

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release.

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Caption: Four-time repeat recipient Mallory Poff works on her research project to design a solar-powered mobile cooling unit that meets agricultural standards for use on small farms.

‘Ding’ Darling awards \$33K for environmental studies scholarships

“Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) this summer awarded \$33,700 in conservation education scholarships to 14 students from the surrounding five-county area. During its 16-year history, the DDWS Environmental Scholarship Program has awarded a total of \$233,200 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 partner 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 their school and career plans with donors.

The **Richard Bailey Scholarship**, named in memory of a longtime refuge volunteer and donated by his family, went to **Erik Courtney**, a recent graduate of Charlotte High School in Punta Gorda, who is headed to Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) in Fort Myers to study environmental engineering

The **Mike & Terry Baldwin Scholarship**, named for DDWS’ immediate past president and his wife, an emeritus board member, went to **Mark Leone**, a Canterbury High (Fort Myers) and Estero High alumnus who studies mechanical engineering and biology at Stanford University in California.

Ellen Marz Hiatt, a recent graduate from North Fort Myers High who is headed to the University of South Florida (USF) in Tampa to study environmental science and sustainability, received the **Dr. Andrew and Laura Dahlem Scholarship**. The Dahlems live part-time on Sanibel Island; their family honors them with a named scholarship.

Dara Craig, a Cypress Lake High alumna earning her doctorate at the University of Oregon in ecology and anthropology, received the **Dr. H. Randall Deming Endowed Scholarship for Conservation & Environmental Studies**. Deming's family established the scholarship in 2016 as a permanently endowed scholarship in his memory.

Cody Weber, a Sickles High (Tampa) alumna attending Florida Southwestern State College in Fort Myers in the field of biology, was awarded the **"Ding" Darling Conservation Scholarship**, made possible by an anonymous donor.

Two **Leslie & Hans Fleischner Scholarships** went to **Courtney Dingerson**, an Ida S. Baker High (Cape Coral) graduate who intends to study biology at the University of Florida (UF) in Gainesville; and Fort Myers High graduate **Alexandra Polk**, who attends USF to study environmental science and marine biology. The Fleischners were parttime Sanibel residents whose love of the island's environment has inspired them to sponsor the scholarships for several years. Since Hans passed away this year, Leslie still spends part of the year on the island.

Mallory Poff, an alumna of Barron Collier High (Naples) who majors in environmental engineering at Elon University in North Carolina, received the **Mary Elaine Jacobson Memorial Scholarship**, made possible by the Sanibel-Captiva Audubon Society.

In honor of the late, longtime DDWS board and Education Committee member and her husband, and in partnership with DDWS, the **Win and Marilyn Kloosterman Memorial Scholarship** went to FGCU student **Nina Nguyen**, an alumna of North Fort Myers High who is majoring in environmental studies.

Blade Kalikow, a Community High School of Naples alumna who studies environmental engineering at Northeastern University in Boston, Mass., received the **Barry & Francine Litofsky Scholarship**, in memory of two former refuge volunteers.

The **Tarpon Bay Explorers Scholarship** went to North Fort Myers High alumnus **Robert Marlin Smith**, who studies marine and environmental science at FGCU. Tarpon Bay Explorers, “Ding” Darling’s recreation concession, started the original DDWS scholarship program in 2006.

Three **Jane Werner Endowed Environmental Scholarships**, established in 2011 as DDWS’ first permanently endowed scholarship fund, went to **Grace McCoy**, a Palm Ridge High (Naples) alumnus who pursues environmental studies at FGCU; **Jax Mendelsohn**, a Lemon Bay High (Englewood) graduate heading to UF to major in environmental studies; and **Jaylynn Santacross**, another Lemon Bay High graduate who will study marine biology at USF. 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 2022 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 2022-2023 should contact Sierra Hoisington 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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