

A BIGGER AND BETTER DAGGERWING

by Alan Kellock

After enthusiastic and well-attended festivities to celebrate the opening of the Daggerwing Nature Center's massive expansion, the new facilities are now open to the public.

The new exhibit hall takes visitors on a journey that begins under the ground, continues under water, and rises above the surface up to the canopy of a swamp. Interactive exhibits, live animals, sloped flooring and oversized features create a storybook-like experience to help understand the swamp habitat.

Following the exhibit, you can take a walk on the boardwalk through 40 acres of real swamp to test out what you learned in the exhibit hall.

Daggerwing offers programs for school groups as well as private gatherings for birthday parties, scout troops, camps, nature clubs, church groups, "mommy and me" groups, senior adult centers and libraries. For all programs, educators use a hands-on approach with live animals, models, interesting facts and other fun materials to teach about conservation and what's native to Florida.

Master of Ceremonies Burt Aaronson, the County Commissioner for our area, reminded the audience that there was more yet to come at Daggerwing. The new astronomical observatory, which will have a dome that opens and a telescope for viewing celestial objects/events, is yet to be built on the very site where the grand opening took place on April 26. He promised it would be open for business within a year's time.

Daggerwing is located in South County Regional Park just west of the Tennis Center and just north of Coconut Cove Waterpark. It is open six days a week from Tuesday to Sunday, 1:00 pm to 4:30 pm, except for Saturday, when the facility opens at 8:15 am. Admission is free.

For more information, go to www.pbcparcs.com/nature and click on the Daggerwing link.