

Outstanding Students Selected as Disney Dreamers & Doers Shining Stars

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla., May 16, 2013 – With the school year coming to a close, Walt Disney World Resort recognized 16 Central Florida students who have excelled in their academic achievements and civic efforts, naming them Disney Dreamers & Doers Shining Stars.

Entering its 30th year, the Disney Dreamers & Doers program recognizes students who have a caring spirit, consistently demonstrate outstanding character and lead by example. The group of students receiving the Shining Star distinction includes a third grader who organized several food collection drives; a sixth grader who used social media to find homes for rescued animals and a high school senior who volunteered 1,350 hours helping people in need.

“We all know dreamers and we all know doers,” said Nancy Gidusko, director of community relations for Walt Disney World Resort. “What makes these students so outstanding – true Shining Stars – is that they are dreamers who take positive steps to make their dreams a reality. They are changing our communities and our world, providing inspiration to their peers and giving us hope for a brighter future.”

Approximately 400 students were chosen by their schools as 2013 Disney Dreamer & Doer. From that group, a panel of judges selected the Shining Stars from elementary, middle and high schools in Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Lake and Polk counties as well as the Florida Virtual School.

“Having a Disney Dreamer & Doer as well as a Shining Star is a proud moment for Timber Creek High School,” said Gabriel Berrio, principal of the school. “It adds to our excitement and to the pride we already have for our students and our community.”

Disney Dreamers & Doers Shining Stars receive a Mickey Mouse statue known as a “Mousecar,” a gold medallion and annual theme park passes for themselves and their immediate family.

The 2013 Disney Dreamers & Doers Shining Stars are:

Orange County

- West Creek Elementary School – Robert Sena
- Orangewood Christian Middle School – Nicholas Christian Reed
- Timber Creek High School -Jessica Velázquez

Osceola County

- St. Cloud Elementary School – Angelika Pabón
- Trinity Lutheran – Rebecca Dupuis
- Celebration High School – Jaime Kaplan-Perico

Seminole County

- Lake Mary Elementary School – Mary Tracy
- Annunciation Catholic Academy – Hannah Veigle
- The Master’s Academy – Kasen Raines

Lake County

- Umatilla Elementary School – Annagrace Hall
- Eustis Middle School – Camryn Rivers
- South Lake High School – Heather LeBlanc

Polk County

- Auburndale Central Elementary School – Jennifer Morales
- Lawton Chiles Middle Academy – Holt Russell
- All Saints Academy – Maxwell Hewett

Florida Virtual School

- Bailey Ansbaugh

To date, more than 12,400 students have been recognized as Disney Dreamers & Doers. The program is just one of the ways that Walt Disney World Resort actively supports education in Central Florida. In the past year, Disney's involvement has included Disney Helping Kids Shine grants for local school districts and early learning coalitions, more than 18,000 hours donated by Disney VoluntEARS at local schools and more than 3 million school supplies donated to students at the start of the school year.

2013 SHINING STARS – LAKE COUNTY

Elementary School

Umatilla Elementary – 3rd grade

Annagrace Hall began a food drive at her school after realizing that one of her friends was among the many recipients of a backpack program that provides meals to those in need. She wondered what would happen if the school's pantry ran out of food, and felt she needed to take action. The drive was a huge success, allowing her to provide families with Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter dinners, holiday gifts and gift cards for families to use in the summer months. Her "small" idea blossomed into more than she expected, and she is now planning for her second annual holiday drive. One of **Annagrace's** teachers admires her for wanting to help so many people at such a young age. She describes her as an exceptional child with a sense of caring and commitment.

Middle School

Eustis Middle School – 8th grade

Camryn Rivers has been involved in various charities such as Kids Against Hunger, March of Dimes, and raising dollars for Haiti. When a teacher was diagnosed with cancer and was in danger of losing her life without proper medication, Camryn took action to help. **Camryn** organized a 5K race, including the sale of t-shirts and team bracelets. To her surprise, over 700 participants attended to show their support, and her profit was \$15,000. These dollars were donated to her teacher to assist in her recovery. One of **Camryn's** teachers said that she is dedicated to her studies and helping people in need. She describes what an honor it is to know her, and that in her case, the student has inspired the teacher.

High School

South Lake High – 11th grade

Heather LeBlanc discovered that a local animal services facility was euthanizing animals. She decided to become involved so that innocent animals could go to deserving, loving homes. She and her cousin opened Misfit Animal Rescue. **Heather** takes the animals from the facility for vaccinations and finds loving, fur-ever homes for them. She has also attended city council meetings, and the county is now working on a resolution to save these animals as well. Since her involvement, over 150 impounded dogs and cats have been saved. One of **Heather's** teachers said

that she has made significant impact in her county. While many students are spending weekends on the beach, she is focused on humanitarian efforts.

2013 SHINING STARS – ORANGE COUNTY

Elementary School

West Creek Elementary – 5th grade

Robert Sena has overcome challenges with a positive attitude and optimism. After a job loss forced his family to move into a motel, **Robert** felt compelled to help others. He volunteers at Coalition for the Homeless, and also speaks to both students and adults about healthy life habits. **Robert** recently applied for and received two grants to support his passion for encouraging a healthier generation. One grant will fund a new vegetable garden at his school, and the other will be used for a garden at the Community Food & Outreach Center. One of **Robert's** teachers said that he shows true dedication to his community and his academics. He is involved in many activities and sets a wonderful example for his peers.

Middle School

Orangewood Christian Middle – 8th grade

Nicholas Christian Reed has a best friend. His brother is a musician, equestrian, swimmer, and has a love for traveling. Nicholas said his brother is severely autistic, and his family's biggest blessing. He teaches his brother as much as his brother teaches him, and it is his job to protect and love him. **Nicholas** believes he is lucky one to have the best brother anyone could want. Although his brother is the true Dreamer & Doer, he can't tell his story, so **Nicholas** will just tell others about his many gifts. The relationship they have inspires **Nicholas** to make his home, school and community a better place. One of **Nicholas's** teachers said that he commits his time and service to others with specific needs. He leads and practices a lifestyle to emulate, and excels in all areas of service.

High School

Timber Creek High – 12th grade

Jessica Velazquez leads service-learning projects at her school and the community. Her 1,350 hours of volunteering include a variety of activities from preserving the environment to clothing and food drives to helping migrant farm workers and those who are homeless. Although **Jessica** has faced emotional and financial hardship like others, she feels that helping has infused her life with hope and joy. She encourages others to take action and participate now in order to make a difference in the lives of others. One of **Jessica's** teachers describes her as role model and leader. As a foster child, she has faced difficulties, yet she focuses her energy on the well-being of others.

2013 SHINING STARS – OSCEOLA COUNTY

Elementary School

St. Cloud Elementary – 5th grade

Angelika Pabon's visit to a homeless shelter made her realize how blessed she is to have a safe place to live. It inspired her to start a donation drive to give pajamas to those in need. To date, she and her Girl Scout troop have donated 625 pajamas to shelters, foster homes, and children in hotels. **Angelika** has begun reaching out to farmers' markets and rotary clubs to collect socks and underwear for foster children. She understands that collecting these items is not the same as providing a safe home, but she feels her efforts create awareness in the community to help more children in need. One of her teachers describes **Angelika's** desire to give to others as very mature for someone her age. She strives to ensure that all students feel valued and included in activities.

Middle School

Trinity Lutheran – 8th grade

Rebecca Dupuis is drawn to help others. She has volunteered at various places such as the Orlando Science Center and Teen Court, and sponsors a child at the Village of Hope in Haiti. She enjoys sending letters to soldiers in Afghanistan, and appreciates what soldiers do to help all children. Volunteering helps **Rebecca** feel she can make a difference, and has taught her how lucky she is to have the life she has. Her view is that a community works when its members practice basic human decency and are considerate and helpful to one another. One of **Rebecca's** teachers said that her positive spirit and academic drive make a difference in her community. She helps classmates and promotes school pride through her volunteer projects.

High School

Celebration High – 12th grade

Jaime Kaplan-Perico builds relationships with students in her intern role with the Boys & Girls Club of Central Florida. At first she did not understand their choices or their hardships, until she took the time to listen to their tales of homelessness, illness, and isolation. **Jaime** said the children have taught her how to be more patient and to better appreciate the simple things in life. When a student thanked her for listening to her and allowing her to express her feelings, it melted her heart. This confirmed her important role with the “club kids.” One of **Jaime's** teachers said she demonstrates kindness to those who face difficulties. She is involved with other organizations and has become an advocate for those in need.

2013 SHINING STARS - POLK COUNTY

Elementary School

Auburndale Central Elementary – 4th grade

Jennifer Morales helps her 4 year old brother to read, write, and learn his letters. Because he has a hard time sitting still, she makes learning fun, such as creating an alphabetical train to teach him letters, or going on an alphabetical treasure hunt. She wants him to get a step closer to his future. **Jennifer's** brother speaks in Spanish during the day, but switches to English when she gets home. She teaches him big words, like hypothesis and onomatopoeia. **Jennifer** said that teaching him helps her too, and because learning is fun, he is always eager to learn. One of **Jennifer's** teachers describes her as a leader, both in school and at home. She is not afraid to try new things and does her best all the time. She can do whatever she puts her mind to.

Middle School

Lawton Chiles Middle Academy – 8th grade

Holt Russell is a kite surfer and owner of Rejoyce Cotton Candy. After meeting a 2-year old in Guatemala who had been left in a garbage can by a mother who could not care for him, he decided to focus his efforts on building an orphanage for children in Africa. **Holt's** company is named after his grandmother Joyce, who had an enormous heart for orphans. His cotton candy machine appears at many community events and he even went kite surfing from Miami to the Florida Keys to raise money for his cause. One of **Holt's** teachers said that he gives 100% to anything he does. He is respectful, kind, and makes the extra effort to help other students and teachers.

High School

All Saints Academy – 12th grade

For the past 5 years, **Maxwell Hewett** has accompanied his father, who is a dentist, to Guatemala to provide dental services in impoverished communities. Parents in these communities must pay \$8 per month to send their children to school, yet families cannot afford to pay this amount. **Maxwell** created a nonprofit with his sister called the Guatemala Awareness Project. On one of their trips, they purchased 500 handmade bracelets that are sold here, and all profits are sent to Guatemala so that more students are able to enroll in school. One of **Maxwell's** teachers said that while most students spend their summers improving themselves, he spends his free time improving the

lives of others. He is more than a dreamer – he is a doer.

2013 SHINING STARS – SEMINOLE COUNTY

Elementary School

Lake Mary Elementary – 5th grade

Mary Tracy has 4 siblings. Her brother and sister have extra needs, and she helps her family by doing a variety of chores. When her brother is afraid during thunderstorms, she sits with him. When her sister needs help in her wheelchair, she makes her comfortable so she can breathe better. **Mary's** involvement in Girl Scouts allows her to also help others in need through volunteer projects. She knows she is not doing things that matter to the world, but she is doing things that matter to those she loves. She doesn't believe she has changed the world, but she knows she has changed herself. One of **Mary's** teachers describes her as kind, caring, and responsible. Both **Mary** and her family work together to make the world a better place through kindness and good deeds.

Middle School

Annunciation Catholic Academy – 8th grade

Hannah Veigle was diagnosed with diabetes in fifth grade. Although others felt she would have limits, **Hannah** wanted to prove them wrong. She started a walk team called Hannah's Troops and has raised over \$20,000 to fight juvenile diabetes. **Hannah** is active in other activities as well. She has a pen pal in Haiti who is an orphan and fighting HIV. Her pen pal inspires her and she hopes to meet her someday. She describes diabetes as a gift that pushes her to put her best foot forward, always be optimistic, and actively pursue her dreams. One of **Hannah's** teachers admires her positive outlook and behaviors. She could have felt sorry for herself after her diagnosis, but instead used it as an opportunity to help others.

High School

The Master's Academy – 12th grade

Kasen Raines found her passion while working in India in 2009. She undertook a project to rescue girls from slavery, and through this experience learned the power of listening, sharing, and hope. When she returned to the US, she began mentoring girls struggling with self-image and other issues. **Kasen's** efforts have resulted in the collection of over 550 phones for Harbor House to help victims of child slavery. She also tutors students and serves as a mentor for several girls. She does not want to ignore the pain of those around her, and continues in her campaign to help girls around the world. One of **Kasen's** teachers describes how her global perspective and outreach has touched the lives of students and teachers. Her cell phone drive was creative and inspirational.

2013 SHINING STAR – FLORIDA VIRTUAL SCHOOL

Florida Virtual School – 6th grade

Bailey Ansbaugh went on a trip to Osceola County Animal Control, and that sparked a passion. When she found out she was too young to volunteer, she decided to collect loads of newspapers, blankets, and comfort items to make the dogs more comfortable. Her next project was to find homes willing to adopt. Her first puppy save was a pit bull who was not going to be kept at the center very long, so she knew she had to do something fast. She began a Facebook campaign and was able to find a home for Cookie. One of **Bailey's** teachers said that because of her involvement, animals have many of the supplies needed for their care. She continues her work on finding homes for all the animals.