



MEDIA RELEASE

May 19, 2023

919 N Broad Street • Brooksville, FL 34601

Central High junior named Sunshine State Scholar

Brooksville – Hernando School District is proud to announce that the district's 2023 Sunshine State Scholar, Central High (CHS) junior Madalyn "Maddie" Sapia, was among a small select group of scholars to earn a 1-year scholarship from the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE). Among the more than 100 scholars who attended the 26th annual Sunshine State Scholars conference in Orlando, Maddie was among just 28 who were awarded the scholarship.

The Sunshine State Scholars program is funded by State Farm and the Florida Prepaid College Foundation and is a collaboration among the FLDOE, the Florida Education Foundation, the Florida College System, the State University System of Florida and The Independent Colleges & Universities of Florida. Each year, Florida school districts nominate their top junior STEM student for the scholarship. The scholars convene for a two-day conference to be recognized for their academic achievements and they participate in a tough "think tank" problem-solving activity.

"When I found out I was Hernando County's Sunshine State Scholar, I felt so honored and almost undeserving of the opportunity. I also didn't fully understand how much valuable information I would gain from attending the conference in terms of college opportunities and planning," Maddie said. "When I first found out I simply wanted to represent my school and county to the best of my ability." Maddie said she found the conference beneficial in helping gain important information about college.

Following graduation next year, Maddie is considering attending the University of South Florida, but is also looking at taking a foundational year at Reformation Bible College in Sanford. "Of course, I am open to exploring my options and looking into various scholarships for different colleges across Florida." She hasn't settled on a major but marine science, radiology and medical technology are her current favorites. Maddie's involvement in STEM studies came during her sophomore year, when she took AICE Marine Science with teacher Robert Berger ("one of my favorite teachers ever" she said). "This class was what really inspired me to look into the field of marine science. And I give my thanks to Mr. Berger for making this topic interesting and sparking my interest in the field."

Berger, who has been teaching 24 years, said Maddie was "one of my all-time top students. Her average remained at 100% throughout the year. She was always highly motivated." Berger added that Maddie was the only student to score an "A" on the AICE Marine Science Exam last year. "In addition to her outstanding academic performance, she is a very nice person. ... Maddie was the ideal student in every way imaginable."

Along with her studies, Maddie was captain of the girls' varsity flag football team, and also competed with the weightlifting team for CHS. "I also love being involved in my community," she said. "I am able to do this through the National Honor Society and through my local church."

