



# 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

## HURRICANE PREP: Tips to weather hurricane season

Compiled by Office of Public Information

Spring's gift of pollen and allergies may be subsiding, but the summer season is not without its share of environmental threats. Hurricane season begins June 1, and we invite you to follow these suggestions to prepare for storms that may come our way this summer:

- 1 Identify evacuation routes and local shelters in case of an emergency evacuation order.
- 2 Register individuals with special needs with Marion County Emergency Management by calling 352-369-8136.
- 3 Keep important papers (e.g., insurance, health, birth certificates, deeds and titles), identification and important contact information safe and handy.

4 Store a weeklong supply of non-perishable food for each person in your household. Depending on the damage after the storm, grocery stores may be closed or inaccessible for a long period of time. If you have an infant or small child, include baby food and formula.

5 Store a weeklong supply of water (two gallons of water per person per day) for drinking, cooking, brushing teeth and bathing) for each member of your household.

(Continued on page 2)

**TOP  
 STORY**



Stock a two-week supply of prescription medicines and gather medical supplies (such as hearing aids, oxygen, glasses and/or cane.)

Pack the following in your emergency kit:

- Flashlight.
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio (NOAA weather radio, if possible).
- Extra batteries.
- First aid kit.
- Multi-purpose tool and other tools/supplies to secure your home.
- Sanitation and personal hygiene items.
- Cell phone with charger.
- Extra cash (credit card machines and ATMs will not work without electricity).
- Blankets.
- Baby supplies.
- Pet supplies (collar, leash, license and vaccine information, food and carrier). Visit [www.MarionCountyFL.org/Animal](http://www.MarionCountyFL.org/Animal) for a pet disaster preparedness checklist.
- Camera for photos of damage.

Don't wait until the winds start blowing to start getting ready for this hurricane season. Start preparing now. For more tips, [click here](#).

## Tornado storms through southwestern Marion subdivisions

*Marion County Fire Rescue and Building Safety crews deployed to April 20 scene*

By Barbra Hernández, APR

On the afternoon of April 20, Marion County Fire Rescue responded to a tornado reported in two neighboring subdivisions in southwestern Marion County. Dozens of homes in the Oak Run and Palm Cay subdivisions suffered damages resulting from downed trees and wind. No injuries were reported.



MCFR crews from six stations responded, and work included cutting a path through trees to gain access into one of the subdivisions. As part of the effort, crews worked with Marion County Sheriff's Office's Emergency Management to help residents place tarps on their roofs and clear roads.

Additionally, Marion County Building Safety deployed four inspectors to assess structural storm damage in the Oak Run, Palm Cay and Spruce Creek North subdivisions. Seven homes were declared unsafe and more than 50 were identified as suffering minor tree/wind damages. Inspection work continued on Tuesday.

The National Weather Service identified the weather system as an EF-1 tornado, with winds sustained at 90 miles per hour. The tornado lasted five minutes, carving a path of destruction two miles long and 1,000 feet wide. Most of the damage occurred from tree limbs falling into homes.

## MCFR on Facebook

Visit and "like" Marion County Fire Rescue on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/MCFR.FB](http://www.facebook.com/MCFR.FB) to read about the latest MCFR incident responses and news.

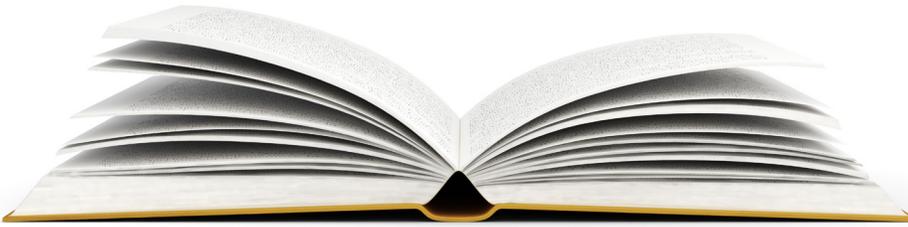


# NEWSFLASH

## SUMMER READING PROGRAM:

# Now showing at your public library

By Stacie Causey



**T**hwart those summertime blues with the Marion County Public Library System as your trusty sidekick for the annual **Summer Reading Program** starting this month. “Every Hero Has a Story” avenges the dog days of summer with plenty of opportunities for readers of all ages to activate thrilling books, digital music and magazines, as well as special programs focused on heroic stories, bat cave experiences, robotic human aides, teen movie fests, family flicks and even a glimpse into the legendary Florida swamp apes.

Library visitors may check out materials at any public library location between June 8 and July 17 and register to win a gift certificate to Barnes & Noble™. Programs to explore include: movie matinees, family story times, surrealist artist James Vredevogd’s intriguing artwork, and even a “Shakespeareance” created by master educator Bobbie Jordan. Wanting to capture more options? Take a glance at the following events sampler by age group and see which ones you want to build into your summer calendar.

### Children (preschool through sixth grade):

Young ones will receive special summer reading bags (while supplies last), and parents of infants and toddlers may take home an activity sheet full of ideas for summer fun and reading.

- **Bat chats with Bat Belfrys, Inc. (various locations and times)** – Bat Belfrys, Inc. and the Florida Bat Conservancy present bat conservationist Shari Blisset-Clark as she sheds light on our nighttime neighbors.
- **Meet the Author: Debbie Garcia-Bengochea and the Gentle Carousel Therapy Horses (June 9, 1 p.m. at Dunnellon Public Library and July 16, 2 p.m. at Forest Public Library)** – Magic, the hero horse, and her sidekick Toby interact with children during the reading of “The Power of Magic.”

### “Tweens” and teens:

Zoom into old and new books, become your own superhero by vote of the masses and even take an active role in helping present programs.

- **Unmask! (June 9, 4 p.m. at Headquarters-Ocala Public Library)** – This teen-centric photo contest pits one local, masked crusader against another with the metropolis deciding the winning superhero face.
- **Lights! Camera! Action! Teen Filmmakers’ Workshop (July 18, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. at Headquarters-Ocala Public Library)** – Get hands-on experience to turn your screen ideas into movies with Bronson Mosley and the crew from Day Break Studios. Registration is open to ages 13-18 and lunch will be provided.

### Adults:

- **Meet the Author: Bill Roberts Cowboy Reflections (June 11, 2 p.m. at Headquarters-Ocala Public Library and July 16, 3:30 p.m. at Belleview Public Library)** – A 35-year veteran of life on the range and lifelong Floridian shares tales of life in the saddle as a Floridian cowboy.
- **Meet the Author: Dr. Joe Ponds (June 23, 2 p.m. at Dunnellon Public Library)** – A local author and vice president of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association of Florida, Dr. Ponds tells the story of two percent of Army helicopter pilots struggling against the racial divide in America during the Vietnam Era.

For full program details and a complete list of all Summer Reading Program events, visit <http://library.marioncountyfl.org> or call 352-671-8551.

MARION COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM

**SUMMER READING PROGRAM  
JUNE-JULY**

352-671-8551 :: [library.marioncountyfl.org](http://library.marioncountyfl.org)

Community sponsor:

OCALA.com friends Marion County FLORIDA PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM

## Building Safety streamlines permitting services

By Barbra Hernandez, APR



Re-roofing? Replacing doors and windows? Obtaining proper permitting through Marion County Building Safety just got faster and easier. The department recently opened an express window to offer a streamlined process for citizens and contractors requesting approval for permits not requiring a plan review. The window, located at Building Safety's lobby (2710 E. Silver Springs Blvd., Ocala) is open on weekdays from 8 a.m.-3 p.m. and offers quick permit assistance for the following:

- HVAC change-outs.
- Reroof (single family residence/duplex/mobile home/metal).
- Subsurface grout underpinning.
- Low-voltage security alarm.
- Minor electrical.
- Window and door replacement.
- Siding.
- Garage door.
- Permit pick-ups.

For more information, contact Building Safety at 352-438-2400.



## CITIZENS ACADEMY

## May graduation

By Elaine Delorio McClain



In 10 weeks, these 28 members of the 2015 Marion County Citizens Academy got an in-depth, inside look at county government departments and services. They saw a pot hole being patched and got a hands-on look at fire rescue equipment. They learned how energy is produced from decomposing garbage at the county landfill and followed the travels of a library book from book drop to shelf. In addition to these and other behind-the-scenes tours, participants met key department staff, pored over budgets and master plans, learned about departments' unique challenges and witnessed the operations behind the scenes.

Sound interesting? Mark your calendar for January 2016, when registration begins for next year's Citizens Academy program.

### 2015 Citizens Academy graduates

- |                          |                           |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Robin Arnaud             | Lenora Marks              |
| Wayne B. Bachand         | Robert Melzer             |
| Gwen Bailey              | Dorrick Nurse             |
| Eugene (Gene) Blahut     | Sandra Peralta            |
| Michelle Burnett         | Suni Perez                |
| Gerald Cassatt           | Janet Robertson           |
| Sharon Cassatt           | Winsome Stern             |
| Charles Cheadle          | Terrence (Terry) Thompson |
| Richard (Rich) Greenberg | Liz Walker                |
| Adelia Hupp              | Angela (Angi) White       |
| Shirley Isaacs           | Deborah Winston           |
| Raymond (Ray) Jackson    | Bob Zimmerman             |
| Barbara (Barb) Jackson   |                           |
| Dolores Johnson          |                           |
| Mary Wagner Mann         |                           |
| Susan Mannino            |                           |

## Public Safety Communications, OPD streamline dispatch

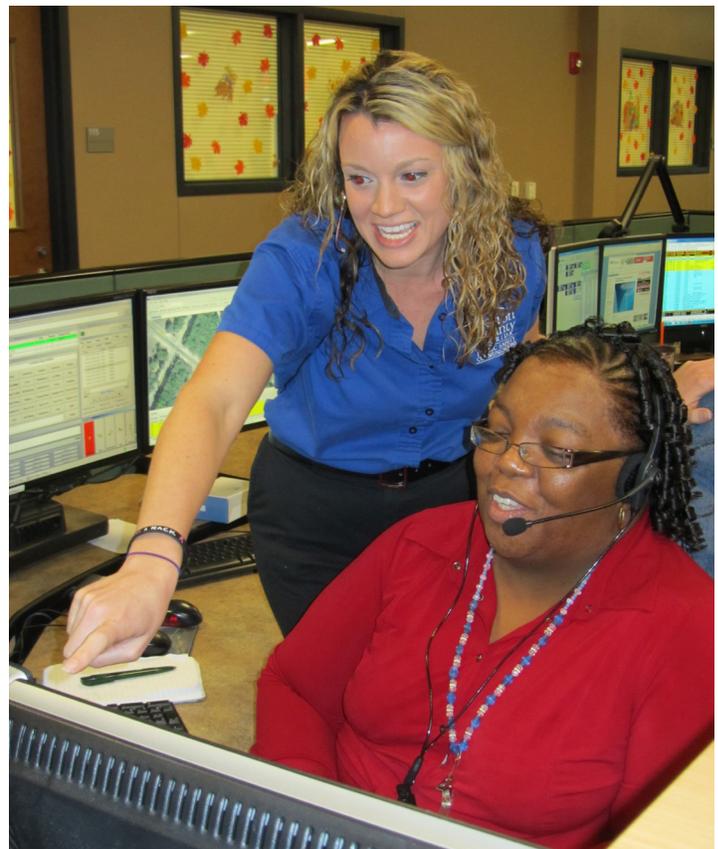
By Barbra Hernández, APR

Marion County Public Safety Communications and Ocala Police Department recently joined efforts to bring citizens improved dispatch services.

The agencies completed the installation and testing of a computer-aided dispatch system (CAD-to-CAD) connection in early spring. The connection allows either agency to take an emergency call regardless of jurisdiction and transfer the call's information to the other agency without the dispatcher having to call and verbally exchange the caller's information.

"This connection will allow for a quicker and more efficient transfer of information, saving time in getting emergency responders to the scene," said Karl Oltz, Marion County Public Safety Communications director.

Marion County Public Safety Communications is responsible for answering incoming emergency (911 and TTY calls) and non-emergency telephone calls 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. In fiscal year 2013-14, the department received more than 442,000 calls (including emergency and non-emergency calls). For more information about services provided by Marion County Public Safety Communications, call 352-671-8460 or visit [www.marioncountyfl.org/PublicSafetyCommunications](http://www.marioncountyfl.org/PublicSafetyCommunications).



## Veterans Rally awarded

By Elaine Delorio McClain



On June 20, 2014, hundreds braved the 90-plus-degree weather to gather under a sprawling tent on an undeveloped, grassy field. The people inside were proud and passionate. Most had served their country in the armed forces. Now, they were here to tell visiting representatives from the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs why their community, Marion County, is the ideal location to site the next state veterans' nursing home. Marion County

government had spearheaded the effort which culminated with this unprecedented show of community support from veterans, residents and businesses who donated every essential to host the community rally. Nearly a year later, the National Association of County Information Officers (NACIO) awarded the county with a Best of Class award and the Florida Public Relations Association's Mid-Florida Local Image Awards awarded the county with a Judges' Award (an outstanding entry that achieves maximum results while using a minimum amount of money). Both awarding agencies commended the county's strategic and cost-efficient public information efforts in hosting the event for the community.

### Other recent commendations:

- Marion County Office of Public Information: FPRA Mid-Florida Local Image Awards – Award of Distinction for a community meeting held by Marion County Utilities to welcome new customers.
- Marion County Office of Public Information: FPRA Mid-Florida Local Image Awards – Judges' Award and recognition in the NACIO Awards of Excellence for a news release that helped educate residents on the benefits of microchipping pets and that garnered international news coverage.