

News for Immediate Release



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Illinois Conservation Foundation Awards Conservation Achievement Scholarships

SPRINGFIELD, IL – The Illinois Conservation Foundation (ICF) is pleased to announce the three recipients of the 2016 Conservation Achievement Scholarships – Elizabeth Moore of Rock Island, Katelyn Toigo of Grafton, and Charlee Thompson of Edwardsville. Each will receive \$2,000 scholarships from the ICF to apply to specified expenses at the two- or four-year college or university of their choice.

“The Illinois Conservation Foundation is proud to recognize the achievements and the potential of the young people receiving this year’s Conservation Achievement Scholarships,” said Wayne Rosenthal, chairman of the ICF Board of Directors. “Each has shown leadership abilities in their schools and in their communities directed toward conservation initiatives and environmental stewardship that will make a positive impact.”

The Conservation Achievement Scholarships have been awarded since 2005. In the 12 years of this program’s existence, 63 scholarships worth a total value of \$98,000 have been distributed. Generous donations to the Illinois Conservation Foundation from numerous organizations and individuals make the scholarship program possible.

“The Board of Directors and supporters of the ICF believe in investing in the good work and good ideas of young people interested in protecting our natural world and spending time outdoors – and that’s what this scholarship program is all about,” said ICF Executive Director Eric Schmidt.

2016 Conservation Achievement Scholarship Recipients

Elizabeth Moore, Rock Island

During her four years as a student at Rock Island High School, Elizabeth Moore has been a member of the school's Environmental Action Club (EAC), including serving as vice-president. The EAC has worked to remove invasive species such as garlic mustard at Nahant Marsh, clean up the Mississippi River, and make the high school more environmentally conscious. Moore noted that in her role in charge of school-wide recycling. "I am entrusted to ensure that no sheet of paper is left un-recycled."

Moore became interested in the environment volunteering with her family on the Xstream Cleanup, part of Chad Pregracke's Living Lands and Waters' Great Mississippi River Cleanup near Rock Island. Last spring, Moore created a vegetable garden at Denkmann Elementary School, organizing students in planting, maintaining, and harvesting the 800-square-foot garden. After another Denkmann garden season this year, Moore reports teachers at the school plan on using the vegetable garden as a science project as Moore heads off to attend college. Moore plans to attend Carleton College in Minnesota. She is considering studying Conservation Biology and Political Science at Carleton "in order to become an effective activist, and I hope to participate in Carleton College's Kids for Conservation, which gives elementary school students knowledge they will need to make environmentally responsible decisions in their future."

Katelyn Toigo, Grafton

As a student at Jerseyville Community High School, Katelyn Toigo has participated in tree planting projects on Public Lands Day and trash pickup efforts, but counts as her most important conservation work volunteering on habitat restoration projects at Katelyn's Woods Land and Water Reserve near Grafton, Illinois – and volunteering at Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge (TRNWR) in Brussels, Illinois.

Katelyn's Woods is a 150-acre reserve of upland oak/hickory forest with old fields interspersed. "I help eradicate invasive plants by pulling bush honeysuckle, garlic mustard, sweet clover, and many other species," Toigo said. "My efforts are rewarded by the resurgence of native species like the large yellow lady's slipper orchid, great Indian plantain, whippoorwill, and timber rattlesnake. In old field areas, I cut trees to maintain an early successional state which provides habitat for quail, rabbits, and many Neotropical migrants, along with a variety of savanna and prairie plants."

Toigo also worked on prairie restoration on acreage adjacent to the land and water reserve. Her favorite conservation work involves volunteering at TRNWR, including transplanting wildflowers, painting buildings, erecting signs, working at the refuge visitor center, and eradicating non-native plants. Toigo will be attending Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

Charlee Thompson, Edwardsville

As a freshman at Edwardsville High School, Charlee Thompson, her twin sister and a friend founded an environmental club that sparked a passion for environmental activism. Club members brought awareness

to a variety of environmental issues, including the Keystone XL Pipeline and the significance of recycling. The club expanded its message outside of the school, providing climate change presentations, initiating a “No Idling” campaign within the school district, and beginning a partnership with the local watershed nature center.

Thompson was appointed to the Edwardsville Cool Cities Initiative Advisory Committee (CCIAC) by the mayor. Working as a liaison between her high school environmental club and the CCIAC, she created an event called “Edwardsville Unplugged,” an acoustic concert in support of the World Wildlife Fund’s “Earth Hour.” She also helped create the not-for-profit “Illinois Youth Environmental Network,” connecting Edwardsville students with air and water quality experts, solar experts, engineers, and other environmentalists from around the state.

Thompson will attend the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to become an environmental engineer.

“I want to do my part in protecting the planet for future generations,” Thompson said.

Applicants for the Illinois Conservation Foundation's Conservation Achievement Scholarship program must be outstanding high school seniors in Illinois who have demonstrated effective, voluntary, long-term dedication to the preservation, protection, enhancement and/or promotion of Illinois' natural resources. Other criteria also apply. Detailed instructions and the application form can be accessed at <http://www.ilcf.org/scholarships>. Please contact the Illinois Conservation Foundation at 217-785-2003 or dnr.icf@illinois.gov for more information or to make a donation to support the Conservation Achievement Scholarships.