

2012 Congressional Award Gold Medal Winners

Florida District 22

Christian Dulcie

Palm Beach Gardens, Florida

Advisor: Lynn Lyons

Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America, HOBY & National Honor Society

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To earn my Congressional Award Gold Medal I completed over 500 hours of Voluntary

Public Service, which included a Veterans Outreach program I began in 2007. Partnering

with community leaders and groups, I conducted drives and events to provide ongoing

support for homeless and disabled veterans in need. For Personal Development, I served

my state of Florida as a messenger in the House of Representatives for two years. I

learned the dynamics that go into making law and the many facets working together to

operate our government. For Physical Fitness, I became more self-disciplined in adhering

to a set workout routine, increasing my strength and endurance in bench press, squats,

push-ups, and sit-ups. Finally, for my Exploration, I planned a five-night discovery of

New York City. I toured shops, theatres and museums displaying cultural and artistic

treasures; visited monuments, churches and architectural sites rich with our nation's

history; explored financial, business and transportation hubs driving our economy; and

took a culinary journey through eclectic neighborhoods with diverse ethnic markets. It

was a privilege and life-changing endeavor to complete the challenges necessary to earn

my Gold Medal, and I learned fundamental values of citizenship, service and

accountability in the process.

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Meghan Fallon

Jupiter, Florida

Advisor: Lynn Lyons

Affiliations: Girl Scouts of the USA, National Honor Society

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To earn my Congressional Award Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary

Public Service by participating in various activities. I coached a travel volleyball team

and also visited the local pre-school and nursing home as a part of my school's Student

Government Association. For my Personal Development portion, I worked on an

architectural computer program called Google Sketchup, designing many different houses and buildings. I also played flag football for my school, becoming an intermediate flag football player. For my Physical Fitness, I played on my school and club volleyball team, attending practices, camps, games, and tournaments to reach a total of 878 hours. Finally, for my Exploration I planned a five-night trip to Charleston, South Carolina. In the heat of the summer, we explored America's first port and learned of America's history.

Earning the Congressional Award Gold Medal was an amazing experience that taught me many life lessons such as perseverance, time-management, project planning, and responsibility.

Robert Jacobs

Palm Beach Gardens, Florida

Advisor: Lynn Lyons

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To earn my Congressional Award Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary

Public Service mainly working with children in my community. I volunteered as a junior

counselor at my school's summer camp, where I set up activities for the campers and

supervised them during their time at the camp. For Personal Development, I became a

certified lacrosse referee and now referee youth lacrosse games in our community. I also

worked with a trainer to improve my physical strength and endurance while playing

sports. For Physical Fitness, I trained to become a better lacrosse player and a starter on

my high school lacrosse team, where we won a state championship. Finally, for my

Expedition I planned a trip to the Big Island of Hawaii where we flew over an active

volcano in a helicopter, swam in a black sand beach and watched cliff divers on the south side of the island. Reflecting on my experiences while earning the Congressional Award Gold Medal, I learned how much I enjoy working with children.

Heather Klotz

Royal Palm Beach, Florida

Advisor: Shelby Colman

Affiliations: National Honor Society, People to People International

To earn my Congressional Award Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary

Public Service at Animal Care and Control of Palm Beach County, Vinceremos

Therapeutic Riding Center, Royal Manor Nursing Home, and a local homeless shelter.

Because of my love for horses, I most enjoyed working at Vinceremos Riding Center

where I was able to interact with mentally handicapped kids and provide them with the joy of interacting with the amazing horses. For Personal Development, I spent over 200 hours learning about art through various art shows, classes, and exploring through my paintbrush. I have learned incredible art skills and have found a new appreciation that will stay with me for the rest of my life. My Physical Fitness hours were accumulated through riding my horse three times a week and continually receiving lessons to be always improving. My horse and I can now successfully jump an entire course of jumps set at three feet. Finally, for my Expedition I spent five days and four nights at a nearby nature preserve where I learned about the special animals in South Florida and the plant life that makes up my ecosystem. I had a great time learning about the preserve and learning how to care for my environment. The Congressional Award has taught me that

dreams become accomplishments when you work toward something with all of your

heart.

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Grace Marrero

Jupiter, Florida

Advisor: Lynn Lyons

Affiliation: Girl Scouts of the USA

I have volunteered for many organizations through my efforts in the Girl Scouts of

America by helping the local animal shelter, making care bags for soldiers, creating cards

for children with terminal health conditions, and more. I also volunteered at a community

theater to help with the production of *Seussical Jr.* My passion for film directed my

Personal Development activities. I learned to expand my filming skills and knowledge on

editing, lighting, sound, and software through years of research, self-training, and practice. For Physical Fitness, I continued my training in Tae Kwon Do and finally achieved my goal by earning my official Korean 2nd degree black belt. I also strived to improve my stretching, kicking, and technique for my physical fitness. For my Exploration, I traveled across the country to California where I ventured through Los Angeles, Malibu, and San Diego. I discovered a whole new lifestyle, architecture, horticulture, and atmosphere that I fell in love with.

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Allison Wrieden

Jupiter, Florida

Advisor: Joe Marino

Affiliations: Habitat for Humanity, Salvation Army

I completed over 400 hours of community service to assist needy children in my community mainly through working with the Head Start after-care and Salvation Army programs. The work I did for Voluntary Public Service impacted me the most because I was able to witness how a simple act of service on my part could be life-changing to the people I assisted. For Personal Development I volunteered my time by organizing and leading the middle school youth group, WyldLife, at my local church. This vastly improved my leadership skills and my patience. As my activity for Physical Fitness, I was trained to ride both styles of horseback riding- English and Western. By doing this, I greatly improved my physical strength and gained a lifelong love for horses. In order to perform my Exploration and Expedition activity, I planned an eight day trip for my family to rural Colorado. This put me out of my comfort zone often because of the

strenuous activities such as whitewater rafting and a ropes course I performed.

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Hailey Cunningham

Palm Beach, Florida

Advisor: Lynn Lyons

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To earn my Congressional Award Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary

Public Service work at my local art museum and through my school. I aided visitors at

the museum and helped kindergarteners learn to read at an elementary school. For

Personal Development, I learned to cook and to bake. I hosted a very successful fourcourse

dinner party. For Physical Fitness, I took Pilates classes and cardio boot camps. I

greatly improved my flexibility through these courses. And for my Exploration, I planned

a five-night trip in the Southwest, exploring the different cultures. We visited great

monuments such as the Grand Canyon and sampled the local cuisine. Through the

Congressional Award, I learned dedication and commitment.

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Eric Gfesser

Palm Beach Gardens, Florida

Advisor: Lynn Lyons

Affiliation: Boy Scouts of America

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To earn my Congressional Award Gold Medal I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary

Public Service work at the Busch Wildlife Center. I was responsible for raising money,

planning, drafting plans and building two cages for the animals. In addition, I participated in numerous projects for my school and community such as serving meals to the homeless at a local church. For Personal Development, I set out to improve my golf game and play in local tournaments. I was successful and achieved the Player of the Year for the JGFA Tournament Series. For Physical Fitness I set a goal to improve my tennis game. I achieved that goal and became a qualifier for the Georgia High School State Tennis Tournament in the first singles position. I was awarded the MVP award for my team and was also recognized by the local newspapers. Finally, for my Expedition, I participated in a seven day, six night sailing adventure in the Bahamas. Planning included getting certified by PADI for open water scuba diving, charting out our dives, organizing my gear and making sure the equipment was ready for exploring the underwater world. It

was an amazing and challenging adventure. I liked being in touch with nature. The

Congressional Award program has taught me that really can do anything I put my mind

to.

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Kelly Higgins

North Palm Beach, Florida

Advisor: Lynn Lyons

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In pursuit of my Congressional Award Gold Medal, I have given over 400 Voluntary

Public Service hours to numerous causes including the Village of North Palm Beach's

program to support our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. I helped collect items outside of

the dollar store and pack the items up in decorated paper bags and send them to the

soldiers. For Personal Development, I took an SAT class combined with my own studying. In doing this, I was able to raise my SAT score over 150 points. For Physical Fitness, I ran cross country in an attempt to lower my time for a 5K. I succeeded in achieving my goal time of exactly 26 minutes and 50 seconds. For my Exploration, I planned a trip to Alguíño, Spain for three weeks. I traveled to this remote area in Spain at the age of fifteen without a parent and with another fifteen year old by my side where we visited several festivals and monuments in the area. Completion of the Congressional Award Gold Medal is an accomplishment that I will never forget and always appreciate.

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Pauline Thiemann

North Palm Beach, Florida

Advisor: Lynn Lyons

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To earn my Congressional Award I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service work for several different local charities. I also spent time tutoring others, supporting local water sports, and helping raise money for the victims of the Haiti earthquakes. For Personal Development, I participated in water polo lessons six times a week, and studied the sport on my own. I am now the goalie for my high school water polo team. For my Physical Fitness portion, I decided I would train for and improve my swimming skills. When I began, I swam the 100-meter butterfly in 52 seconds and improved to a 40 second 100-meter butterfly. For my Expedition I planned a trip to northern Canada. While in Canada I walked a trap-line, toured a power plant, interviewed a real trapper, visited a dairy farm and spent a day on The Polar Bear Express where I

visited an Indian reservation. I am so glad I persevered through to the Gold Award. I feel such a sense of accomplishment and it has emboldened me to reach higher in everything I do.

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Allison Puchferran

Boca Raton, Florida

Advisor: Jeanne Campbell

The Congressional Award has become a right of passage in our family, as I join my two

older brothers in reaching this goal. By far my favorite areas in this journey were

Voluntary Public Service and Expedition where I was able to work with children

especially those less fortunate. In the area of Personal Development I studied piano,

violin and guitar and played in a worship band for my peers. In Physical Fitness I was

able to continue my passion of playing golf, being named captain of my high school golf

team and receiving offers to play college golf. I was even able to travel to Germany to

work at the German Masters European PGA Golf Tournament. In these areas I coached

and taught soccer to children locally and in third world orphanages. My involvement in

the Congressional Award Program has helped me discover so many things about myself.

I am continuing my education in nursing, where I believe working with children that will

become an even greater part of my future.