



COUNTY CONNECTION

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

Interim 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

Commission presents top priorities for MARION TO LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION

By Barbra Hernández, APR

What could state legislators do in 2015 to continue helping Marion County move forward? The answer may be found on a list of legislative priorities the Marion County Commission recently presented to Marion's legislative delegation.

At a Jan. 12 meeting with state senators and representatives, Commission Chairman Stan McClain highlighted several of the initiatives meant to propel economic development and resource protection for Marion County, among others.

"Our 2015 legislative priorities reflect the County Commission's efforts to support our veterans, promote our region's agriculture and economic vitality, protect our water and land resources and remove policy roadblocks."

What are this year's legislative priorities?

8th State Home for Veterans

Requested action: Line item budget appropriation for the 8th state veterans' nursing home to be built in Marion County, and waiver of the application process for an automatic site awarding to Marion.



Southeastern Livestock Pavilion

Requested action: Allocate \$4,518,748 to fulfill Phase III of the pavilion's master plan for boosting Florida's agriculture.



IN DETAIL:

[CLICK HERE](#) to view the 2015 Legislative Priorities materials, including the **Legislative Priorities booklet** and Chairman McClain's **2015 Legislative Delegation Speech**.

Land and Water in Marion

Requested actions:

1. Support balanced distribution of funds for land acquisition and water quality and quantity projects throughout the state, with equitable allocation irrespective of a project's urban/rural nature, or coastal/inland location;
2. Support an allocation policy that involves local government participation in priority assessment and community impact;
3. Support the continued funding of the Water Management Lands Trust Fund and the annual reserve for payments in lieu of taxes for ad valorem losses incurred as a result of water management district acquisition or charitable donation.



Local Discretionary Sales Tax

Requested actions:

Support modifications to existing laws to allow for a discretionary sales tax that can be used for general purposes, including operations expenditures.



Shared Costs for Medicaid

Requested actions:

1. Support continued evaluation of county-state Medicaid cost-share arrangement, considering the impacts of state policies designed to contain growth in Medicaid costs including statewide Medicaid-managed care and diagnosis-related group reimbursement for hospitals.
2. Consider possible alternatives to the current arrangement.
3. Support establishing a cap on growth in the individual county Medicaid costs under S. 409.915, F.S. to address the anticipated cost shifts that result from the transition to a Medicaid enrollee-based, cost-sharing system.
4. Oppose efforts to further shift state Medicaid costs to counties.



Florida Retirement System

Requested action: Revise language in the Florida statutes to allow local governments to employ temporary positions under the same rules as the State of Florida.



Rainbow River Patrol Officer

Requested action: Allocate \$10,000 for a dedicated Florida Fish and Wildlife officer on the Rainbow River on holidays and weekends from Memorial Day through Labor Day, which is the busiest season.



NEWSFLASH

FOCUS HERE:

Community Services needs your input

By Danielle Damato Doty

County residents will soon have the opportunity to provide input about local needs relating to improving the quality of life for residents.

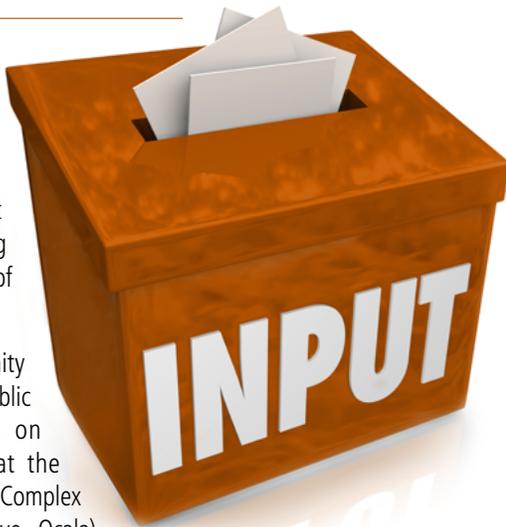
Marion County Community Services will host two public focus group meetings on **Thursday, Feb. 12**, at the McPherson Governmental Complex Auditorium (601 SE 25th Ave., Ocala).

The afternoon meeting will be held from 2-4 p.m., followed by an evening meeting from 6-8 p.m.

Marion County Community Services administers the Federal and State Community Development and Affordable Housing grants which Marion County receives. Any citizen or public agency is welcome to attend the focus group meetings and provide comments on local needs related to these grants. For anyone who cannot attend, comments may also be submitted in writing by Tuesday, Feb. 10, and should be mailed to: CDBG Administrator, Community Services Department, 2631 SE Third St., Ocala, FL 34471.

"It's important for us to stay aware of the public's perception of community needs," said Cheryl Amey, Director of Community Services. "The public can help us identify local needs so we can better direct funding to address gaps in services."

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program provides grants to over 1,200 local governments to devise neighborhood approaches that improve the physical, economic and social conditions in communities.



MARION COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM

African American READ-IN

Sunday, Feb. 22, 2 p.m.
Headquarters-Ocala Public Library
2720 E. Silver Springs Blvd., Ocala | 352-671-8551

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

Marion County Master Gardeners'
Spring Festival 2015

March 14 | **March 15**
8 a.m.-5 p.m. | 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Next to the
SE Livestock
Pavilion

2232 NE Jacksonville Road
www.marioncountyfl.org/springfestival



**For more information, contact
Marion County Community
Services at 352-671-8770.**

Community Sponsor:
OCALA.com

Event Sponsor:
Ag Pro

UF IFAS Extension
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

Marion
County
FLORIDA
EXTENSION SERVICE

TWICE A CHAMPION:

Marion County earns second Healthy Weight Community Champion nod

By Elaine Delorio McClain



The Florida Department of Health (FDOH) recently named Marion County a **"Healthy Weight Community Champion"** for the second consecutive year. Through the program, FDOH recognizes best practices by local governments that have implemented policies and programs aimed at increasing physical activity and improving nutrition. **This year, Marion was recognized for its Parks and Recreation department and facilities, as well as for the Board of County Commissioners' "Health Happens" wellness program, specifically the McPherson walking trail and outdoor fitness area.**

The walking trail is a 1.25-mile loop around the perimeter of the McPherson Governmental Complex and incorporates existing sidewalks along Southeast 25th Avenue and East Fort King Street. The outdoor fitness area is also located in the complex and includes 12 exercise stations on stabilized surfacing for exercising at various levels of intensity. Both were completed in June 2014 and were funded in part by the County Commission, Florida Blue and the Park Partnership Grant Program.

Want to become a health champion?

- **Visit the Marion County "Health Happens" Farmers Market.** Held every Friday from 8 a.m.-2:30 p.m. in McPherson Field (601 SE 25th Ave., Ocala), the market offers fruit, vegetables, local honey, fresh seafood, organic goods and more from a variety of vendors. The market is funded through Florida Blue. Call 352-438-2360 for more information.
- **Escape, experience and explore at a Marion County park,** and you won't even realize you're exercising. Parks and Recreation offers nearly 25 miles of paved and unpaved trails for walking, hiking, biking and rollerblading on your own or through guided hiking programs. Exciting programs including kayaking, canoeing, paddle boarding, archery, basketball, softball, tennis and more are offered throughout the year. Visit www.MarionCountyFL.org/Parks for details.
- **Adopt a dog.** Dogs make great walking and jogging companions, and Marion County Animal Services has dozens of shelter dogs of all kinds hoping for homes. The adoption fee is only \$50 and includes the spay/neuter surgery, county license, rabies vaccine, microchip and a lifetime of friendship. Visit www.MarionCountyFL.org/Animal for more information.

Calendar — of — Events



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

They found homes for the holidays... and stayed

By Elaine Delorio McClain

This past holiday season, Marion County Animal Services staff put on their elf hats, loaded dogs and cats into the department's sleigh (which looks a lot like a van) and headed out on the town in search of new homes and holiday cheer for shelter animals. You just might have seen them if you frequented community festivities such as Light up Ocala, the Let's Skate Ocala ice rink and the Silver Springs State Park Pack Walk. Other outreach events included visiting the Market of Marion and the PetSmart Charities National Adoption Weekend.

"Outreach events such as these give our adoptable pets extra exposure in the community, increasing their chances of being adopted," Animal Services director Deborah Horvath said. "Our animals also love the special attention and interaction, and enjoy the change in scenery."

Nearly 400 pets found homes between Halloween and Christmas, which includes those adopted at the shelter, at outreach events and at the in-store cat adoption area at the Lady Lake PetSmart. Nearly 120 of those were more than 1 year old, which meant their new families brought them home for half the adoption price, part of the shelter's holiday promotion aimed at finding homes for older pets.

Adoption outreach events didn't end with the holiday season; check out the below opportunities to adopt outside the shelter. As always, check Animal Services' online calendar [here](#) for the latest dates.

February 2015 adoption events:

Feb. 14 | 10 a.m.-3 p.m. | Lady Lake PetSmart
Feb. 21 | 9 a.m.-3 p.m. | Market of Marion
Feb. 22 | 10 a.m. | Silver Springs State Park Pack Walk



3RD IN THE NATION:

4-H poultry judging team corrals top awards

By Stacie Causey



Marion County 4-H members recently competed at the national level for poultry and livestock judging in Louisville, KY, earning Marion two top distinctions in the poultry judging competitions. **Marion County's Chris Candreva placed first in the nation**, surpassing 74 contenders, while the Florida team (represented by Marion County) ranked third overall out of 20 competing teams in the National 4-H Poultry and Egg Conference.

Senior 4-H members who have won for poultry judging at the state level use USDA grading criteria to: qualify poultry and eggs as "ready-to-cook," showcase their industry knowledge while demonstrating preparation of an egg dish, answer rapid-fire questions in the Avian Bowl, and even host a barbecue cooking demonstration for chicken and turkey.

Florida teams have earned their way to the podium 12 out of the past 22 years, with five additional first, second or third-place finishes since the first competition in 1965, in which Florida placed first.

Founded in 1902, 4-H was incorporated into the Extension Service in 1914 as a non-formal, education program teaching leadership, citizenship and other life skills to youth. Know a child, teen or volunteer who would enjoy participating in the 4-H program? Invite them to contact Marion County UF/IFAS Extension Service at 352-671-8400 or visit www.marioncountyfl.org/4-h.

Special Thanks

Special thanks to volunteers and participants of the 2014 Color Me Green Fun Run 5K event. The funds raised helped our state champs with the travel costs to compete at the National 4-H Poultry and Egg Conference.