Generosity has been at the heart of Don Diego Scholarship Foundation (DDSF) since the 22nd District Agricultural Association (DAA) Board established a college scholarship program in the name of the San Diego County Fair’s welcoming ambassador, Don Diego, in 1986. That spirit of generosity has prevailed throughout the years. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been key in helping our organization survive and our scholarship recipients thrive.

To date, DDSF has awarded $1,191,000 in scholarships to 298 students and in agriculture education grants. In 2021, 19 exceptional students shared $74,500 in scholarships. Many of the scholarships were funded by Board members, their families and friends.

Mission Statement
The Don Diego Scholarship Foundation promotes education in a fair and fiscally sound manner by providing scholarships to deserving San Diego area graduating high school seniors and graduates who are associated with activities at the Del Mar Fairgrounds, including the San Diego County Fair. The Don Diego Scholarship Foundation also provides grants for agricultural education.
Edwin Vargas Navarro — Vista
$20,000 Liss Family Scholarship/Top FFA Scholar
$1,000 Zable Foundation Junior Livestock Auction Scholarship
University of California Berkeley
Math
My experience at the Fair has been a phenomenal growth experience. I am deeply appreciative of my immigrant parents’ sacrifices raising nine children. This amazing scholarship will enable me to attend my dream school, become a math teacher, and show that the long hours my father worked in the strawberry fields were not in vain.

Kylie Konyn — Escondido
$5,000 Zable Foundation 4-H Scholarship
$5,000 Spanjian Family Scholarship
$3,500 William & Betty Ann Tulloch Junior Livestock Auction Scholarship
University of Wisconsin, Madison
Animal Science
I am a lifetime 4-H member and give my whole self to my club, community, country, and world. I feel privileged to know I will earn a B.S. in Animal Science, secure an advanced degree, and contribute to the growth and utilization of genetic and nutritional information in the agriculture industry. Thank you, DDSF!

Juancarlos Cigarrero — Solana Beach
$5,000 George & Patricia Karetas Employee Scholarship
$2,500 Special Award
San Diego State University
Business/Sociology
The Fair was my first job. My father and mother work tirelessly doing manual labor with selflessness and tenacity. Being raised in a low-income household to immigrant parents motivated me to develop a ‘can-do’ attitude that guides my life. I am proud to be a first-generation college student and help break my family’s cycle of poverty.

Alexander Poroy — Encinitas
$5,000 Gerry & Jeannie Ranglas Exhibitor/Participant Scholarship
Cal Poly San Luis Obispo
Business Administration/Economics
Winning first place in the Student Showcase for my architectural design taught me how it feels to be passionate about a project and made me well-rounded. This DDSF scholarship will help me immensely as I pursue an MBA and fulfill the potential that businesses have to change the world for the better.
Employee Scholarships

Jamie Uribe — San Diego  
San Diego State University  
$2,500  
Business Administration

Samantha Coleman — San Diego  
$1,500  
Shewmaker Family Scholarship  
Elon University  
Psychology

Matthew Morse — Solana Beach  
$1,000  
Mannen Family Scholarship  
MiraCosta College  
Liberal Arts

Exhibitor/Participant Scholarships

Elizabeth Hazard — Encinitas  
Colorado State University  
$2,500  
Fish/Wildlife/Conservation Biology

Aiko Lozar — Carlsbad  
$1,500  
Chapman University  
Film Production

Adelle Priest — Valley Center  
$1,000  
Brigham Young University  
Environmental Science

Zable Foundation 4-H Scholarships

Claire Fernandez — Carlsbad  
$2,500  
Colorado State University  
Science

Leila Perko — Vista  
$1,500  
Cal Poly San Luis Obispo  
Animal Science

Morgan Robinson — San Marcos  
$1,000  
Cal State University San Marcos  
Business Administration
FFA & Junior Livestock Scholarships

Rebecca Berquist — Poway
$2,500 Juanita Hayes FFA and $2,500 Ecke Family Junior Livestock Auction Scholarship
Montana State University Agriculture Education

Adelaide Sorbo — Ramona
$1,500 FFA and $1,000 Zable Foundation Junior Livestock Auction
Texas A&M Biomedical Engineering

Sydney Breese — Fallbrook
$1,000 FFA and $1,000 Zable Foundation Junior Livestock Auction
California State University Chico Agriculture Education/Science

Areli De Casas — Escondido
$1,000 Zable Foundation Junior Livestock Auction
University of California Riverside Psychology

Kellsey McCaffree — Valley Center
$1,000 Zable Foundation Junior Livestock Auction
Palomar College Animal Science

Alyssa Partner — Escondido
$1,000 Junior Livestock Auction
Modesto Junior College Large Animal Veterinary Science

Generosity Runs in the DDSF Family

Board members stepped up to the plate in a major way during the pandemic. Individuals, families and friends have funded a number of scholarships, including Endowed Named Scholarships and individual year gifts.

In 2021, Board member/Chair Emeritus Jon Liss provided a total $20,000 Liss Family Scholarship – $5,000 per year for four years – which was awarded to Edwin Vargas Navarro. This follows in the footsteps of the $20,000 scholarship provided by Vice Chair John Hoeftich’s CGW Family Scholarship awarded in 2020 to Nikki Arias.
DDSF Has Continued to Pivot and Persevere

No one knew that the COVID-19 pandemic that hit the world in 2020 would last throughout 2021, or that the San Diego County Fair, for the second consecutive year, would not take place in its usual form. Nevertheless, our organization and the students we support have energetically continued seizing every opportunity to flourish.

Among Notable 2021 Achievements:

- A revamped online application system streamlined the application process, making it smoother and easier for students to navigate, apply in the category of their choice, and submit all required information and documentation electronically.

- As with the regularly scheduled executive meetings, scholarship finalist interviews were conducted via Zoom.

- In addition to their excellent qualifications, the 19 winning recipients sharing $74,500 in awards demonstrated admirable resiliency and ingenuity. Samantha Coleman, who captured the $1,500 Shewmaker Family Scholarship, qualified to apply by working for Roxy Food Truck’s “Food Fix” drive-through. Samantha nabbed the job going with her family to purchase dinner. She relates, “We were driving through the roundabout at the Fairgrounds and I had the sudden urge to work there. I got the job, in my pajamas, from the backseat of our family car.”

- In the absence of the popular DDSF Dinner and Concert Gala at the now-shuttered Fair, we ramped up publicity and outreach, as detailed on page 6. These and related efforts, as well as the continuing largesse of Board members and other donors, have kept our stream of revenue flowing despite the lack of Fair-related revenue not only from the Gala but also from the guitar auction, petting farm and other sources.

- A virtual Junior Livestock Auction yielded $5,000+ to support 2022 JLA scholarships.

- A $15,000 Zable Foundation grant is funding all 2022 4-H and some Junior Livestock Auction scholarships.

- DDSF Board member Susan Farrior provided a $4,000 Charity Fair Horse Show donation that will fund scholarships in 2022.

- After receiving a Payroll Protection Plan (PPP) loan for the maximum $12,000 in 2020, the loan was forgiven in 2021.
Ratcheting Up Publicity to Energize DDSF’s Expanding Audience

A second consecutive year without DDSF’s annual Gala fundraiser meant not only loss of revenue but a lost opportunity for our Class of 2021 Scholars to meet and mingle with the donors who supported them and those who might support future recipients. To ameliorate these twin dilemmas, we intensified our pre- and post-selection publicity and outreach efforts. The results in terms of increased interactive exposure, growth of our online DDSF community, monetary donations, and wise investments, were positive.

Platforms accessed had the added benefit of “free ink,” meaning there is no necessity to pay for communications shared via Facebook, Instagram, the website, eBlasts and targeted releases to the media.

In addition to highlighting our 2021 recipients, we enhanced awareness of DDSF’s significance by sharing frequent updates on recipients, including monthly Scholar Spotlights highlighting past recipients who have excelled in college and career, and are giving back to their community. These and other electronic vehicles feature easy, one-click links to donating.

As an added marketing bonus, Chair Juanita Hayes coordinated and appeared on KUSI TV’s “Good Morning, San Diego” with top 2021 Scholar Edwin Vargas Navarro.
A Year of Strength and Transition

DDSF ended 2021 in a strong financial position, with total current assets of $1,252,788 including more than $576,600 in endowed scholarships. We received donations to support the Plant*Grow*Eat bus program (paused for two pandemic years) in memory of Jill Coughlin, the program’s former Coordinator. The 2021 virtual junior livestock auction raised over $5,000 to support 2022 junior livestock auction scholarships. Many friends of DDSF donated over $162,600 in support of our mission.

As DDSF’s 35th anniversary year approached its conclusion, 2021 became a year of transition.

At the end of 2021, Executive Director Chana Mannen finalized her plan to retire in 2022 and confirmed she would aid in passing the baton to a new ED. She formally shared her decision in a January 2022 letter to the Board in which she noted, “It has been my honor and pleasure to serve as your executive director for thirty-five years, from the birth of our organization until the present day.” Expressing pride in having led the awarding of 298 scholarships, Chana said, “I am also proud that our organization is in sound financial shape.”

As the organization looks forward to 2022 and beyond, it looks to the past to fuel the future. An Alumni Club will be established to offer past scholarship recipients an opportunity to join together and help DDSF propel the next generation of Scholars to college and career success.

As a challenging 2021 came to its end, DDSF buoyantly concluded, “During this pandemic-driven, tumultuous time in our 35-year history, we have met the moment. We are prepared and eager to continue building a better San Diego, one scholarship at a time.”

2021 DDSF Success Stories in the Making

Claire Fernandez
Juancarlos Cigarrero
Adelaide Sorbo

Leila Perko
Matthew Morse
Elizabeth Hazard

Current Leadership Team

Executive Committee
Juanita Hayes, Chairman
John Hoeflich, Vice Chairman
D Prestininzi, Secretary
George Karetas, Treasurer

Board
Lisa Barkett, Alyson Connelly, Sandra DiCicco, Glenn Drown, Susan Farrior, Joe Harper, Kirby Morrison, Frederick Schenk, Stephen Shewmaker, Alysha Stehly

Chairs Emeritus
Paul Ecke III, Roxana Foxx, Jon Liss

Executive Director
Chana Mannen

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501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization: EIN 33-0859020
© 2022 Don Diego Scholarship Foundation
2021 Annual Report: Created 3/22