

For additional info contact:  
Shirley Barnes  
608-623-2109

## Mineral Point, River Valley and Highland students win Mary Louise Symon awards

Grassroots Citizens of Wisconsin has announced the recipients of the second annual Mary Louise Symon Memorial Award. Three awards were presented to area students this year. Mariah Sujewicz of River Valley High School, Amber Stanek of Highland High School and Michaela Marshall of Iowa-Grant High School were chosen on the basis of comprehensive applications, including descriptions of the impact the applicants have already had on the community and the contributions they hope to make in the future.

Ms. Symon, of Spring Green, who died in late 2009, was the first woman chair of the Dane County Board. Throughout her life she remained deeply committed to advancing a broad social agenda including protecting the environment, preserving farmland and rural regions, making courts more humane, ensuring fair housing and defending social services, among others. She was one of the founders of the Grassroots Citizens of Wisconsin and was a strong advocate of the role of citizens in a democracy.

The Mary Louise Symon Memorial Award honors her memory by recognizing young men and women whose scholarship, personal character and volunteer service demonstrate a similar commitment to community engagement and the creation of a positive social environment.



River Valley graduating senior Mariah Sujewicz recognized that bullying of LGBT individuals is a pressing issue in many schools and communities. To tackle this problem, she and other concerned students formed the Gay Straight Alliance at River Valley High School which has resulted in the decline in harassment at River Valley by promoting a safe school climate to counteract bullying of all kinds. She was also a four-year-member of the school's Mock Trial Team, among many other activities. "Opposing attorneys cringed at the thought of cross-examining her," said Jason Hollenberg, her mock trial coach.

Involved in music and many other school activities, Highland graduating senior Amber Stanek recognized that obesity has become a national epidemic. Her dream is to "to turn this national issue into something that isn't an issue at all." To achieve this goal she will pursue an ambitious double major in Dietetics and International Science. After graduation her dream is to create a non-profit organization to help maintain good nutrition in third world countries. "I see nothing more rewarding than helping those in need," she says.



Iowa-Grant graduating senior Michaela Marshall didn't let adversity get her down. When an injury, requiring multiple surgeries, sidelined her from playing the sports she loved, she became the manager of several sports teams. Aware of the impact of government funding reductions on rural children in southwest Wisconsin, she stepped up to fill in some of the gaps, tutoring, collecting food, teaching swimming and repairing homes on mission trips. With a passion for science, she obtained high marks in rigorous coursework and will pursue a career in exercise and rehabilitation sciences.

The three award recipients will be honored at a gathering hosted by Grassroots Citizens of Wisconsin early in the fall.

The Mary Louise Symon Award is made annually by Grassroots Citizens of Wisconsin, a network of engaged people in southwest Wisconsin who, through constructive dialogue and education, foster informed, positive change in our communities. In sponsoring this award, it seeks to underscore the place of young people of high character and motivation in the shaping of the communities of Southwest Wisconsin.

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