



COUNTY CONNECTION

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Marion County Commissioners
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Kathy Bryant, Vice Chair, District 2
Stan McClain, Chairman, District 3
Carl Zalak III, District 4
Earl Arnett, District 5

County Administrator
Bill Kauffman

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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.



TOP STORY



Apply now for the 2015 Citizens Academy

By Elaine Delorio McClain

Are you making a new year's resolution? Consider resolving to learn more about the community in which you live, work and play by joining Marion County's 2015 Citizens Academy. The application period for the program is now open, but apply soon, as space is limited. From the top of the landfill to the back rooms of the library, this free, 10-week program provides an inside look at county government and its operations, services and challenges.

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



Click [here](#) to watch a special video invitation to attend the Citizens Academy from Commissioner Moore and Jeannie Rickman.

What to expect:

- Interactive demonstrations and behind-the-scenes tours of county facilities such as a wastewater treatment plant, the Marion County Landfill and the Animal Center.
- Presentations from department directors and other key staff on processes such as zoning, road maintenance and emergency dispatch.
- In-depth explanation of the countywide budget.
- Gaining a thorough knowledge of how the county works and how you can get involved.

How to apply (starting Jan. 1):

[Click here](#) to access the application. You can print, fill out by hand and mail to our office (601 SE 25th Ave., Ocala, FL 34471), or submit via email.

Questions?

Call 352-438-2300 or visit: www.MarionCountyFL.org/CitizensAcademy.

Marion County brings the harvest home



Dozens of community organizations and hundreds of Marion Countians made the third installment of the 'Bring the Harvest Home' Holiday Food Drive a success on Dec. 12. More than 6,000 lbs. of canned goods and toiletry donations poured in at the Square and at Queen of Peace Catholic Church as part of the food drive hosted by the Marion County Board of County Commissioners. The campaign helped restock local food pantries such as Interfaith Emergency Services, Brother's Keeper and Salvation Army, which have faced nearly bare shelves recently.

"Each canned good and toiletry item donated directly benefits a struggling family in Marion County," said Commissioner Kathy Bryant, who spearheaded the initiative. "Once again, our residents and partner agencies came together to support our neighbors, and we are tremendously grateful for that."

Partner agencies this year included: Marion County Sheriff's Office, City of Ocala, Ocala/Marion County Chamber & Economic Partnership, United Way of Marion County, Florida Public Relations Association - Ocala Chapter, Marion County Supervisor of Elections, Marion County Fire Rescue, Marion County Public Library System, Ocala Police Department and Queen of Peace Catholic Church.



NEWSFLASH

Internationally-recognized events to boost local tourism and economy

By Danielle Damato Doty

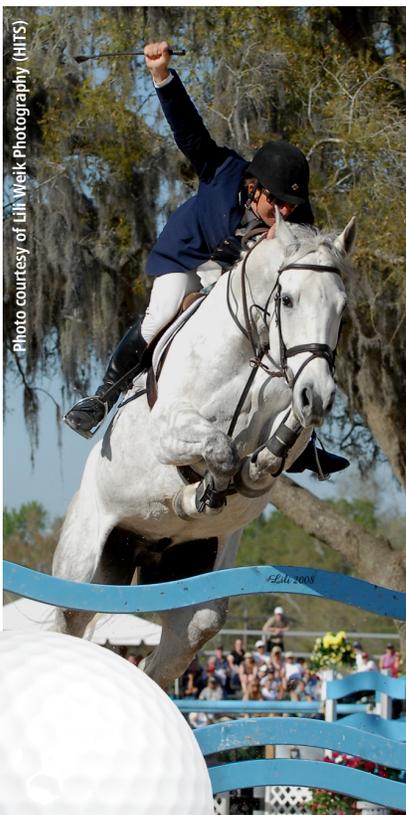


Photo courtesy of Lili Weik Photography (HITS)

Tourism activity is vibrant in Marion County and several upcoming events are set to bring it up a notch and create significant economic impact for the area.

The new year begins with the **Coates Golf Championship presented by R+L Carriers.**

The event is the kickoff tournament for the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) 2015 season and will be held at Golden Ocala Golf & Equestrian Club from Jan. 26-31, 2015. The inaugural tournament will host 120 of the best professional female golfers in a 72-hole tournament playing for their share of \$1.5 million.

The event is anticipated to generate \$10-12 million in revenue for local businesses.

More than 130 media representatives from around the

world are expected in Ocala to report on the tournament and approximately 40,000 spectators are anticipated to attend. Live broadcasts of the Coates Golf Championship will air in more than 170 countries and into 400 million homes. The tournament will be broadcast on NBC's Golf Channel, including 10-12 hours of live worldwide TV coverage showcasing the Ocala/Marion County area.

From **Jan. 14-March 22**, the **Horse shows In The Sun (HITS)** Winter Horse Show Jumping Circuit comes to town once again. HITS is the world's leader in hunter/jumper horse shows, producing events encompassing over 20,000 horses and riders, and awarding several million dollars in prize purses. According to the Ocala/Marion County Visitors & Convention Bureau (VCB), **HITS will support more than 4,000 jobs and have an estimated economic impact of more than \$17.6 million.**

Another popular equine event in Ocala is scheduled for **March 18-22. Live Oak International** is a Combined Driving and Show Jumping competition welcoming leading drivers, trainers, coaches and owners from all over Europe and North America. In addition to the competition, the week features a classic car show and welcomes more than 7,500 attendees. The VCB estimates that **Live Oak International will support more than 300 jobs and have an economic impact of more than \$1.6 million.**

For information about these events and more in Marion County, visit www.OcalaMarion.com.



Point toward success.

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.

[Click here to sign up online!](#)

Marion County Agriculture Hall of Fame recognizes local icon

Compiled by Stacie Causey



The Marion County Agriculture Hall of Fame honored local icon Franklin Walter (Frank) Smith on Nov. 20 during its annual banquet celebrating National Farm City Week at the Marion County UF/IFAS Extension Service Auditorium. More than 150 guests and elected officials celebrated Smith's lifelong achievements at the banquet.

"There's nothing like being recognized by the home folks," Smith said as he accepted the award from fellow cattleman Hugh Dailey.

Nominations were received from Smith's peers for his contributions to Marion County's agriculture industry. A bronze plaque showcasing Smith's photo and biography will be added to a permanent exhibit in the main lobby of the Marion County UF/IFAS Extension Service Auditorium. The exhibit recognizes 31 previous Agriculture Hall of Fame inductees.

The 34th Ag Hall of Fame inductee

Franklin Walter (Frank) Smith

- Third-generation watermelon producer who farmed 4,800 acres.
- Central Florida cattleman who owned and managed herds exceeding 1,200 heads.
- Former president of the Marion County Cattlemen's Association.
- Former director of the Florida Cattlemen's Association.
- Southeastern Youth Fair supporter for more than 50 years.
- Seasoned Ocala Bull Sale grader.

Did you know?

Marion County UF/IFAS Extension Service created the Marion County Agriculture Hall of Fame in 2003 to recognize members of the community for advancements in Marion County's \$1.2 billion agriculture industry.

2015
Calendar
of Events

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

PROGRAM PORTRAITS

Fee changes slated for KP Hole and Carney Island

By Elaine Delorio McClain



The tubing package fee at KP Hole Park and the entrance fee for Carney Island Recreation and Conservation Area are set to change beginning Jan. 1, 2015. The **KP Hole tube package fee** will increase from \$15 to \$20, and includes park admission, tube rental and return shuttle service after the four-hour float downriver. The regular park admission fee will remain at \$5 per person. The increase will offset the cost of deputies to patrol the river area during the busiest times of the year and to support funding for future capital improvements at the park.

The **Carney Island entrance fee** will increase \$2 per vehicle, from \$5 to \$7, and will be used to support maintenance and funding for future capital improvements at the park.

Did You Know?

Using funds from the “Pennies for Parks” program, Marion County purchased the **Carney Island** property in 1990 with the goals of protecting its ecological character and providing a resource-based recreation area. The site features more than 750 acres of sandhill islands, causeways, wetland systems and shoreline beaches. Park amenities include boat ramps, volleyball, concession stands and restrooms, hiking trails, horsehoses, two swim beaches and two playgrounds. Last fiscal year, 70,420 vehicles entered the park.

Established as a boys retreat in the early 1920s, **KP Hole Park** was acquired by Marion County and designated as a public recreation area in 1953. Today, KP Hole Park offers swimming, tubing, scuba diving, boating, kayaking, canoeing and paddle boarding to thousands of visitors – 74,844 last fiscal year alone.

For more information, call Marion County Parks and Recreation at 352-671-8465 or visit www.MarionCountyFL.org/Parks.

Shelter dogs go for a Pack Walk!



On the fourth Sunday of every month, residents have an opportunity to “adopt” a shelter dog to take on a ranger-led walk through the gardens at Silver Springs State Park. Park admission fees will apply (\$8 per vehicle), but there’s no charge for participating in the pack walk. Participants have the option to bring their own (well-behaved) dog for the walk or choose one of the dogs that Animal Services staff will bring to the park. **The next Pack Walk is scheduled for Jan. 25 at 10 a.m.** Info: call Animal Services at 352-671-8700 or Silver Springs State Park at 352-236-7156.

Community welcome: 351st Military Police Company

Hundreds of citizens and local officials joined Marion County families in welcoming their patriots home in early December. The proud spectators watched as the 351st Military Police Company marched into the Ocala-Marion County Veterans Memorial Park for a community recognition for their service and sacrifices to defend our freedoms.

