

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 13, 2017, “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) awarded \$15,500 in conservation education scholarships to 13 students from the surrounding five-county area. During its 11-year history, the DDWS Environmental Scholarship Program has awarded a total of \$97,000.

“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 13 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 **Carmen Hoyt**, a Gulf Coast High graduate entering her senior year at Duke University in North Carolina studying marine biology; and **Anthony Bonacolta**, a Bishop Verot graduate studying marine biology at the University of Miami.

Cypress Lake High graduate **Dara Craig**, who studies environmental conservation at Vanderbilt University in Tennessee, was recipient of the **Mike and Terry Baldwin Scholarship**, named for DDWS’ vice president and his wife, an emeritus board member, who were on hand to present the award.

Melissa Marchese, a Canterbury High graduate headed to Duke University 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.

Glenwood High graduate **Felicia Nudo**, who majors in environmental studies at Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) in Fort Myers, was awarded the **Dr. H. Randall Deming Scholarship for Conservation & Environmental Studies**. Deming's family established the memorial in 2016 as a permanent endowed scholarship in his memory.

The **Leslie & Hans Fleischner Scholarship** went to **Nicole Cohen**, a Cape Coral High graduate who studies environmental engineering at Johns Hopkins University in Maryland. The Fleischners are part-time Sanibel residents whose love of the island's environment moved them to sponsor the scholarship.

Ashley Turner, a graduate of Lemon Bay High who is headed to the University of Florida (UF) in Gainesville to study environmental science and agriculture, won the **Mary Elaine Jacobson Memorial Scholarship**, made possible by the Sanibel-Captiva Audubon Society.

Bishop Verot High graduate **Lauren Puleo**, entering the University of Central Florida in Orlando to study zoology and conservation, received the **Francine Litofsky Scholarship**, in memory of a published nature photographer and active refuge volunteer.

Tarpon Bay Explorers Scholarships sponsored four recipients: Fort Myers High graduate **Adrian Dougherty**, who studies environmental engineering at UF; **Morgan Humphrey**, a graduate of Barron Collier High studying environmental engineering at FGCU; **Juana Perez Mandujano**, an Immokalee High graduate intending to study environmental engineering at Wartburg College in Iowa; and **Spencer Burkhart**, a Port Charlotte High graduate entering Florida State University in Tallahassee to study environmental chemistry and engineering. 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 established in 2011, went to recent Cypress Lake High graduate **Blake Basler**, who will be

attending the Florida Institute of Technology in Melbourne to study biochemistry. 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 greater ‘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 2017-2018 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 and to read full descriptions of 2017 scholarship winners and donors, visit dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/student-scholarships.

Individuals and businesses interested in establishing a named scholarship of \$1,000 or more for 2018 should contact Birgie Miller at 239-292-0566, director@dingdarlingsociety.org; or Sarah Lathrop at 239-472-1100 ext. 4, sarah@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 dingdarlingsociety.org or contact Birgie Miller at 239-292-0566 or director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

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