

Coastal America Student Summit Profiles in Success

2006 Student Summit Profile

**Gina Carrillo, Monterey Bay Aquarium, 2006 Coastal America Student Summit Participant
(Invited to return as Alumni speaker at 2011 Student Summit)**



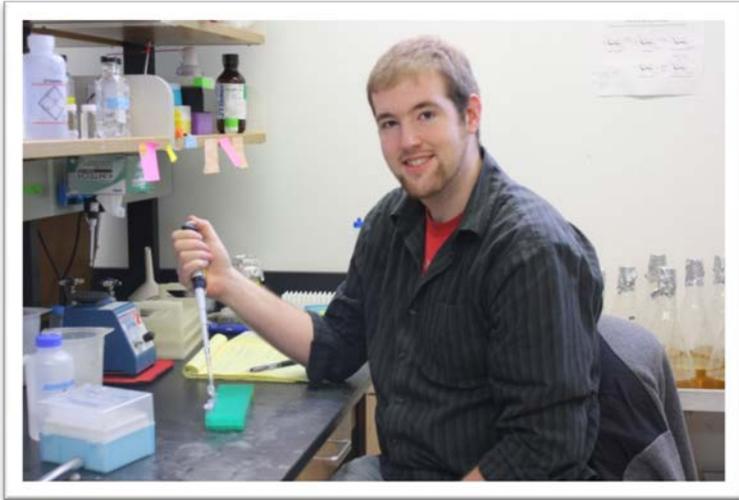
“After returning from the 2011 Student Summit, I continued my studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC) and my mentoring/tutoring work at Pajaro Valley High School in Watsonville, CA. In the summer of 2011 (June-Aug), I had the opportunity to travel to Bali, Indonesia to take part in an international integrative undergraduate research program for underrepresented students called the Diversity Project. In Bali I worked closely with marine biologists/scientists from various organizations (including the Smithsonian) to learn more about the origin of the incredible biodiversity of the Coral Triangle using cutting edge genetics techniques.

Upon graduating I was offered a seasonal position with the Monterey Bay Aquarium to help with the completion of a longitudinal evaluation of their Watsonville Area Teens Conserving Habitats (WATCH) program. As an alumnus of the program, it was quite amazing to be a part of a project that allowed me the opportunity to hear first-hand the incredibly positive impacts that this program has had on its participants. When an opening within the Monterey Bay Aquarium's education department became available this summer, I found it an opportunity that I simply could not let pass. My involvement with the Monterey Bay Aquarium has now come full circle as I am now working full-time as a Bilingual Education Specialist within their amazing education department. In this position I will be teaching Pre-K thru 12th grade students who participate in the various school programs that the Aquarium offers.

As a recent college graduate and advocate for environmental education, I could not imagine myself in a more fortunate position. I am ecstatic to begin this new chapter in life and look forward to staying in contact with the staff of Coastal America, as you all have played a significant role in helping me realize the immense importance of educating our youth about the environment and harnessing their incredible potential to create positive change!”

2006 Student Summit Profile

Matt Zmudka, National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium, 2006 Coastal America Student Summit Participant



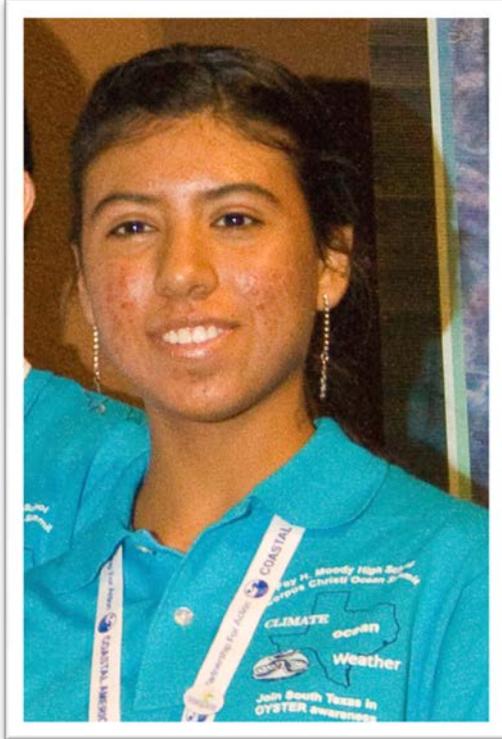
“Going into the Ocean Summit, I was concerned that I would be out of place, coming from an inland aquarium and having seen the ocean once in my lifetime. However, I quickly realized that the Summit allowed us to contribute our little bits of knowledge on various ecosystems, problems, and solutions into one whole plan that extended beyond any aquarium or region. The Summit also revealed to me how little is known about our oceans and coasts and the direct impact our actions 1,000

miles inland had on them. After hearing about the challenges facing our oceans from the other delegations, I was more motivated than ever to help our delegation carry out its action plan. We tailored our message about avoiding and controlling runoff to hundreds of students ranging from kindergarten to 5th grade. Thanks to the Summit, we were able to add stories about the coasts and their challenges to our lessons, giving them greater impact. I continued environmental work into college, spending a summer doing prairie restoration at the top of a farm-heavy watershed that eventually drains into the Mississippi.

Six years after the Summit, I am now a graduate student doing biochemical research. While not directly involved with coasts and oceans, I use the networking and presentation skills I learned at the Summit every day. I am also more aware of how science and environment policy works at the federal level and make an effort to be better informed about legislation that impacts waterways and coasts. I gained a ton of new knowledge about the ocean itself at the Summit, and I share this and build on it whenever I can. This has allowed me to better understand current and ecological events, such as the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Finally, I now have a great network of aquariums doing outreach and conservation work and friends who are interested in the future of our environment. “

2011 Student Summit Profile

Luisandrea Diaz, Texas State Aquarium, 2011 Coastal America Student Summit Participant



“Probably the best memory I have from sophomore year is my exciting trip to Washington D.C. for the Student Summit forum. From touring the country's capitol, to signing an official environmental proclamation to the US Congress, the Student Summit was an unforgettable experience. Only four students from Moody were selected to participate, and after working so closely on our project and traveling halfway across the US together, we became a little family that even with the separation of college, still has a strong bond.

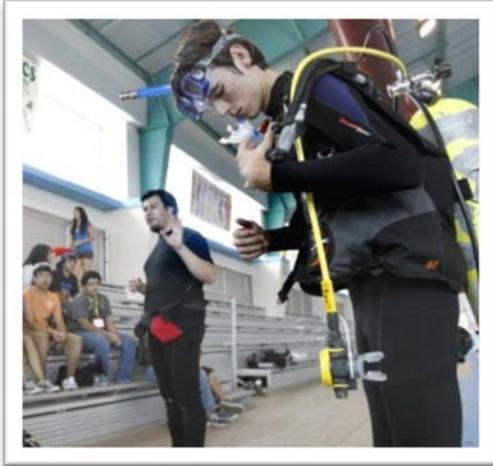
The topic we decided to present in D.C. was an investigation on oyster restoration and awareness. At the conference, we impressed the audience with our 3-minute video and short oral presentation on oysters. Here was where I got the chance, and so did the rest of the team, to experience what presenting in front of a large audience and live TV felt like. The main supports for me while speaking were (1) my team standing up there with

me, (2) the assurance that I knew and fully understood the material I was presenting, and (3) the fact that most of the people in the audience had been or were going to be in the same position as me at one point or another. As a major (and successful) presenter, the Student Summit has provided me with the confidence and effectiveness necessary in every presentation.

For my courses in the Innovation Academy at Moody, I decided to take the more mechanical and technical part of engineering rather than go the marine and environmental route, because of my career choice. However, I have stayed with the Student Summit effort, now transformed into South Texas Oyster Restoration and Awareness (STORA) with the help of a grant, and have seen the program realize great environmental tasks and community involvement, all original goals stated in Washington D.C. Even after I leave STORA for college, I will continue to volunteer for the betterment of the environment, and I know I will always be a part of that little Student Summit family that grew into something great for South Texas and became a sort of legacy at Moody [High School].”

2011 Student Summit Profile

Kevin Dirksmeyer, Texas State Aquarium, 2011 Coastal America Student Summit Participant



“The Summit was not just a few days ordeal in D.C. that occasionally involved speaking to our peers. No, much more went in depth to this process between the first notice to our present standing. We had to establish a networking of contacts to help us through and with each one we encountered new tricks of the trade. Several science related folks such as Dr. Pollack showed us the value of our environment in which added to our determined topic of oyster population. We watched as she spoke of this issue she held close to her heart, enriching our minds with the information. So much was gained in knowledge that come time to present our

project in D.C. things felt natural as we knew firsthand the importance of the oysters.

As for the experience itself on that stage of a museum world renown was once in a lifetime! We practiced many; many times before hand just to nail it because we knew 80 some odd other high school students just as passionate and a camera feeding our speech to people everywhere would be there. We were scared to death come our turn, even my knees were rattling behind that podium! But I tell you this, ever since, my confidence in crowds has been through the roof. I feel at advantage when given projects to speak on. And have even travelled to other cities as well to speak with other team members about different environmental projects. I honestly don't think had I not been given such an opportunity like that of the Ocean Summit that I would have been near successful with my high school career.

The next test after meeting the people in D.C. was how we'd actually carry through when we returned home. I'd say we did/ are doing pretty well with it. Having attended many gatherings, festivals, school etc. we reached out to so many just by word of mouth and activities. But that didn't end there. We received a grant from State Farm to make it all happen! Now we could go in the field (or in this case water) place back these recycled oyster shells with the help of tons of volunteers from Moody High School and the community itself. It's proven beautifully how well our project has endured and the memories we made along the way. To name a few: several cold outings of dealing with cold wet oyster shells and the water, making literally everyone's hands numb but enjoying the team effort tremendously; the kids excitement at festivals when we gave out free face paintings while talking about the oysters.”

2004 Student Summit Profile

Will Sautter, South Carolina Aquarium, 2004 Coastal America Student Summit Participant



Will Sautter is an acoustic mapping specialist who joined the [NCCOS' Center for Coastal Monitoring and Assessment](#)'s (CCMA) [Biogeography Branch](#) in 2011 as a contractor with [CSS-Dynamic](#). He grew up in Charleston, South Carolina, the current home of the *Nancy Foster*. He graduated in 2010 from [Appalachian State University](#) in North Carolina with a bachelor's in geology, and he is specialized in [Geographic Information Systems \(GIS\)](#) and [SONAR](#) systems. He has also had experience working with the [South East Fisheries-Independent Survey](#) (SEFIS) and the [Marine Resources Monitoring, Assessment, and Prediction](#) (MARMAP) Program on

biogeographic assessments of the snapper-grouper complex. Will has seafloor mapping experience from Alaska to the Virgin Islands, and is returning with the Biogeography Team to the Caribbean for his second time. His role for this mission will be to process the collected multibeam sonar data using GIS into maps, which will be used by marine spatial analysts to classify the marine habitats and find fish spawning sites.