

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release.

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w/dara craig: Sanibel islander Dara Craig received her fifth DDWS scholarship this year for graduate school at the University of Oregon. Here, she studies climate change and glacial melt in New Zealand.

‘Ding’ Darling awards \$30K for environmental studies scholarships

In compliance with state pandemic guidelines, “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) this year awarded \$30,700 in conservation education scholarships remotely to 14 students from the surrounding five-county area. During its 15-year history, the DDWS Environmental Scholarship Program has awarded a total of \$199,500 to deserving students.

“The society is committed to educating today’s youth to become future conservation stewards,” said DDWS Education Committee Chair Wendy Kindig. “We work with businesses, families, 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.”

Eleven donors sponsored the 14 scholarships this year. In lieu of the traditional physical awards ceremony, DDWS invited scholarship recipients to send a video to share with donors their school and career plans.

Two **Richard Bailey Scholarships**, named in memory of a longtime refuge volunteer and donated by his family, went to **Blade Kalikow**, a recent graduate of Community High School of Naples who is headed to Northeastern University in Boston, Mass. to study environmental engineering; and **Izabella Ferjiani**, who graduated from Lemon Bay High in Englewood and will be studying marine science at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Fla.

The **Mike and Terry Baldwin Scholarship**, named for DDWS’ immediate past president and his wife, an emeritus board member, went to **Mallory Poff**, a Barron Collier High (Naples) alumnus who studies environmental engineering at Elon University in North Carolina.

Dara Craig, originally from Sanibel Island and a Cypress Lake High (Fort Myers) alumnus attending graduate school at the University of Oregon's environmental sciences program, received the **Dr. Andrew and Laura Dahlem Scholarship**. The Dahlems live part-time on Sanibel Island; their family honors them with a named scholarship.

Robert Marlin Smith, a North Fort Myers alumnus who studies marine and environmental science at Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) in Fort Myers, Fla., received 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.

Skylar Lowden, a Fort Myers High alumnus attending the University of Miami in the field of architecture, was awarded the **"Ding" Darling Conservation Scholarship**, made possible by an anonymous donor.

Two **Leslie & Hans Fleischner Scholarships** went to **Shannon Dougherty**, a Cape Coral High graduate who intends to study sustainability science at Mercer University in Atlanta, Ga.; and Gulf Coast High (Naples) graduate **Micah Evans**, who will be attending the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., to study ocean engineering. The Fleischners are part-time Sanibel residents whose love of the island's environment has inspired them to sponsor the scholarships for several years.

Alexandria Henson, a graduate of North Fort Myers High who will be majoring in environmental studies at the University of Florida (UF) in Gainesville, received the **Mary Elaine Jacobson Memorial Scholarship**, made possible by the Sanibel-Captiva Audubon Society.

In honor of the late, long-time DDWS board and Education Committee member and in partnership with DDWS, the **Win and Marilyn Kloosterman Memorial Scholarship** went to Purdue University (West Lafayette, Ind.) graduate student **Taylor Sorrell**, an alumnus of Palmetto Ridge High in Naples who is studying biological engineering.

William Sobczak, a Barron Collier High (Naples) alumnus who studies environmental engineering at UF, received the **Barry and Francine Litofsky Scholarship**, in memory of two former refuge volunteers.

The **Tarpon Bay Explorers Scholarship** went to North Fort Myers High graduate **Tate Williams**, who will study environmental engineering at FGCU. Tarpon Bay Explorers, “Ding” Darling’s recreation concession, started the original DDWS scholarship program in 2006.

Two **Jane Werner Endowed Environmental Scholarships**, established in 2011 as DDWS’ first permanent endowed scholarship, went to **Alexandra Polk**, a Fort Myers High alumna who studies environmental science and marine biology at the University of South Florida in Tampa; and **Mark Leone**, who previously attended Estero High and the FGCU Accelerated Collegiate Experience program and now heads to Stanford University in Stanford, Cal., to major in civil engineering. The family of the late Jane Werner, who volunteered at the refuge for 25 years, set up the scholarship fund 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 2021-2022 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 2021-2022 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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