



COUNTY CONNECTION

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IN THIS ISSUE

Section	Page(s)
• Top Story	1
• Infographics	2
• News Flash	3-4
• Employee Spotlight	5
• Pets of the Month	5

Marion County Commissioners

- David Moore, District 1
- Kathy Bryant, District 2
- Stan McClain, Vice Chair, District 3
- Carl Zalak III, Chairman, District 4
- Earl Arnett, District 5

Marion County Administrator

Dr. Lee A. Niblock

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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.

SIGN UP SOON FOR CITIZENS ACADEMY 2014

TOP STORY



By Barbra Hernández, APR, Marion County Office of Public Information

Citizens Academy is growing in 2014. The comprehensive 10-week course that gives participants a look into local government services is expanding this year to include evening sessions.

"Our new evening sessions will provide more opportunities for Marion County residents to experience their local government up close," said Jeannie Rickman, executive administrative manager and Citizens Academy coordinator. "This will facilitate scheduling for residents who may be on tighter morning or work schedules and who would otherwise not be able to participate."

Evening sessions will provide the same offerings as the morning programming – firsthand information about:

- How your local government operates.
- Challenges and issues facing Marion County.
- Operations and services of the county's departments and offices (not including constitutional offices).

Citizens Academy sessions will be held Thursdays from March 6-May 15, 2014. Applications will be accepted starting Jan. 2 and may be completed online by clicking [here](#).

CITIZENS ACADEMY 101

What are the session hours?

Morning sessions will be held from 9 a.m.-noon. Evening sessions will run from 6-9 p.m.

What do the sessions include?

Session formats vary and may include a variety of speakers, facility tours and hands-on demonstrations.

Who can attend?

Residents and business owners in Marion County who are at least 18 years old.

What is the cost?

Citizens Academy is offered at no cost.

More information:

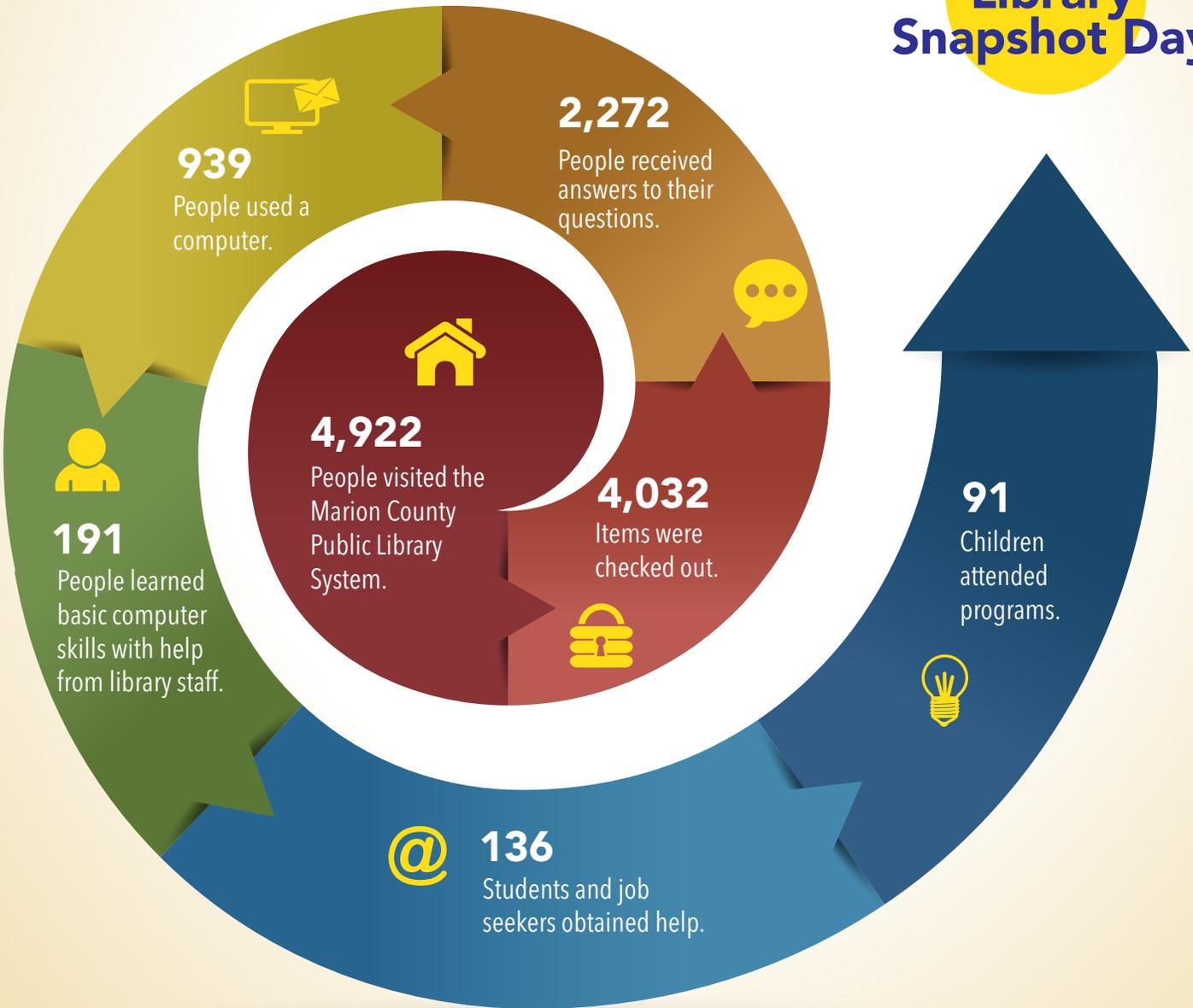
Contact Jeannie Rickman [here](#) or call 352-438-2300.

Apply [here](#) starting Jan. 2!

A Day in the Life of Your Public Library System*

How many people use library services on a given day? Find out below from the 2013 Library Snapshot Day results and learn how you can be counted this year!

Jan. 22, 2014 is
Library Snapshot Day



Want to show us how you use library services? Stop by your local public library branch on **Jan. 22** and take part in the 2014 Library Snapshot Day. Libraries across the state will be joining this effort to document their impacts within their local communities. For more information, call 352-671-8551 or click [here](#).

*As documented during the 2013 Library Snapshot Day.

NEWSFLASH

PROGRAM PORTRAITS:

Bring the Harvest Home nets 15,000 pounds in donations

Local officials, citizens and businesses partnered during the Dec. 6 Holiday Food Drive to help Marion's neediest families "Bring the Harvest Home" this season. Officials collected more than 15,000 pounds of canned food and toiletry donations to be distributed among local food pantries Brother's Keeper, Interfaith Emergency Services and Salvation Army. Thank you, Marion County, for your generosity!



Special thanks to the extra efforts of our local Marion County UF/IFAS Extension Service 4-H groups. In all, these eager children and teens brought in nearly 1,700 pounds of food donations. Learn more about Marion County's 4-H programs by clicking [here](#).



Looking for business?

If you're a **local vendor** in Marion County, **opportunities** may be closer than you think.

Sign up today to receive **bid notifications** through Marion County Procurement Services'

Local Business Directory.

Call 352-671-8444.

LOW ROPES, HIGH HOPES

Parks course builds local teams

By Elaine Delorio McClain, Marion County Office of Public Information



On a warm, Florida December day, about two dozen children balance carefully on a long cable stretched between wooden columns. Though the cable is only about a foot off the ground, they grip each other's arms tightly, holding their collective breath and willing themselves not to fall. As more children step on the cable, the members of the human rope scoot gingerly further along to make room, trusting each other to help balance them and keep them from falling.

"You can do it!" shouts Danny Smith, a recreation leader with Marion County Parks and Recreation. "Don't let go!"

Smith is a certified ropes course instructor, and, along with Josh Snellgrove, also a recreation leader, is leading this homeschool PE class of 9-15 year-olds through the low ropes course at Brick City Adventure Park.

Ropes courses, often used as personal development and team-building exercises, provide physically- and mentally-taxing challenges conquerable only by the participants working together as a group. Marion County's course is a "low ropes course," meaning most of the eight different challenges don't involve the element of height.

"The ropes course presents a personal challenge," explained Recreation Manager Cathy Norris. "But the exercises also involve problem-solving and working as a unit with a group of people. And without a doubt, all of the challenges involve a trust factor."

The homeschool PE group is only one of many groups to scoot, shimmy, stretch and spring across the ropes course. In addition to Parks' outdoor recreation programs, private businesses, leadership classes and other groups can reserve a private guided ropes course experience.



Could your business, group or class benefit from a team-building exercise?

To find out more about reserving a private ropes course experience led by a certified instructor, call Parks and Recreation at 352-671-8560 or email parcs@marioncountyfl.org. Discounted rates for non-profit groups are available. For news and updates about other parks programs, like them on Facebook at www.facebook.com/marioncountyparksandrec.



Interact with us
on **Facebook!**

Click [here](#) to join
your community's conversations
online.

Mark your CALENDAR

Mark these important dates on your calendar this month:

- **Jan. 1 - All county government offices closed**, in observance of New Year's Day.
- **Jan. 14, 6:30-8:30 p.m. - Town hall meeting** (Berean Baptist Church, 4800 SW 20th St., Ocala).
- **Jan. 20 - All county government offices closed**, in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Calendar of Events

Find out what events are coming up
in Marion County – check the online
calendar of events!

ROSEANNE RUSSO

LIBRARY DIVISION MANAGER,
MARION COUNTY PUBLIC
LIBRARY SYSTEM



Compiled by Stacie Causey, Marion County
Office of Public Information

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Educational background: Master of Library Science (FSU), Master of Education (UF) and Bachelor of Science in Zoology (UF).

When did you start with Marion County? December 2006.

Are you from Marion County originally? If you've lived other places, where have you lived? I am originally from Newark, NJ. I came to Florida in 1971 to attend school and, recognizing that skies really are blue, never left. I have lived in Gainesville since 1974 and in Alachua since 1983.

What's your favorite or most rewarding part of your job? Working with a talented and highly dedicated staff.

What are some unique or interesting projects you've worked on while employed here? CREATE (Colossal Reading, Entertaining Artsy Teen Event), YALLA (Young Adults Leading Library Awareness) and BOOKFEAST (a smorgasbord of local authors).

What would you like for the average resident to know about your department or position?

Knowledge can change your life! The public library provides all of the citizenry with the foundations to create an improved world, for themselves and for others, through the free flow of information. We live in a country where one can be as informed as one wants to be.

Many of my friends are from countries in which governments have a stranglehold on what the citizenry may read. One only reads what the ruling party will allow to be read. When they came to the United States, my friends were astounded that we were allowed to read freely and form our own opinions. Having been denied this for so long, they did not take this lightly! They became the strongest defenders of the public library as the clearest symbol of their newly acquired freedom and speak to me often about the pride they have in being a part of it. These people have helped me shape my conviction that we must have free access to information if we are to truly be free.

What do you listen to on your way to work? National Public Radio (NPR) and books.

Tell us a little about your home life (kids, pets, etc.) Married 30 years to H.J. Herrera, a photographer (which means there are lots of beautiful photos hanging throughout the house). One son, age 26. He is an environmental consultant living in NYC. Two cats, Frank and Elizabeth, both now 16.

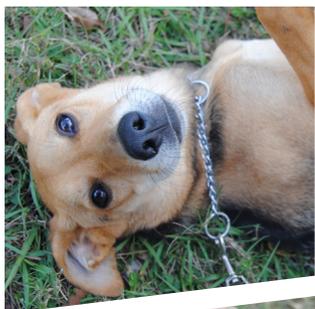
What are your hobbies/interests? Violin (and Annasemble, a multi-age community orchestra made up of adults who had lessons at some point in their lives and talented teens), strength training, travel out of the country and cooking for friends who enjoy taking a chance on "let's try this" meals. (This can be hilarious!)

If you could be or do anything else – what would you do or be? Peace Corps volunteer.

Do you have a special quote/saying/motto that has special meaning to you? If so, what is it? "A man may do an immense deal of good, if he does not care who gets the credit for it," from the diary of Father Strickland, S. J., 1863.

PETS of the MONTH

By Elaine Delorio McClain, Marion County Office of Public Information



Jingles (A110778) - is a 1-year-old female hound mix. She is a sweet girl that enjoys going for walks and car rides. Jingles is well behaved and gets along with other dogs, adults and children.

Dusty (A110848) - is a 4-year-old male pit bull mix. Dusty is quite the character and seems to love posing with puppy-dog eyes for the camera. He does well on a leash and likes playing in the water. Dusty does well with men, women and children.

The adoption fee for all dogs and cats is only \$40 and includes their spay/neuter surgeries, county licenses, current vaccinations and microchips. Call Marion County Animal Services at 352-671-8700 for more information or visit the shelter Tuesday-Friday from 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m. or Saturday from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. See all the dogs and cats available for adoption online by clicking [here](#).

