

PRESS RELEASE

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Tarpon Bay Explorers offers scholarships for environmental studies

Tarpon Bay Explorers Scholarship for Environmental Studies for the fifth consecutive year will award \$1,000 to each of one or more local high school seniors or college students in April, reports Doris Hardy, chair of the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) Education Committee.

Applicants must live in Lee County, Charlotte, or Collier County and intend to pursue an education in science, biology, environmental studies, or wildlife conservation. Funds may be used for tuition, books, supplies, equipment, and technical materials at a qualifying institution of higher learning. Applications are due by March 31, 2010.

“We are extremely grateful to Winston Spurgeon and Wendy Erler-Schnapp, owners of Tarpon Bay Explorers, for this generous contribution to the future of environmental education and our youth,” said Hardy. “It fits well with our mission to further the refuge’s conservation education value.”

Tarpon Bay Explorers, the official recreational concession for J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge, offers refuge visitors kayak rentals and tours, Wildlife Drive tram tours, nature boating cruises, educational Deck Talks, and other opportunities to learn more about local wildlife and its habitat.

“Our Tarpon Bay Explorer naturalists are a team of environmental educators. Many of these talented individuals would not have had the opportunity to complete environmental studies or other related programs if it weren’t for grants and scholarships from members of the business community,” said Erler-Schnapp. “Therefore, we understand the value of educating these young people and are glad to contribute. We are fortunate to be able to offer these scholarships.”

DDWS -- a non-profit, friends-of-the-refuge organization that supports the Education Center, “Ding” Darling Days, and other educational programs at the refuge – will administer the Tarpon Bay Explorers scholarships.

For information on underwriting additional scholarships or applying for scholarships, please contact Hardy at hardydd@comcast.net or 239-472-1100 ext. 233, or Toni Westland at Toni_Westland@fws.gov or 239-472-1100 ext. 236.

Applicants can also download and print scholarship applications and information from www.dingdarlingsociety.org. Click on the applicable link on the bottom right-hand side under the “Inside the Society.”

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