



COUNTY CONNECTION

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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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Scan the QR code with your smartphone to visit Marion County online.

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.

NEW MARION COUNTY WEBSITE LAUNCHES WITH IMPROVED FEATURES

By Barbra Hernández, APR, Office of Public Information

County residents, business owners and potential visitors are now accessing a new and improved Marion County website when they visit www.marioncountyfl.org.

The new website delivers improved content and navigation, and enhanced features for customers looking to interact with their local government straight from their home, business or any other place. An improved visual layout depicts scenes of Marion County life that showcase community assets.

"Our online visitors will now experience a more customer-friendly, simpler-to-navigate site for accessing county programs and services," said Valerie Kendrick, Information Technology department director.

For more information about the new website or to share feedback, please contact the Marion County Office of Public Information at 352-438-2300 or email pio@marioncountyfl.org.

Visit www.marioncountyfl.org and tell us what you think!

Seen the new website? Click [here](#) to take a short survey!



TOP STORY

NEW WEBSITE FEATURES INCLUDE:



Mobile-friendly version.



Calendar and news items e-notification service.



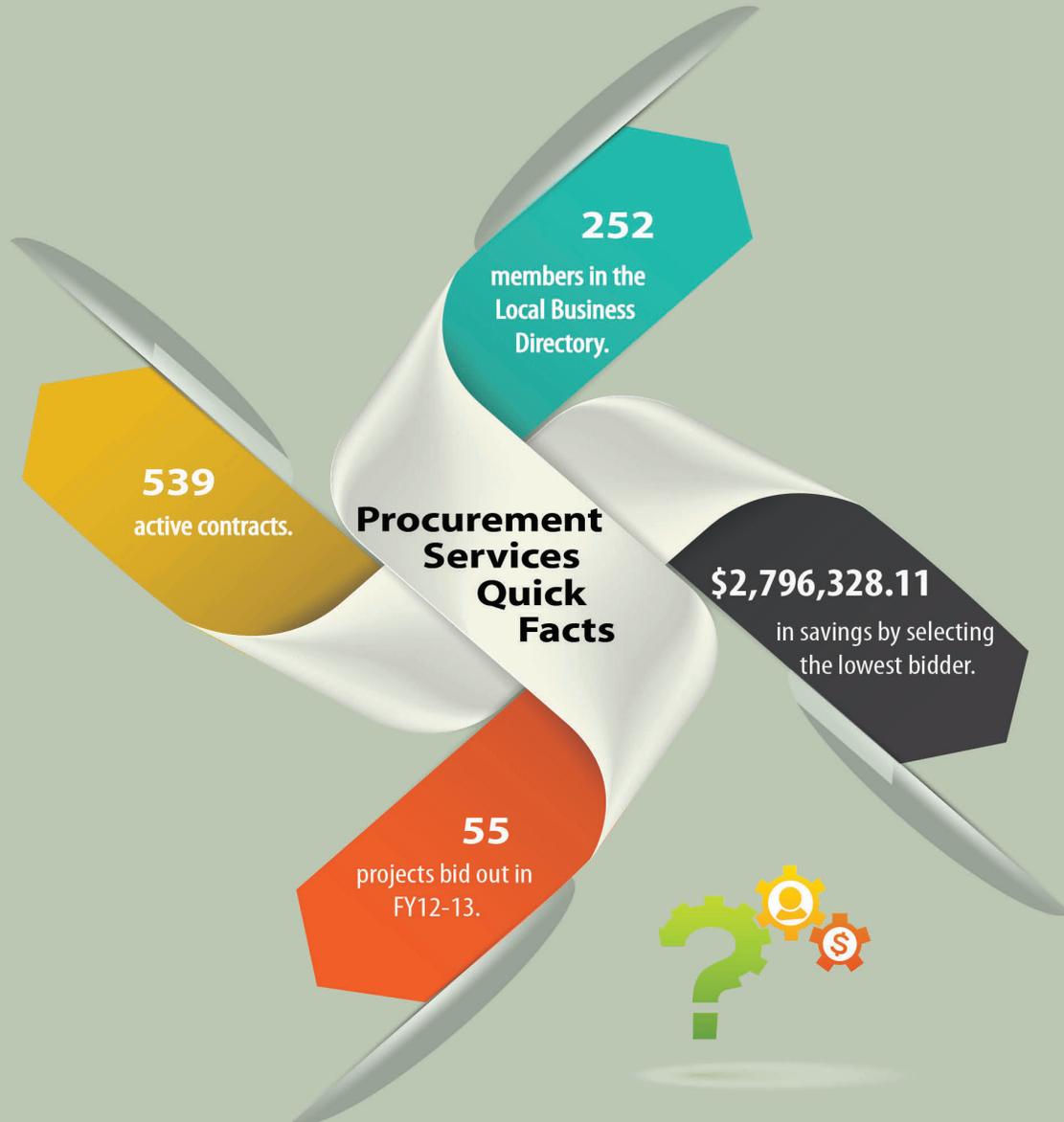
Frequently asked questions section.



Improved navigation from the home page to frequently used services and more.

Procurement Services

Know some local business owners? Read below and share with them some highlights of Marion County Procurement Services during National Purchasing Month. Perhaps, they could be the next local agency to sign up to do business with Marion County.



Why join Marion County's Local Business Directory (LBD)?

Pre-public notice LBD vendors are notified before a bid is published publicly.

Bid e-packets Bid packets can be emailed as PDFs from Procurement Services.

Internal visibility All 24 Marion County departments can view the directory at any time.

Online sign-up Click here to access the application: www.MarionCountyFl.org/procurement

* Numbers reported as of February 2014.

NEWSFLASH

20 years...and still growing! Master Gardeners Spring Festival set for March 8-9

By Stacie Causey, Marion County Office of Public Information

Marion County Master Gardeners' Spring Festival 2014

Gardening activities will be in full bloom this month as the Marion County Master Gardeners gear up to host the 2014 Marion County Master Gardeners' Spring Festival – the area's largest plant sale and garden expo. This year's two-day event kicks off at 8 a.m. on Saturday, March 8, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony to mark the festival's 20th year, and continues through Sunday, March 9, with a variety of seminars, activities and more. Read below to get the 411 on this year's festival offerings.

Spring Festival 101:

- **More than 80 vendors** will offer native plants and trees, gardening and landscaping must-haves and a variety of Central Florida's first picks of the season.
- Expert volunteers will lead **15 free mini-seminars** in the Extension Service auditorium and in the Master Gardeners' demonstration garden on topics ranging from selecting the right fertilizer and organic gardening to composting and preserving your harvest.
- Local industry specialists will provide **tips on tropical food crops, beekeeping and attracting birds and butterflies** to your garden.
- The **Kids Gardening Zone** has expanded to more than 4,800 square feet inside the auditorium and offers young gardeners educational activities, games and crafts that are sure to create a buzz. Come see the "Bug Man" and his huge collection of insects from Central Florida and create your very own pair of life-sized butterfly wings!
- **Special giveaways** on Sunday, March 9, and much more.

Did you know?

- The Marion County Springs Festival is coordinated by 90 dedicated Marion County Master Gardeners who volunteer more than 3,000 hours.
- The festival recently won the International Master Gardeners' Search for Excellence Award in Community Service. Growing from 1,700 visitors during the initial festival in 1994, last year's attendance topped 8,000.

For more information on the Spring Festival, please visit www.marioncountyfl.org/springfestival or call 352-671-8400.



Area's largest all-in-one plant sale and gardening expo!

Marion County Master Gardeners' Spring Festival 2014

March 8
8 a.m.-5 p.m.

March 9
9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Next to the
SE Livestock
Pavilion

2232 NE Jacksonville Road

www.marioncountyfl.org/springfestival

Click here
for more
details!

Community Partner:



Community Sponsor:



Event Sponsor:



Register TODAY!

April 12

**5K Corporate Run
for the Springs**

Family event!

Marion County
FLORIDA

www.marioncountyfl.org

**Calendar
— of —
Events**

Find out what events are coming up in Marion County — check the online [calendar of events!](#)

Enjoy the Taste of *Eating Right*

By Nancy Gal, Marion County UF/IFAS Extension Service

Most of our food choices are based on taste with little thought of whether they are healthy or not. During National Nutrition Month, Marion County UF/IFAS Extension Service's Food and Consumers Sciences program invites you to challenge your palate and discover nutrient-rich foods that will help you taste the benefits of eating right. Here are some starter tips:

- Enhance soups, salads, sandwiches and many entrees with dark green, red, orange, starchy and other vegetables to boost flavor and nutrition.
- Balance your plate by serving meals that contain a variety of nutrient-dense foods in appropriate portions from the protein group (animal or plant), vegetable group, fruit group, whole grain group and low-fat or non-fat dairy group.
 - Choose grain products that are made from whole grains. These include: brown rice, bulgur (cracked wheat), oatmeal, quinoa, whole grain cornmeal, whole grain wheat and whole grain barley.
 - Boost your meals with protein-rich legumes, such as: kidney beans, black beans, black-eyed peas, split peas and lentils. These offer excellent sources of dietary fiber, folate and potassium.

- Delight in fruit — the ideal dessert. With little effort, a plain apple can become a baked apple with the addition of raisins, a sprinkle of cinnamon and a dollop of low-fat yogurt.

Get more tips or sign up for one of several classes on food and nutrition available through Extension Service, visit www.marioncountyfl.org/extensionsservice or call 352-671-8400.



**Fix
-a-
Leak
Week**

March
17-23

Drip, drip, drip. Whether in the kitchen or bathroom, a leaky faucet or toilet is a waste of natural resources and your money. **Did you know that water lost due to a leak can be more expensive than the cost of buying replacement parts?**

Check out the **Marion County Utilities** website for easy directions for checking for leaks, do-it-yourself instructions for fixing them and other helpful tips for water efficiency. Visit www.marioncountyfl.org/utilities today!

- A 1/32-inch leak can waste 73,992 gallons per year.
- A 1/16-inch leak can waste 295,992 gallons per year.
- A 1/8-inch leak can waste 1,183,992 gallons per year.
- A 1/4-inch leak can waste 4,725,996 gallons per year.

RITA WILEMON

MARION COUNTY
INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGYCompiled by Barbra Hernández, APR, Office
of Public InformationEMPLOYEE
SPOTLIGHT

Educational background: Bachelor of Science degree in Systems Science from the University of West Florida in Pensacola, Florida.

Associate of Arts degree in Business Administration from Central Florida Community College in Ocala, Florida.

When did you start with Marion County? October 1994.

What led you to your current career or position, and what made you interested in working in your field? In my first couple of years at college I studied both accounting and information technology. After taking some computer programming classes at the University of West Florida, I decided that was what I really wanted to pursue. I enjoyed the problem-solving aspect of writing code and helping make others' jobs easier.

Are you from Marion County originally? If you've lived other places, where have you lived? I was born in Ocala. For about two years I lived in Pensacola, Florida while obtaining my bachelor's degree.

What's your favorite or most rewarding part of your job? The most rewarding part of my job is being able to work with others at Marion County. I enjoy helping them find answers to their questions and finding solutions to any issues they have.

What work accomplishment have you been proudest of? It is hard to choose just one. Maintaining the website has been very rewarding, but I have also been proud to manage other projects where I have had to evaluate and implement new software for the county.

What would you like for the average resident to know about your department or position? The Information Technology department is always working with all the departments of the county to help make information available and easier to obtain by the citizens of Marion County. I believe others who have visited our office would agree that Marion County's Information Technology department is state-of-the-art.

What would people be surprised to know about you? For fifteen years, while working full-time at Marion County, I held multiple part-time jobs as a fitness instructor at local health clubs where I taught step aerobics, hi/lo aerobic, spinning and strength classes.

What's the oddest job you've ever had? While working as a contractor at United Telephone, I retrieved reports and work orders from line printers and delivered them to different areas within their offices. This was before email and local area networks were prevalent. One might say I was their "sneaker net."

Tell us a little about your home life (kids, pets, etc.) My husband and I are both natives of Ocala and have been married for more than 26 years. We enjoy serving in our church and doing fitness activities together. We have two cats who we like to say have adopted us.

If you could be or do anything else – what would you do or be? I would enjoy operating a health club or being a personal fitness trainer. I enjoy helping others meet their fitness goals.

Do you have a special quote/saying/motto that has special meaning to you? If so, what is it? If you want to achieve your goals, sometimes you have to take chances.

PETS of the MONTH

By Elaine Delorio McClain, Marion County Office of Public Information



Vinny (A113437) - is a 6-month-old pit bull mix with a fun black and white coat. He's shy at first, but once he warms up, he's loyal and affectionate. He says he'd love to find a forever home where he could spend his time as a lapdog. (Yes, he thinks he's a lapdog).

Sweet Pea (A113593) - is an 8-year-old, domestic long-hair kitty. She was brought to the Animal Center because her owner moved and was unable to take her along. Sweet Pea gets along with everyone, including dogs, and hopes to find a permanent home where she can share the love and affection she keeps holed up inside her little furry self. She says she promises to keep you warm and give you a memorable friendship.

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 at www.marioncountyfl.org/animal.

