

## Friends of Euclid Creek – Scholarship Winners

### Nina Savastano - 2021



Nina has exhibited the potential to make a contribution to the protection of the environment through study, volunteerism, and commitment. She is a rising senior at John Carroll University, studying environmental science. She notes that after graduation she would like to join the workforce in an environmental science career. Her time at John Carroll has given her the chance as she says “to expand her scientific knowledge” as well as complete two impressive research projects related to frog behavior. After graduating, she says she hopes to start working right away in an environmental science career so she can, as she says, make an impact. “Through my extracurricular activities in high school and courses in college, I have been developing my passion for environmental issues and making a difference.”

Nina has done much volunteer work related to environmental science, in part, as she participated in stream assessments, hikes, bus trips, and community outreach when she was an active member of the Biology Society at Independence High School. She helped host open house activities - open to the community - allowing them to complete mock stream assessments, search for aquatic creatures in the pond, and go on guided hikes. The mock stream assessment was geared towards introducing children to some of the invertebrates that live in Ohio's freshwater streams. This event and others like it allowed her to serve her community and help instill what she calls “an appreciation for the natural environment.”

### Kassandra Hernandez - 2019



Kassandra's ultimate goal is to get a bachelor's degree in horticultural sciences/urban forestry. She says, “My love for the green industry comes from love for the outdoors as well as my immense interest in science.” In high school she was in student council and honors society and was honored with a “Woman of the Year” award.

Kassandra recently gained an interest in biomechanics/plant diagnostics when given the opportunity to work at the Davey Research Institute. She notes, “When I envision a future, I see advancement in the integrated management systems we have in place to preserve the forested areas across the nation... as well as further research to ensure preservation of the native species and pollinators. I have come to understand the impact we can have in the world we live in and how science/horticulture play a major role.” She goes on to say that “What I want to accomplish in the green industry is change and advocacy. I want to be a voice for future ‘green-thumbs’ of the industry...”

Pursuing a degree in Plant Science and Landscape Technology as well as an Associate of Science degree at Cuyahoga Community College, Kassandra has continually made the Dean's List and currently is part of Tri-C's Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society. She has volunteered at various events to promote information about the Plant Science and Landscape Technology program at Tri-C.

### Andrew Yormick - 2018



Andrew grew up in Lyndhurst, graduated from St. Ignatius High School. He will attend the Cleveland State University Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs with a major in Environmental Studies.

Andrew has demonstrated a devotion to the environment in two major ways, as a volunteer and as an artist/photographer. As a volunteer, he has worked with a naturalist in the Mohican State Park, and as a teacher's aide. Even his athletic activity on the crew team has led him to strengthen his commitment to the environment by wanting to take on projects to clean-up the waterways on which he races. In addition, Andrew has expressed his obvious passion for the environment through his outstanding photographs of nature. In his application, Andrew wrote, "I plan to use my photography skills...as a key part of my future roles in environmental studies."

The Friends of Euclid Creek is delighted to be able to reward Andrew for his devotion to the environment and support his future education with a financial gift to help him realize his goal to protect and promote the environment.

### Caleb Rykaczewski - 2017



Caleb worked as a wildlife volunteer at the Penitentiary Glen Wildlife Center. His research project involved preventing the spread of avian flu from wild bird populations to domestic poultry flocks. He also researched the dietary preferences of raptors in captivity in order to reduce waste at facilities where these birds are sheltered.

Caleb attended Mentor High School and was a member of the National Honor Society and Student Council.

He was also a starting defensive lineman for the Mentor Cardinals and a team captain. Given his interest in wildlife and habitat conservation and maintenance, Caleb was an outstanding choice for this year's FOEC Environmental Education scholarship.

### Hrishikesh "Gopal" Mandal - 2016



Gopal is a graduate of Mayfield High School with a desire to be a professor or researcher who helps to protect and preserve nature. Gopal was involved in several research projects in high school, including one in which he studied the effects of deforestation on a local salamander population. He also won an award at the Northeast Ohio Science and Engineering Fair for a self-designed research project studying acid degradation of brownfields. Gopal has participated in many extracurricular activities, including the History, Spanish and Chess Clubs, he enjoys singing and the theatre, and is inspired by tutoring other students. He expresses a deep passion for the environment and for scientific research, which makes him a deserving recipient of the 2016 FOEC Environmental Education scholarship.

### Abbigail Smith - 2015



Abbigail is a Mentor on the Lake resident, a graduate of Mentor High School, and currently studying Environmental Geology at Murray State University in Murray, Kentucky. "Having lived on Lake Erie my entire life, I developed at a young age a love for water and how it is affected by nature and man. My mother and grandfather often took me fishing in the Lake Erie tributaries, including Euclid Creek, for steelhead trout. This is where I started to get my interest in geology and watersheds," stated Abbigail in her scholarship application.

In 2014, she wrote a paper on current water quality issues in Lake Erie for one of her college courses and learned about human impacts on our Great Lakes and the importance of watershed education. "I have personally experienced the late summer algae blooms on Lake Erie. Some years we have seen hundreds of dead fish on our beach caused by oxygen depletion from decaying algae. We need to take action to protect this valuable resource, and keep it as clean as possible," stated Abbigail. This summer Abbi has an internship in the Obion Creek watershed in Kentucky studying the effectiveness of an old restoration project.

Abbigail's enthusiasm for our water resource health and interest in becoming a watershed professional after getting her college degree is why she is such a deserving recipient.

#### **Anne Roberto - 2014**



Anne stated in her application letter that it is her "goal to become an environmental scientist working in the field of wildlife conservation. I am also interested in the field of sustainability and the career of a sustainability specialist." "I have had an interest in environmental science from a young age ... and ... grew up in South Euclid...where the Euclid Creek runs through my backyard...playing and exploring in the creek. I had an interest and curiosity in the different changes that occurred within the creek from different environmental factors such as the weather, and also human factors like pollution." "Growing up, being surrounded by nature stirred a passion in me to want to work towards preserving it. I am quite concerned with the effects of pollution in my community as well as the rest of the planet, and the effects on human health."

"I am connecting more pieces each day through my education and gaining insight into the environmental systems, and the detrimental effects that cause changes to them. I am hoping that through my education I can help protect and preserve not only wildlife, but also help make a difference in the negative effects on our planet."

Anne went on to serve on the FOEC board and in 2019 found employment at the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District. We are thrilled to have awarded Anne the scholarship, as she is a very deserving and dedicated student, volunteer and watershed steward!