



# COUNTY CONNECTION

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# NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION SOLUTIONS

## *close to home*

By Barbra Hernández, Marion County Office of Public Information

**A**h, the holidays: that magical time that sweeps us into making all kinds of resolutions, big and small, for the new year. Some of us resolve to start a diet, others to manage our finances better. Some will decide it's the year to make some home improvements; others will try to figure out ways to scale back on spending.

Whatever your resolutions for 2012 are, Marion County government offices are likely able to help you take a step closer to fulfilling them. Check out our list of common resolutions to find out how we may help.



### **Resolution #1: Exercise more.**

Whether to lose weight or just maintain a healthy lifestyle, exercise has many benefits. Exercising outside as opposed to indoors, however, provides some added perks, like increased energy and decreased tension, depression and anger [according to a recent study from the Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry](#). Visit one of our 39 county parks to get your muscles moving outside and optimize your workout's benefits for 2012 and beyond. To find a park near you, see our [listing of county parks](#).

### **Resolution #2: Manage the diet.**

Whether you're going on a food or fiscal diet, UF/IFAS Marion County Extension Service offers courses to help maintain those resolutions. Learn how to grow your own vegetable garden, take charge of your diabetes or develop a spending plan or savings strategy. Call 352-671-8400 for a full course listing and class times.

## MISSION STATEMENT

Marion County provides professional and resourceful public services for our citizens through strategic planning and cost-effective implementation of county initiatives, generating positive results that set the standard for quality local government.

**TOP  
STORY**

**Resolution #3: Look for a new job.**

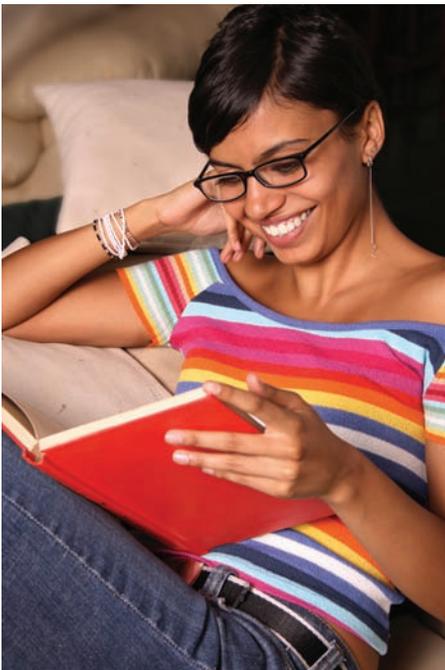
Did you know Marion County government posts all of its job openings online at [www.marioncountyfl.org/humanresources.htm](http://www.marioncountyfl.org/humanresources.htm)? Call the Human Resources office at 352-438-2345 to learn about these as well as volunteer and internship opportunities.

Also, consider visiting the Public Library System's online "Tools to help during tough economic times" to see information on topics including finding a job, creating your resume and developing new skills.

**Resolution #4: Make home improvements.**

Looking to take advantage of the cooler weather and renovate the exterior of your home or complete outdoor projects such as installing a new deck, fence or shed? The Building Department can assist you in pulling the appropriate permit at 352-438-2400. And while you're at it, ensure the safety of your home by [installing a smoke alarm](#) and writing a [fire escape plan](#). Not sure how? Call Marion County Fire Rescue at 352-291-8000.

**Resolution #5: Relax more.**



You might have left behind a tough 2011. Maybe you're just now getting some down time from work and family commitments. Fortunately, your prescription for relaxation is nearby.

Whether it's a hike in the woods, relaxing stay in a rustic cabin, good book or even a new furry friend that you're looking for, the county has it. See our [listing of county parks](#) for the best hiking locations, or call Parks and Recreation at 352-671-8760 to find out about its cabins

nested along Horseshoe Lake. Visit the library [in person](#) or [online](#) to find your next book to curl up with, and look for a new furry friend amongst the [adoptable pets](#) at Marion County Animal Services. If your idea of relaxation instead includes activities like throwing parties, you could also consider booking the [rental areas at UF/IFAS Marion County Extension Service](#).

Have another resolution in mind but not sure how we may help? Call us at 352-438-2300.

**BEHIND  
THE  
SCENES**

**Office of the  
County Engineer's  
Survey Section**

By Barbra Hernández, Marion County Office of Public Information

**D**igging for treasures. Some make a hobby of it. Others call it a living.



Meet the Marion County Office of the County Engineer's Survey Section. This team of five leads no ordinary scavenger hunt over Marion County land. These staffers don't really go after gold (though finding some would sure be welcome), and their work instruments don't make alarming sounds when they detect something buried, but their searches yield a special kind of finding: accuracy. And when talking construction, it's worth a lot.

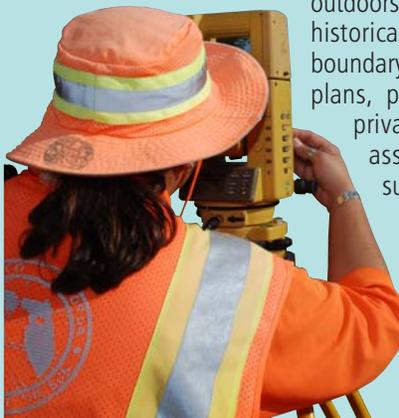
Surveying, a profession dating back thousands of years to ancient civilizations, is the art of finding precise locations, or points, on land to determine distances, angles and, especially, property boundaries.

Before an engineer puts a design concept to paper and long before the shovel hits the ground on an Office of the County Engineer construction project, the survey crew takes to the field to trace the canvas over which others will build.

"We help ensure accuracy of information that will be used in the design of construction plans," said County Surveyor John Archer.

Guided by advanced instruments and GPS, the survey crew scans land to determine the physical delimitations and topographical features of future construction sites for anything from sidewalks and curbs to major roads. Once surveyors gather information on the areas to be improved, engineers use it to design the facilities county residents and visitors will enjoy. Then when construction is done, survey staff heads back to the field to collect additional land data on the constructed project.

While conducting field surveys is one of main duties of this team of modern-day land explorers, its everyday work isn't limited to the outdoors. The survey crew also maintains historical records and a database of boundary and topographical data, review plans, plats and other documents for private development projects and assists the public with general survey questions.



To learn more about the Office of the County Engineer's survey work, visit the [website](#) or call 352-671-8686.

# NEWSFLASH

## The time has arrived to register for Citizens Academy

By Christy Jergens, Marion County Office of Public Information

**R**eady. Set. Go! The time for citizens to register for the Marion County Citizens Academy has officially arrived. Academy hopefuls should apply as soon as possible – registrants are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. Access registration forms and additional information about the program at [www.marioncountyfl.org/citizensacademy.htm](http://www.marioncountyfl.org/citizensacademy.htm).



County residents or business owners ages 18 and older are eligible to attend. All interested residents must complete a registration form and be accepted prior to attending; academy participants must go to a minimum of eight of the 10 sessions to graduate.

## Stormwater education grants available for teachers

By Barbra Hernández, Marion County Office of Public Information

**P**ublic and private educators wishing to teach their students about stormwater quality topics may benefit from a Marion County Office of the County Engineer grant program.

Through March 30, 2012, educators serving students in unincorporated Marion County may apply for a grant under the 2011-2012 Stormwater Education Grants Program. Awardees may receive up to \$750 to use for stormwater/water resource projects and up to \$1,000 to purchase equipment related to these projects. Interested applicants may visit [www.marioncountyfl.org/stormwater.htm](http://www.marioncountyfl.org/stormwater.htm) to download grant application instructions and forms.

The Office of the County Engineer launched the Stormwater Education Grants Program in 2010 to help students who live in unincorporated Marion County learn about stormwater pollution prevention, karst topography and what water quality means to the Floridan aquifer and other water bodies.

For more information about the grants program, call Gail Mowry at 352-671-8686.

## BY THE NUMBERS - COUNTY SERVICES IN 2011



Compiled by Elaine Delorio, Marion County Office of Public Information

**O**ver the span of a year, many residents and non-residents alike visit county facilities, and a barrage of items and services change hands. Just how many? Glad you asked. Read below for a numbers round-up from some of our county departments for the last calendar/fiscal year.

- ✓ Marion Countians kept 20,496.59 tons of waste out of the landfill by recycling.
- ✓ Marion County Veterans Services staff assisted veterans with 6,408 requests for assistance.
- ✓ 782,120 square feet of runway was either repaved or rejuvenated at the Dunnellon Airport to extend the life of the airport's runway.
- ✓ 391 brave souls crawled, squeezed, shimmied and scooted through White Cliff cave as part of the Marion County Parks and Recreation guided cave tour program.
- ✓ County citizens checked out items from the Marion County Public Library System 1,424,614 times.
- ✓ UF/IFAS Marion County Extension Service's eight extension agents offered 477 class sessions.
- ✓ 2,319 homeless dogs, cats, ferrets, guinea pigs, rabbits, birds, horses and even pigs found homes with help from Marion County Animal Services.

# Forest Community Center OPENS IN OCKLAWAHA

By Barbra Hernández, Marion County Office  
of Public Information



Ocklawaha residents now have a new place to call home. On Nov. 19, Marion County Parks and Recreation and the Forest Advisory Council inaugurated the Forest Community Center at Sandhill Park.

The 9,600-square-foot center, formerly home to the Forest Public Library, will offer area residents daily public meeting room access, a variety of adult and youth recreational programs and a youth room equipped with billiard, foosball and pingpong tables. Outdoor enthusiasts visiting the adjacent, nine-acre Sandhill Park will enjoy a playground, picnic pavilion and self-guided interpretive trail along a raised boardwalk connecting to the library's new location.

Construction of the Forest Community Center was completed in October with U.S. Housing and Urban Development Department Community Development Block Grant funds. For more information about the center and upcoming programs, call Marion County Parks and Recreation at 352-671-8560 or visit [www.marioncountyfl.org/parks.htm](http://www.marioncountyfl.org/parks.htm).



# END *holiday celebrations* ON A SAFE NOTE

By Peveeta Seeraj, APR, Marion County Fire Rescue

The gifts have been unwrapped, the holiday meals have been devoured and you've happily rung in another new year; what's next on your list? Well, Marion County Fire Rescue hopes it's a quick cleanup that's added to your to-do list to prevent lingering hazards from spoiling the new year.

Fire Rescue recommends following these safety tips to ensure 2012 is as joyful as the 2011 holiday season:

### Holiday cleanup and fireplace protocol:

- Remove the Christmas tree when it begins dropping needles, or as soon after the holidays as possible. Dried-out trees are a serious fire danger and should not be left in or near the home or garage. Instead, live Christmas trees can be dropped off at any of Marion County's 18 recycling centers. For more information, visit Marion County Solid Waste's website.
- Take down indoor and outdoor electrical lights immediately after the holidays to make them last longer and prevent hazards. Check each strand of lights for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires and loose connections. Discard damaged strands.
- Remove other seasonal decorations and materials, such as stockings, candles and extension cords.
- Never burn cardboard boxes, wrapping paper, Christmas trees or trash in your fireplace. Use only seasonal woods when building fires, and when you do build a fire, build a smaller, hotter one; they burn more evenly and cause less smoke.
- Keep the area around a fireplace clean and free from flammables like stockings, rugs and other home furnishings, and hire a licensed and insured chimney sweeper to clean and inspect your chimney and fireplace yearly.

### Heating safety:

- Turn off space heaters when you are not in the room and when you go to sleep.
- Place space heaters on a flat, level surface where they can't fall or break open, and keep them at least three feet away from combustibles, children and pets.
- Check space heater cords and wires periodically to ensure that they have not frayed or eroded, and don't use extension cords for your heaters unless absolutely necessary.
- Purchase space heaters that consumer safety watchdogs such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL) have approved and that automatically shut off should the heater tip over.
- Hire a licensed and insured professional to inspect your heating system annually and service as needed. Clean or replace furnace filters annually, and be sure to keep combustibles away from these heating sources, especially when heating systems are stored in a closet.



# EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

**JOHN ARCHER JR.** ■ COUNTY SURVEYOR  
OFFICE OF THE COUNTY ENGINEER

*Compiled By Barbra Hernández, Marion County Office of Public Information*

**What led you to your current career or position, and what made you interested in working in your field?** I am a second generation land surveyor. I began working in the field with my dad at his engineering firm when I was 12. Later while in college, I found my way back into the field working for a number of companies in the West. The diversity of the work and the challenges it brings is why I enjoy surveying.

**Are you from Marion County originally? If you've lived other places, where have you lived?** No, I am originally from Kansas City, Mo., and have lived in Arkansas, California, Kansas, Missouri, Tennessee and Alabama.

**What are some unique or interesting projects you've worked on while employed here?** In my tenure I have worked on so many exciting projects for almost every department under the Marion County Board of County Commissioners. Some of my favorites would be: all of the major road projects, working with the Marion County Sheriff's Office on different investigations, retracement of Bureau of Land Management work, the early cells at the landfill and anything I have ever done for Marion County Parks and Recreation.

**What work accomplishment have you been proudest of?** My daily activities give me a unique chance to leave a history of my work with every project. I just hope someday

when I'm gone that someone looks at what I have done here and says, "Man, that guy did good work."

**What's the oddest job you've ever had?** I once cleaned rotten vegetables out of semitrailers on a road trip for some traveling money.

**What are your hobbies/interests?** I ride and build motorcycles. Also, I enjoy sailing and snow skiing.

**Tell us something interesting about you that most people wouldn't know.** I've ridden a motorcycle through 49 states, most of Canada and Mexico.

# PETS OF THE MONTH

*By Elaine Delorio, Marion County Office of Public Information*



**Georgie**  
(A063160)



**Copper**  
(A045542)

Georgie (A063160) – Georgie is a 7-year-old basset hound mix that says he's the perfect problem-free dog. He's housebroken, leash-broken, gets along with children and other dogs, loves car rides and enjoys spending time outside. If you're looking for an easygoing pet with no training needed, Georgie is for you.

Copper (A045542) – His name is Copper, but he's got a heart made of gold. This sweet kitty was sick and dirty when he was rescued during a cruelty case. Three months later, he's healthy, relaxed, clean and ready to make a new start this New Year's. Help him do that by adopting him today!

The adoption fee for Georgie (A063160) or Copper (A045542) is only \$40 and includes their neuter surgeries, county licenses, current vaccinations and microchips. Call Marion County Animal Services at 352-671-8700 for more information or visit the department Tuesday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. or Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

## Calendar of Events

Find out what events are coming up in Marion County. Check the [online calendar of events](#).