



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Plant City Champions for Youth Honors Local Students During Youth Excellence Awards Ceremony

Every fall, Plant City Champions for Youth holds an annual Youth Excellence Awards Ceremony recognizing eight local high school students for their outstanding accomplishments. A dinner in their honor was held at the Sadye Gibbs Martin Community Center on November 3, 2025 with the students, their relatives, school representatives, and club members in attendance.

The eight students from Plant City High School (PCHS) were selected for recognition because of their efforts in athletics, academics, and community service work. Each student received an award for their accomplishments.

PCHS Principal Traci Durrance and College & Career Counselor Jamie Stephens introduced the students and summarized the youths' amazing accomplishments and involvement in community service through projects and school clubs which make them role models for the underclassmen to look up to for leadership and guidance.

In addition to the recognizing the students, Plant City Champions for Youth made a financial contribution to the PCHS Senior Awards Ceremony to be held in May.

Plant City Champions for Youth president Jeff Arnold spoke to the students sharing some words of support and appreciation for their outstanding contributions to our community and wishing them the best in the future.

Plant City Champions for Youth is a local 501-c-3 organization formed to continue the legacy of the now-dissolved Plant City Optimist Club and is hyper-focused on the youth of Plant City. Other programs and service projects the club members participate in include Law Appreciation Week and providing at least \$6,000 in tech/trade school and college scholarships for local high school graduates. The club is very active in its support of youth by working closely with the Plant City Parks & Recreation Department in their youth flag football, basketball, and soccer programs as well as various sports skills competitions, the annual Easter Egg Hunt and the "Monster Mash" Trunk or Treat. Other support includes the youth programs of the United Food Bank & Services of Plant City and the Plant City Family YMCA along with other area youth sports programs and other needs as they arise. The Club's two fundraisers to support their community programs are an annual golf tournament and the sale of Christmas trees each year.

For more information about Plant City Champions for Youth, please visit their web site at www.pcchampionsforyouth.org or contact Club President Jeff Arnold at pcchampionsforyouth@outlook.com.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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High res photos are attached to the e-mail as well as a copy of their award bios.

Photos courtesy Plant City Champions for Youth



Left to right: Jeff Arnold, Plant City Champions for Youth President; Traci Durrance, PCHS Principal; Chase Durrance; Olivia Ennis; Marley Mueller; Jagger Horton; Braxton Willis; Makinley Jensen; Helena Adkins; Cosme Moran; Jamie Stephens, Plant City High School College & Career Counselor



Left to right: Plant City High School Principal Traci Durrance; Plant City Champions for Youth President Jeff Arnold, Plant City High School College & Career Counselor Jamie Stephens; A check for \$500 was presented to Plant City High School for the annual Senior Awards Ceremony in the spring.

2025 YOUTH EXCELLENCE AWARDS
STUDENT BIOS PROVIDED BY PLANT CITY HIGH SCHOOL

Helena Adkins is the daughter of Teena and Devon Garbus and Travis Adkins. She currently serves as the President of Raid the Stage and Plant City High School's SkillsUSA electricity program. She has been in technical leadership positions, with the PCHS theatre program, in over 10 shows, and is currently working as the assistant director for You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown. She currently holds 170 thespian points and will graduate with over 2,000 hours working with both the school and local theaters. This past year, she helped her troupe in winning the Broadway School of Excellence grant through Disney, making her school one of 21 in the nation. With a passion in theatrical scenic design and lighting, she plans to pursue a BFA program with a focus in technical theatre at a college in Florida.

Chase Durrance is the son of Matthew and Rhonda Durrance. He is a four-year letterman on the boys golf team, a member of Youth Alive, a member of Girls and Boys Interact Club, a member of the Turning Point Chapter at PCHS, and an active member of FFA where he has shown pigs and steers. He will again show a steer this year at the Florida Strawberry Festival. He has earned several Industry Certifications in Agriculture and Business. Chase is a member of the PCHS Student Government and the National Honor Society where he has a 5.0 GPA. Chase has volunteered with several community projects including the Community Food Bank, Plant City Champions of Youth Christmas Tree Lot, the PCHS Merry Market, and many other PCHS events. Chase plans to attend Santa Fe Community College in Gainesville after graduation.

Olivia Ennis is the daughter of Trey and Lindsey Ennis. She has worked hard to maintain a 6.1 GPA while staying actively involved in both academics and extracurriculars. She is proud to be a member of the National Honor Society, FFA, Youth Alive, and Interact clubs. She is also a member of the student government body where she helps plan school wide activities to encourage school pride and engagement. As a member of the FFA, Olivia has been an exhibitor of steer and swine for the Strawberry Festival since seventh grade, working to save funds for college, transportation, and extra training for athletics. These experiences have shaped Olivia's values and taught her the importance of teamwork, hard work, responsibility, and giving back. Olivia has played competitive club volleyball since the age of nine and enjoyed being a Varsity Raider volleyball player all four years of high school. For the past two years, she has also competed on the PCHS track team. Olivia currently holds the school and county record for girls' javelin and currently stands as the 4A State Champion, she is hoping to earn the title of overall state record holder this track season. Olivia plans to attend Florida International University, on a full scholarship, where she will continue to pursue athletics for the FIU Track Team. She will study sports medicine and use her love of athletics to train high performing athletes on the professional circuit.

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Jagger Horton is the son of Joseph and Summer Pradera. He is diagnosed with ADHD and loves to use it as a strength instead of a weakness. Jagger loves talking to people, learning new things, and using opportunities to the maximum. He is the President of the Boys Interact Club, a member of National Honor Society and Science National Honor Society, a member of the Student Government Association, and a member of the Raider Rundown Club. Jagger loves playing sports and is a member of the Varsity track team and is the Captain of the Boys swimming team. Outside of school, Jagger loves to fish on the weekends and spending time after school going on runs. He works at at our local Chick-Fil-A establishment in Plant City where he is a team leader. Jagger loves to build relationships and serve his community through work and clubs, and it has helped him build who he is and shaped what he enjoys doing each day. After high school, Jagger plans to attend the University of Florida to pursue a degree in Mechanical Engineering, where he will be able to pursue a career in the Engineering field and be able to serve his community.

Makinley Jensen is the daughter of Jeff and Rhonda Jensen. She is involved in several clubs and leadership roles that reflect her passion for agriculture and community service. Makinley currently serves as the Plant City FFA Chapter President, Hillsborough County FFA Federation Reporter, and FFA Sub-District Co-Chairman. Through these positions, she has gained valuable experience in leadership, communication, and teamwork. Within FFA, Makinley enjoys competing in various contests, especially Agricultural Communications. Her team recently competed at the National FFA Convention and earned a Gold Emblem, which was one of her proudest achievements. Makinley shows steers and lambs throughout the state of Florida. Outside of FFA, she is a member of the varsity girls golf team and currently serve on the Florida Strawberry Festival Queen's Court. After graduation, Makinley plans to attend the University of Florida, where she will major in Agricultural Communications and minor in Political Science and Pre-Law. Her ultimate goal is to become an advocate for the agricultural industry.

Cosme Moran Paz is the son of Gabriela Paz and Cosme Moran. He credits his parents to teaching him the value of effort, humility, commitment, and always working hard and giving his best effort. Cosme currently serves as the President of the Latin Quarters Club and Vice President of the HEARTS Beyond Borders Club. He is also a member of the Senior Council and the National Honor Society, where he has had the opportunity to develop his leadership and service skills. Cosme has completed over 200 hours of community service, participating in various events in the Plant City community, where he is always proud to represent his school, his Hispanic community, and to support those in need. After high school, Cosme plans to attend college and pursue a degree.

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Marley Mueller is the daughter of Brett and Carol Mueller. She serves as President of the senior class, co-president of the interact club, president of NHS, reporter of the FFA senior chapter, and historian of the debate club. She has a passion for public speaking and has placed 1st in the district in Rotary's oratorical contest and top 3 in the state in the Optimist Oratorical Contest 3 times. Marley has also attended many leadership conferences including HOBY leadership, YLC, Westpoint leadership conference, and The University of Florida's College of Journalism Summer Media Institute. Marley has earned numerous honors, including FFA gold national emblem team, homecoming queen, and the Anne Frank Humanitarian award. After high school, Marley plans to attend the University of Florida majoring in nutrition with the ultimate goal of becoming a dentist.

Braxton Willis is the son of Jacob and Meghan Willis. He is currently the Vice President of Plant City Highschool FFA chapter, Secretary of Plant City High School's Turning Point Chapter, on the leadership team for the Youth Alive Club, and a member of the National Honor Society, Raider Buddies, Girls and Boys Interact, and Special Olympics. Outside of school, Braxton enjoys showing his steer at the Florida Strawberry Festival. He also enjoys competing with his FFA chapter and earned the spot to compete nationally in Ag Communications. With his team, they placed Gold at the FFA National Convention.