

## MARTIN COUNTY

# Record-setting Garden Expo fuels scholarships for local students

Lisa Oster

Jensen Beach Garden Club

JENSEN BEACH — Since its founding in 1950, the Jensen Beach Garden Club has been a quiet but enduring force across the Treasure Coast — enhancing public spaces through beautification projects while supporting local nonprofits that serve families and at-risk children. Today, that legacy continues through a strong commitment to education, environmental stewardship, and community engagement.

That mission was on full display this spring as the Club hosted its 5th annual Garden Expo on March 7 at its new location in downtown Stuart's Memorial Park. The event welcomed about 2,600 attendees and raised more than \$34,000 — making it the most successful fundraiser in the Club's history. With the help of dedicated community partners, including Jensen Beach High School JROTC and local Boy Scouts, and a remarkable increase in donations at the door, this year marked a milestone: for the first time, 100% of proceeds will be reinvested into scholarships, environmental education, and community programs.

At its Annual Meeting on April 16, the Club awarded three \$2,000 scholarships to graduating seniors from Jensen Beach High School, along with a \$1,500 continuing scholarship to a previous recipient.

Erin Gimbal will attend Berry College to pursue a double major in Environmental Science and Pre-Law, with plans to become an environmental attorney. A leader in the Earth Savers Club and a counselor at the Environmental Studies Center, she has been involved in shoreline restoration efforts alongside the Garden Club and ORCA and is passionate about addressing environmental challenges facing the Indian River Lagoon, Lake Okeechobee, and the Everglades.



Henry Baker, Jennifer DiTrapani, Erin Gimbal (Jennifer's daughter), Dina D'Angelico-Elms,

Henry Baker will attend the University of Florida to study Environmental Engineering. As president of the Earth Savers Club and a counselor at the Environmental Studies Center, he has led projects including mangrove planting, beach cleanups, and environmental design work, demonstrating a strong commitment to sustainability and conservation.

Izzy Fenniman will attend the University of Florida to pursue a career in marine biology. Through her work with River Kids and the Florida Oceanographic Center, she has led outreach efforts and environmental initiatives focused on marine conservation and water quality, and is dedicated to protecting coastal ecosystems.

Sarah Ladd, a previous scholarship recipient, continues to excel at the University of South Florida, where she is majoring in Marine Biology with a minor in Environmental Science and Policy. She is on track to graduate early in 2028 and remains focused on advancing her studies in environmental science and applying her education to long-term environmental solutions.

Beyond scholarships, the success of this year's Garden Expo is creating an even broader impact across the community. The Club is contributing \$10,000 to House of Hope's Growing Hope Farm, supporting local food pantries and food security initiatives.

The Club also continues its long tradition of funding summer camperships for children through the Environmental Studies Center and the Florida Oceanographic Society — providing opportunities for young students to experience hands-on environmental education and connect with the natural world at an early and formative age. These programs help inspire the same curiosity and environmental awareness reflected in this year's scholarship recipients.

The Jensen Beach Garden Club remains committed to investing in the next generation of environmental leaders while continuing its longstanding tradition of service to the community.

Find out more about the Jensen Beach Garden Club's charitable giving on Facebook and Instagram, or visit [www.jensenbeachgardenclub.com/charitable-giving-in-2026](http://www.jensenbeachgardenclub.com/charitable-giving-in-2026).



**Jan Jovingo, Jensen Beach Garden Club; Kris Kerr, Environmental Studies Center; and Dana von Rinteln, Jensen Beach Garden Club. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY JENSEN BEACH GARDEN CLUB**



**Sarah Ladd and Dina D'Angelico-Elms, Jensen Beach Garden Club.**