



COUNTY CONNECTION

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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

By Elaine Delorio McClain

5 FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE SPRING FESTIVAL

For two decades, budding blooms haven't been the only signals of springtime in Marion County. The Marion County Master Gardeners' Spring Festival, the area's largest all-in-one plant sale and gardening expo, is back for the 21st straight year, offering two days of outdoor fun, learning opportunities and an all-inclusive gardening sale selection.

1. WHEN AND WHERE TO GO.

Saturday, March 14, 2015 | 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
Sunday, March 15, 2015 | 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

2232 NE Jacksonville Road, Ocala (next to the Southeastern Livestock Pavilion).

Admission: \$1, free for children 12 and younger.

*Spring Festival veterans will tell you that Saturday tends to be the busiest day; if you're planning on attending Saturday, get there early to claim your parking spot! Vendors will re-stock Saturday night, so you'll see the same selection on Sunday.

2. WHAT YOU'LL FIND AT THE PLANT SALE.

Vegetable plants? Check. Organic products? Check. Flowers, shrubs, trees, clay pottery, ornamentals, sod and other gardening supplies? Check! Dozens of vendors have brought their finest wares for your perusal in one convenient location. You're buying directly from the producers, so you'll find only the freshest plants here.



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3. BUT, IT'S MORE THAN A PLANT SALE - GROW YOUR GARDENING KNOW-HOW!

Get inspired, refresh your memory and learn something new with talks, demonstrations and seminars held outdoors in the garden and indoors in the auditorium. Learn from the experts on topics ranging from organic pest control and composting to growing tomatoes and palms. Check out the full schedule of class offerings [here](#).

4. BRING THE KIDS!

Kids get in free, and will love being entertained and educated at the Kids Gardening Zone. Your little green thumbs will be able to plant their own seedlings, see a worm farm, learn about plants, explore a bat cave, get their faces painted and more.



5. COME READY FOR A FEAST.

This year, enjoy an all-new food truck rally, serving up soul food, pasta bowls, cheesesteaks, Caribbean-themed cuisine and more fresh culinary selections. For dessert, the kids (and you) can enjoy ice cream and snow cones.



DID YOU KNOW?

Nine ways to garden smarter in Marion

By Marylou Klein, Marion County Master Gardener

Gardening in Florida isn't the same as gardening in different parts of the country. Here in the Sunshine State, we deal with sandy soils, karst terrain, humid and hot summers, as well as lots of rain – except when we have no rain. Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ provides nine principles to help Floridians garden well while protecting the environment and saving water and money.

1. **Right plant, right place.** Select plants to match their site, water and light needs.
2. **Water efficiently.** Group plants with similar water needs together. Do not overwater.
3. **Fertilize appropriately.** Follow directions on the label. A little can go a long way!
4. **Mulch.** Use 2-3 inches to conserve water.
5. **Attract wildlife.** Provide food, water and shelter for birds, butterflies and other wildlife displaced by development.
6. **Manage yard pests responsibly.** Manage pests with as few chemicals as possible, using the least-toxic mixture first.
7. **Recycle yard waste.** Compost yard clippings to enrich your soil.

8. **Reduce storm water runoff.** Retain as much storm and irrigation water on your property as possible.
9. **Protect the waterfront.** Even if you don't live on a waterfront, everyone in Marion County lives in a watershed and approximately 2/3 of the county is in the springshed for either Rainbow Springs or Silver Springs. What you do to your landscape and how you manage it affects these springs and our drinking water.

To learn more, visit the Master Gardeners' booth at the Spring Festival, contact them at 352-671-8400 or click here to visit them [online](#).



NEWSFLASH

FACILITIES FOCUS:

Staff nails big savings with in-house skills

By Danielle Damato Doty

Cost-savings come to reality at Marion County Facilities Management, a public sector county department that has the professional capacity to perform private sector work. With highly-skilled staff, necessary licensing and the ability to pull permits, Facilities Management is able to complete many different types of projects in-house and under budget.

Painting a picture of cost-savings

Project: Clerk of the Court's Records Storage building
Started: January 2014
Projected completion date: April 2015
Original quote: \$1.7 million
Final cost with Facilities in-house expertise: \$1.2 million
Savings so far: \$500,000 tax dollars

Facilities Management brought the cost down through value engineering the original design and using in-house staff to perform mechanical, electrical and plumbing work, as well as some of the painting. The licensed electrical team has produced a \$20,000 savings on this project to date and that is expected to increase even more toward the end of construction. The licensed mechanical team and plumbing technicians are currently working onsite and will be producing a significant savings as well. Facilities professional painters completed the ceiling repainting in-house, which saved \$20,000 alone.

Project: A/C unit installation at Tax Collector's Ocala Annex office
Started: November 2014
Completed: December 2014 (less than a month)
Original cost: Similar work has been quoted between \$25,000 - \$35,000
Final cost with Facilities in-house expertise: \$10,000
Savings: \$15,000 tax dollars

The department saved approximately \$15,000 by using in-house labor to fix a pressing problem. The annex office needed a quick A/C installation after opening an additional training space equipped with new computer systems. The new use and equipment made the room too warm, and it was necessary to get A/C installed immediately. By Facilities Management staff doing the work instead of having to go through the bid process to hire private electrical and A/C contractors, no additional time was spent to get the issue fixed.

Marion County Facilities Management is a department of the Marion County Board of County Commissioners. Staff maintains more than 300 existing county-owned and leased structures, as well as coordinates the planning, design and construction of proposed county-owned facilities. Totalling more than 3 million square feet, these include office buildings, fire stations, the Clerk of the Court, the county jail and many others.



Save the date!

April 11

Marion County's Corporate 5K

Run for the Springs

www.MarionCountyFL.org



COUNTY COMMISSION UPDATES:

Strategic Planning Workshop

By Barbra Hernández, APR

On Jan. 22, the County Commission officially launched its budgeting process for next fiscal year at a Strategic Planning Workshop. During the meeting, commissioners listened to presentations from senior county staff and discussed the three key topics impacting the upcoming budget:



- **Launching of a 5-year fiscal forecasting program.**
- **Group health insurance performance and the Affordable Care Act rules.**
- **Funding for the county's fire rescue and EMS services.**

In the coming months, county staff will begin preparing proposed budgets for their respective departments in anticipation of the commission's budget workshops in the summer. Click [here](#) to visit Marion County's budget web page and stay up to date on the budgeting process.

PROGRAM PORTRAITS:

Commissioners attend Town Hall Meeting

By Barbra Hernández, APR



Marion County commissioners recently attended a town hall meeting organized by the Lake Weir Kiwanis Club. During the meeting, which was attended by dozens of residents from the Lake Weir and Weirsdale areas, commissioners shared district updates and held a Q&A session with attendees. Kiwanis Club members additionally presented the leaders with recognition plaques for their work.

Change these 3 on March 8

By Barbra Hernández, APR

Daylight saving time begins on Sunday, March 8, and Marion County reminds residents and businesses to change the following three on that day:

- **Clocks:** Reset all clocks forward one hour.
- **Batteries:** Change the batteries on all smoke alarms. These devices can save lives during fire emergencies and must be maintained regularly to ensure proper functioning.
- **Irrigation schedules:** Adjust irrigation timers to water up to two times per week. For odd-numbered addresses, irrigate on Wednesdays and Saturdays only; for even-numbered addresses, irrigate on Thursdays and Sundays only. For non-residential properties, irrigate on Tuesdays and Fridays only. Water only before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m. on designated days.



Calendar — of — Events

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

FIRE RESCUE HIGHLIGHTS:

Move Over for Emergency Vehicles

By Jessica Greene Fuchs



Marion County Fire Rescue reminds drivers to move to the side of the road when seeing an emergency vehicle approaching. Not only is it the law, this practice helps keep drivers themselves, the patients MCFR transports and crewmembers safe.

MCFR rescues have been struck by drivers six times since January 2014, and have had several documented close calls during the same timeframe.

Florida Statute 316.126 – commonly referred to as the “Move Over” law – requires drivers to “yield the right-of-way to the emergency vehicle” and immediately move to the closest edge of the roadway, clear of any intersection. Drivers should stop there and remain in position until the emergency vehicle has passed.

The “Move Over” law also requires drivers to, “vacate the lane closest to the emergency vehicle...when driving on an interstate highway or other highway with two or more lanes traveling in the direction of the emergency vehicle.” If a driver can’t accomplish this lane change safely, the law instructs the driver to reduce their speed to 20 miles per hour below the posted speed limit.



Click [here](#) for a short video message from Marion County Fire Rescue’s Deputy Fire Chief, Paul Nevels.

Marion County Fire Rescue welcomes newest recruits



Congratulations to Class 514!

Timothy Grubb, Firefighter/EMT
Juan Berrios, Paramedic
Frederick Bower, EMT
Charles Matt, Firefighter/EMT

Lenny Rivera, FF/PM
Cassandra Taaffe, Paramedic
Josh Quijano, EMT

Responding to the CALL OF DUTY

On Friday, Jan. 30, **Marion County Public Safety Communications Center Dispatcher I Dianne Graham-Miller** was presented with a Distinguished Service Award for her life-saving role in an incident that occurred on Nov. 30, 2014. Dianne calmly guided a good Samaritan while he stayed on scene with the victim of a single car crash until first responders arrived and rescued her.



Also on Jan. 30, **Lt. Benjamin Tyre, DE1 FF/PM Henry Herrera, FF/EMT Gabriel Pichardo, Paramedic Jessica Garrison and Paramedic Matthew Kaizer** were

presented with Meritorious Service awards for their role in bringing a man who was in cardiac arrest back to life on the sixth attempt on Sept. 30, 2014.

