

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release.

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‘Ding’ Darling awards scholarships for environmental studies

At a special after-hours gathering at J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge on June 7, 2016, “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) awarded \$15,500 in conservation education scholarships to 14 students from the surrounding five-county area. The awards total was the highest ever in the 10-year history of DDWS’ Environmental Scholarship Program.

“The society is committed to educating today’s youth as conservation stewards of the future,” said DDWS Education Chair Wendy Kindig. “We work with businesses and individuals to provide annual scholarships to award to outstanding students pursuing degrees related to conservation, wildlife biology, and the environment. A big thank you to our scholarship sponsors for helping us in our mission.”

Nine donors sponsored the 14 scholarships this year. Some sponsors were on hand at the ceremony to present checks to and congratulate the students who were able to attend.

DDWS awarded two **Richard Bailey Scholarships** named in memory of a longtime refuge volunteer and donated by his family. They went to **Morgan Humphrey**, a Barron Collier High (Naples) graduate headed to Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) to study environmental engineering; and **Jake Joers**, a 2015 Barron Collier High graduate studying oceanic engineering at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton.

Naples High graduate **Emily Louis Black**, who will attend the University of Notre Dame in Indiana majoring in environmental engineering, was recipient of the **Mike & Terry Baldwin Scholarship**, named for a DDWS board member and his wife, an emeritus board member.

Juliette Verley, a Fort Myers High graduate headed to the University of Central Florida (UCF) in Orlando to study environmental science, received the **Dr. Andrew and Laura Dahlem Scholarship**. The Dahlems live part-time on Sanibel Island and were honored with a named scholarship by family members.

Originally from Fort Myers, Lane Marshall, who now studies natural resource conservation at the University of Florida (UF) in Gainesville, was awarded the **Dr. H. Randall Deming Scholarship**. His family established the memorial this year as an endowed scholarship.

The **Leslie & Hans Fleischner Scholarship** went to **Carmen Hoyt**, a Gulf Coast High (Naples) graduate who studies marine biology at Duke University in North Carolina. The Fleischners are part-time Sanibel residents whose love of the island's environment moved them to sponsor the scholarship.

Isabel Gareau from Naples won the **Mary Elaine Jacobson Scholarship** to continue her ethnobotany and plant science studies at Cornell University in New York State. This memorial scholarship was made possible by the Sanibel-Captiva Audubon Society.

Fort Myers High graduate **Adrian Dougherty**, entering UF to study environmental engineering, received the **Francine Litofsky Scholarship**, in memory of a published nature photographer and active refuge volunteer.

Tarpon Bay Explorers (TBE) Scholarships had five recipients: Bishop Verot High graduate **Anthony Bonacolta**, who studies marine biology at the University of Miami; **Kara Lefebvre**, a graduate of Lemon Bay High in Englewood entering UF to study biological sciences; **Alex Lochard** from Cape Coral, who studies environmental engineering at UF; **Allison Malay** from Fort Myers studying environmental science at UCF; and **Shannen Smith**, a Lemon Bay High graduate entering Northeastern University in Boston to study environmental science. Wendy Schnapp presented the awards as co-owner of Tarpon Bay Explorers, which started with the DDWS scholarship program in 2007.

The **Jane Werner Environmental Scholarship**, DDWS' first permanent endowed scholarship, went to recent Lemon Bay High graduate **Samantha Albino**, who will be attending UF to study

marine biology. DDWS Emeritus Board Member Marilyn Kloosterman presented the award in honor of her late friend Werner, who volunteered at the refuge for 25 years.

“These students become part of the great ‘Ding’ Darling family,” said Kindig. “We welcome them back as scholarship applicants next year and as fellow conservation stewards in years to come.”

DDWS will again be awarding scholarships at the end of the 2016-2017 school year. High school seniors and college students living in Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Glades, and Hendry counties and pursuing careers in biology and environmental studies are eligible.

For an application, please visit dingdarlingsociety.org/student-scholarships. To read full descriptions of 2016 “Ding” scholarship winners, visit dingdarlingsociety.org/scholarship-winners.

Individuals and businesses interested in establishing a named scholarship of \$500 or more for 2017 should contact Birgie Miller at 239-292-0566 or 239-472-1100 ext. 4 or via email at director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

As a non-profit 501(c)3 organization, DDWS works to support J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge’s mission of conservation, wildlife and habitat protection, research, and public education through charitable donations and Refuge Nature Shop proceeds.

To support DDWS and the refuge with a tax-deductible gift, visit www.dingdarlingsociety.org or contact Birgie Miller at 239-292-0566 or director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

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