

Zonta Announces Public Affairs Recipient for 2015



The 2015 recipient of Zonta's Young Women in Public Affairs award is Sanibel resident Casey Dillon Wexler, a Fort Myers High School senior. Casey was honored recently at a Zonta gathering, and will attend American University in Washington DC in the fall.

Established in 1990, the YWPA award honors young women aged 16-19 who demonstrate a commitment to leadership in public policy, government and volunteer organizations. The program operates at several levels, and those honored at the local level compete for district/region awards and international awards. The Zonta Club of Sanibel-Captiva awards a \$250 prize and sends the chosen application to Zonta's District 11, comprising 42 clubs from North Carolina to the Caribbean.

Casey, who attended The Sanibel School before heading to Fort Myers High, has maintained a weighted GPA of 5.1 in the competitive International Baccalaureate program. In addition to her academic achievements, she has been involved in many academic and sporting activities, ranging from the school's Film Club and Varsity Swim Team to serving as the School News Director and as the Florida State Assistant Editor of the Youth-in-Government Press Corps. She qualified for a 3-week talent identification program on the campus of Duke University each summer for four years, studying subjects such as Literature, Law and Logic; Archaeology and Anthropology; and Phylogenetic Systematics.

Concerned about the environment, she volunteered at The Sanibel Sea School while still in elementary school. Later, she joined the Model UN club at Fort Myers High, immersing herself in foreign policy concerns of nations such as India, Syria and Iran. This led to a fascination with international issues and how they affect the policies of the United States. In 2014, she volunteered through Visions Service Adventures on a Blackfeet Indian reservation in Montana, where for four weeks she painted houses, helped build a wheelchair ramp and helped set up a traditional holy ceremony called an Okan.

Tamara H. Leake, AP teacher in Psychology and U.S. History at Fort Myers High, writes: "Casey is a young woman with an impeccable academic record, outstanding moral character, imaginative intellect, and a will to succeed. The future holds great promise for Casey, and I feel confident that she will take advantage of her opportunities to shine."

Casey has not yet chosen her college major, but it seems clear that whatever path she chooses, she will make her mark on the world. She writes of "exemplary women" in her life: her grandmother started the first women-only lobbying firm in the nation's capital and her mother broke barriers in the broadcasting business. "I want to inspire women to get involved in public policy and help advance the cause of women's rights in our country and around the world," she said.

The Zonta Club of Sanibel/Captiva is a service organization of professional women working together to provide hands-on assistance, advocacy and funds to strengthen women's lives on the islands, in Lee County and around the world through Zonta International. Visit www.zontasancap.com.

Caption for photo:

Casey Wexler (center) with Zontians Ellen Strobel (L) and Orlene Shimberg, coordinators of the YWPA program.