

Local students overcome adversity with positivity

[Craig Shoup](#), Reporter 12:16 p.m. ET May 16, 2017



Sandusky County Positive People President Tom Hoffman awards a \$3,500 scholarship to Summer Wagner, a senior at Vanguard Career Center. She wrote an essay detailing how she had to take care of herself at a young age and dealt with a dysfunctional family (Photo: Craig Shoup/The News-Messneger)

FREMONT - There is a reason each table at the sixth annual Sandusky County Positive People Awards Breakfast had a box of tissues. It did not take long for many in attendance on Tuesday to cry as they heard heartbreaking stories of local students who have overcome adversity.

This year, nine students from Sandusky County school districts were awarded a total of \$19,250 in scholarships.

Summer Wagner, a student at Vanguard Career Center in Fremont, was awarded the first place scholarship of \$3,500

Wagner plans to pursue a degree in social work or as a child therapist to make a difference for children.

"I want to be the person that I needed when I was growing up," Wagner wrote in her scholarship application.



Sandusky County Positive People President Tom Hoffman asks county residents and leaders to get involved and raise money to help support students who overcome adversity. (Photo: Craig Shoup/The News-Messenger)

In her essay submitted to the SCPP, Wagner detailed her life growing up and having to take care of herself at a young age as she dealt with a broken family.

"We were not a happy, functioning family," Wagner wrote in her essay. "A lot of things were happening that I did not understand. As I got old, I began questioning how I was being treated and soon authorities got involved and when they learned the extent of my abuse, I was placed in the care of my dad."

Wagner was in therapy at age 10 and began talking about and journaling her abuse and trauma.

Now Wagner maintains straight A's and leans on a support system of friends, teachers, and her family.

"I think having to learn to take care of myself has made me more independent," Wagner said. "I have a strong support group and if I fall I know they will be there to keep me going."

Sandusky County Positive People, a nonprofit organization, has awarded more than \$60,000 in scholarship money since it began six years ago. Many of the students have gone on to become college graduates and enter the workforce.

Another scholarship winner, Amari Bulger, a senior at Ross High School, wrote in her essay that her last name is often seen in the news for all the wrong reason.



Fremont Ross High School Senior Amari Bulger hopes to blaze a new path as dental hygienist when she heads to Youngstown State University in the fall. Bulger was awarded a \$1,000 scholarship by the Sandusky County Positive People. (Photo: Craig Shoup/The News-Messenger)

Bulger's father is Travis Bulger, a convicted drug dealer who left his daughter when she was 4 to serve a prison sentence. Travis, 38, was sentenced in December to 11 years in prison for drug trafficking in cocaine and money laundering.

Amari, who was awarded a \$1,000 scholarship, has overcome the negative stigma and is now an honor roll student, with plans to continue her education at Youngstown State University in the fall where she will major in dental hygiene.

Other scholarship recipients include:



Summer Wagner, near, and Amari Bulger, far, are greeted by guests at the Sandusky County Positive People Awards held at the Neeley Center at Terra State Community College. (Photo: Craig Shoup/The News-Messenger)

- Chandler Harvey, Vanguard Career Center, will major in social studies education at Bowling Green State University.
- Jaret Koselke, Clyde High School, plans to major in major in chemical engineering at the University of Toledo.
- Elizabeth Koenig, Woodmore High School, will major in interior design at Kent State University.
- Jeanne Dyer, Gibsonburg High School, will major in medical laboratory science at Bowling Green State University.
- Logan Sharnighouse, Vanguard Career Center, will apply for an electrical apprenticeship and take classes at Owens Community College.
- Megan Belden, Lakota High School, will major in digital gaming simulation at Shawnee State University.
- Lauren Turner, a senior at Bellevue High School was unable to attend due an awards ceremony at Bellevue High School.

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A room full of county leaders and residents attended the sixth annual Sandusky County Positive People Awards. (Photo: Craig Shoup/The News-Messneger)