



**Marion County
Board of County Commissioners**

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**LOCAL YOUTH RECOGNIZED AS PART OF
RECREATION AND PARKS MONTH CELEBRATION**

Immediate Release

MARION COUNTY, Fla. (July 5, 2011) – A lakeside picnic. A walk under a tree canopy. Vigorous exercise on a tennis court. Marion County parks evoke some of the best memories of fun, relaxation and, yes, intense workout for many county residents.

But for residents Emilia Gamero, 9, and Kaden McMillan, 11, county parks are all about creating a sense of community, respect for nature and a desire to safeguard Florida's future. At Tuesday's regularly scheduled meeting, the Marion County Board of County Commissioners recognized Gamero and McMillan as winners in the first Marion County Parks Poster Contest. Marion County Parks and Recreation, in partnership with the City of Ocala Recreation and Parks Department, hosted the contest in June as part of local celebrations commemorating National Recreation and Parks Month.

Gamero, who won in the 6 – 9 age group, portrayed all eight of the themes associated with the contest's "It Starts in Parks" message, including "achievement," "sense of community," and "heritage," in a colorful diagram. McMillan, winner in the 10 – 14 age group, promoted the messages of "respect for nature" and "conservation of natural resources" through an educational illustration showing the importance of not littering in parks.

Also on Tuesday, commissioners presented a "Parks and Recreation Month" proclamation recognizing the contributions of local parks to the health and quality of life of Marion County residents.

"Parks and recreation are integral foundations in the well-being of our citizens," said Gina Peebles, the county's parks and recreation director. "Our park areas don't just encourage fitness and active lifestyles; they also help drive economic growth through increased commerce and property values."

Cities and counties nationwide celebrate Recreation and Parks Month in July to recognize the role park and recreation facilities play in creating successful communities. To learn more about Marion County parks and recreation opportunities, visit www.marioncountyfl.org/parks.htm, or call 352-671-8560.

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