

Debbie and Stan Zielinski have been volunteering for USACE at the W.P. Franklin recreation area at Lake Okeechobee, Florida for the past year. When they started, they knew very little about FL native plants but were willing to take on the volunteer positions for the Engineering with Nature (EWN) reforestation project. They participated in all of the training events that the volunteer coordinator held to help volunteers identify native and invasive species and have now become very knowledgeable.

A few months ago, our long term EWN volunteers left for another job opportunity. That's when the Zielinskis really stepped up into more of a leadership role, assisting in training newer EWN volunteers. They never fail to take initiative and have often completed tasks before being asked for something to be done. They are very well-rounded in their roles and able to assist with anything needed, whether it be mowing, weeding, watering, educating the public, or plant identification.

In the past year, USACE hosted 2 major community planting days. During both, Stan and Deb took on leadership roles by leading planting teams of 20-25 volunteers and showing them how to plant wildflowers and where to plant them. Leading up to these mass planting days, the Zielinskis helped coordinate with the nursery and plant delivery, as well as working extra hours to help move and organize hundreds of wildflower trays.

Stan and Deb work well over their minimum required hours each month because they are passionate about the success of this project. We are pleased to recognize them for their hard work and dedication to USACE!