



OPTIMISTS CLUB ORATORICAL CONTEST WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Three local students participated in the annual Plant City Optimist Club Oratorical Contest on Mon., Feb. 19 and the top two finishers, Durant High School senior Gabby Howell and Plant City High School sophomore Marley Mueller, have advanced to the Zone Six competitions against Lakeland and Winter Haven's top two finishers on Mar. 25.

The theme of this year's contest was "How to Change the World with Optimism." The students presented their four to five minute orations in front of an audience of nearly 30 people, including their family and guests as well as club members and contest judges.

"It takes a lot of strength for these students to get up in front of strangers and family to give these speeches," said Jack Holland, Optimist Club Secretary/Treasurer and event master of ceremonies. "It is rewarding to see the development of these students and their confidence when giving their speeches."

Holland said improved public speaking skills will benefit them in their future careers.

The results of the event are:

1st Place: Gabby Howell

2nd Place: Marley Mueller

3rd Place: Jazmin Richarte

The top two finishers from the Zone Six competition will go on to the North Florida District's Southwest Regional Contest for the Tampa Bay Area in April. Regional winners then advance to the North Florida District Finals in Bushnell, where a \$2,500 scholarship will be awarded to the District Champion, a \$1,500 scholarship for second place and a \$1,000 scholarship for third place.

A Plant City club representative has won the North Florida District finals competition and received the college scholarship nine times since 2001. Winners have included Jacob Rayburn (2001), Caycee Hampton (2002), Nathan Carson (2008), Amanda Williamson (2009), Mylie Feaster (2011), Jesse Bingham (2012), Emma Poole (2015), Caroline Brummer (2016 and Katelyn Yarbrough (2017).

Last year, the two local finalists, Kenley Connell and Kyleigh Elliott, advanced all the way to the North Florida District finals, coming in second and third place, receiving scholarships of \$1,500 and \$1,000, respectively.

For more information about the Optimist Club of Plant City, visit its website at plantcityoptimistclub.org.