

PRESS RELEASE

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Caption [images available upon request]

‘Ding’ Darling awards \$20K for environmental studies scholarships

In compliance with state pandemic guidelines, “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) this year awarded \$20,700 in conservation education scholarships remotely to 10 students from the surrounding five-county area. During its 14-year history, the DDWS Environmental Scholarship Program has awarded a total of \$147,100 to deserving students.

“The society is committed to educating today’s youth to become conservation stewards of the future,” said DDWS Education Committee 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, environmental engineering, policy, and science. A big thank you to our scholarship sponsors for their support.”

Ten donors sponsored the 10 scholarships this year. In lieu of the traditional physical awards ceremony, DDWS has invited scholarship recipients to send a video describing their plans to share with donors and perhaps others. Stay tuned for details.

A new award this year from a late, long-time DDWS board and Education Committee member, in partnership with DDWS, the **Marilyn Kloosterman Memorial Scholarship** went to **Dara Craig**. Originally from Sanibel Island, Craig is a Cypress Lake High (Fort Myers) graduate currently attending graduate school at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn., studying ecology and anthropology.

The **Richard Bailey Scholarship**, named in memory of a longtime refuge volunteer and donated by his family, went to **Madison Craumer**, who graduates this spring from Lely High School in

Naples, Fla., and is headed to Florida Gulf Coast University in Fort Myers to major in environmental engineering.

The **Mike and Terry Baldwin Scholarship**, named for DDWS' president and his wife, an emeritus board member, went to **Griffin Alexander**, a Naples High graduate studying ecosystem science, policy, and law at the University of Miami (UM), Florida.

Meguine Duvert, an Immokalee High graduate heading to the University of Florida (UF) in Gainesville to study zoology, received the **Dr. Andrew and Laura Dahlem Scholarship**. The Dahlems live part-time on Sanibel Island; their family honors them with a named scholarship.

Gulf Coast High (Naples) graduate **Skylar Fry**, who will begin studies in environmental science at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Tex., was awarded the **Dr. H. Randall Deming Endowed Scholarship for Conservation & Environmental Studies**. Deming's family established the scholarship in 2016 as a permanent endowed scholarship in his memory.

The **Leslie & Hans Fleischner Scholarships** went to **William Sobczak**, a Barron Collier High (Naples) graduate who intends to major in environmental engineering at UF. The Fleischners are part-time Sanibel residents whose love of the island's environment has inspired them to sponsor the scholarships for several years.

Bailey White, a graduate of Canterbury High (Fort Myers) who will be studying ecology and evolutionary biology at Princeton University in New Jersey, received the **Mary Elaine Jacobson Memorial Scholarship**, made possible by the Sanibel-Captiva Audubon Society.

Barron Collier High graduate **Manouk Hermans**, who is headed to the University of Tampa in Florida to study environmental science, received the **Barry and Francine Litofsky Scholarship**, in memory of two former refuge volunteers.

The **Tarpon Bay Explorers Scholarship** went to Golden Gate High (Naples) graduate **Nehemie Cyriaque**, who will study ecosystem science and policy at UM. Tarpon Bay Explorers, "Ding" Darling's recreation concession, started the original DDWS scholarship program in 2006.

The **Jane Werner Endowed Environmental Scholarship**, established in 2011 as DDWS' first permanent endowed scholarship, went to recent Barron Collier High graduate **Mallory Poff**, who studies environmental engineering at Elon University in North Carolina. The family of the late Jane Werner, who volunteered at the refuge for 25 years, set up the scholarship in her honor.

“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 be awarding scholarships starting at \$1,000 each at the end of the 2020-2021 school year. High school seniors and college students living in Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Glades, and Hendry counties and pursuing careers in biology, conservation, and environmental studies are eligible.

For an application and to read full descriptions of 2020 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 2020-2021 should contact Lynnae Messina at 239-472-1100 ext. 233.

ABOUT DDWS

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 profits.

To support DDWS and the refuge with a tax-deductible gift, visit dingdarlingsociety.org or contact Birgie Miller at 239-472-1100 ext. 4 or director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

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