



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 12, 2017

**Local 4-H Youth Selected as a Disney Summer of Service Winner
to Create Positive Change in Her Community**

FORT MYERS, FL, March 12, 2017 – Maegan Mikkelson, a seventeen-year old from Cape Coral, FL and a member of the Trail Blazers 4-H club, has been awarded a *Disney Summer of Service* grant through YSA (Youth Service America). The grant will support Mikkelson in leading a community service project that addresses the issue of mangrove restoration.

Service activities for the Adopt-a-Mangrove Project will take place during the months of March through May 2017. 4-H youth and their families have already begun collecting mangrove seedlings, known as propagules, from the shorelines of our local beaches and raising the cigar-shaped seedlings into small plants, which they will deliver to community leaders, business owners, government officials, students, and other community stakeholders and ask them to take care of the young plant. In a few weeks, the 4-H youth will return and collect the seedling. The baby mangroves, as the youth lovingly call them, will then be planted on Conservation 20/20 land, and registered on a website in the name of the business or individual, so community members can see where “their mangrove” is growing and be encouraged to share that information and their investment in the community on social media.

“Many people don’t know why mangroves are so vital to the SWFL community,” said Mikkelson, “Our project will restore mangroves, educate the community about their importance, and will give community members a vested opportunity to be a part of the restoration process.” By taking an active part in helping with the process they also will learn that mangroves are a habitat which provides food, shelter, and structure for estuarine sea life, improves our water quality, protects against coastal erosion, and provides a habitat for birds and other wildlife. Mangroves also serve as a hurricane buffer providing protection to the citizens of SWFL.

Mikkelson is one of 340 young leaders across the country awarded a \$500 *Disney Summer of Service* grant to organize projects to help make their communities healthier, greener and stronger. Grantees will educate and mobilize their peers around the issue of mangrove restoration, creating solutions to restore mangroves through awareness, service, advocacy, and philanthropic activities.

If you or your business would like to adopt-a-mangrove or support this project, please contact the Trail Blazers 4-H club leader Amy Turner, amybrett@comcast.net, www.adoptamangrove.com or by phone (239) 462-2039. The Trail Blazers 4-H club is part of the Lee County 4-H Youth Development Program and is a part of Lee County Parks & Recreation and UF/IFAS.

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Founded in 1986, YSA (Youth Service America) supports a global culture of engaged children and youth committed to a lifetime of meaningful service, learning, and leadership. With half the world's population under age 25, YSA's mission is to help young people find their voice, take action, and make an impact on vital community issues. For more information, visit www.YSA.org.

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