second annual event takes place May 3 through 9 at refuge venues and throughout the community, including Lakes Park and Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) in Fort Myers.

Highlights of the week will range from nature-healing lectures by nationally noted speakers and a Food Forest Wellness Fest at FGCU, to mindfulness walks on Wildlife Drive and Boot Camp. Guest lecturers include Dr. Geraldine Oades-Sese, child resilience psychologist, and Dr. Joe Blanda, healing-through-nature advocate.

"People protect the things they care about," said Ranger Jessica Barry, who leads the refuge wellness program with mindfulness volunteer Cristina Shaul. "The purpose of 'Ding' Darling's Nature Wellness Week is not only to expose individuals to the healing powers of nature, but also to promote the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's mission of conservation by cultivating a community with a deeper, more meaningful relationship to their planet."





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Stay tuned to dingwellness.com to learn more about Nature Wellness Week activities, how to register, and the overall refuge wellness program.

“Last year’s Wellness Week was such a success, we wanted to bring it back, along with the mindfulness activities we’ve offered throughout the year,” said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland. “When the refuge closed after Hurricane Ian in September, we looked for ways to benefit the traumatized community, who needed that connection with nature to help heal. We partnered with Sanibel Rec and are building on the success we had with the self-guided mindfulness trail at the Bailey Tract by expanding our mindfulness-oriented audio recordings at the refuge and along Wildlife Drive. Participants will get a sneak peek of that during Nature Wellness Week.”

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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