

# News

## The Christina Conservancy

1201 Orange Street, Suite 640. Wilmington, Delaware 19801

To Newsroom Directors and Assignment Editors

For immediate release:  
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### Congratulations, Melissa Vorn winner of the 2017 Edward W. Cooch, Jr. Environmental Scholarship.

**NEWARK** – On June 13, 2017, the Christina Conservancy Board and members of the Christina River Cleanup Committee awarded the Edward W. (Ned) Cooch, Jr. Environmental Scholarship to Melissa Vorn of Middletown, Delaware, a 2014 graduate of St. Georges Technical High School..



**Left to right: Joanne Rufft, Melissa Vorn, Phalla Yun, Sany Vorn**

Joanne Rufft, chairperson of the scholarship committee, introduced Melissa and said, “Our scholarship committee was impressed by Melissa's excitement when talking about her love of the environment and her plans to make an impact on conserving nature as Edward W. Cooch did. We are proud to award this year's scholarship to a young person with so much passion for the environment.”

William Ry Culver, Honors English Instructor and National Honor Society Advisor at St. Georges Technical High School in Middletown, DE said the following in his letter of recommendation: “In the nine years of teaching Honors 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade

English and advising my school's chapter of the National Honor Society, I estimate that I have known more than 3,000 students. Of those, I can think of Scholarships are an investment. They are an investment in a person, and when invested in the right person, the dividends are limitless. Melissa's passion for environmental research and conservation is inherent; she lives it. Her empathy and the scope of her vision are boundless. For Melissa, environmental conservation is not a hobby, an interest, or even a course of academic pursuit. No, for Melissa conservation and protecting our resources is a way of life as she sees the dire consequence of inaction.”

Melissa Vorn thanked The Conservancy and saying, “Thank you so much Christina River Conservancy for giving me the Edward W. Cooch Jr Scholarship. This scholarship will aid me in attaining my degree and starting my career. I hope to become part of the next generation of conservationists in protecting wildlife and preserving it for years to come. Once again thank you so much and I am honored to receive this scholarship.”

-More-

*Cooch scholarship, p2.*

Highlights of Melissa's many extracurricular activities include:

- Student intern at Bombay Hook, National Wildlife Refuge (09/2016 to the present) in which she "assists Biologist and Visitor Services with various tasks."
- Villanova University Summer Engineering Camp (07/10 – 07/20/2016) where she "developed leadership skills while working on a group project about what method would effectively provide clean water to people living in Sub-Saharan Africa."
- Volunteer for the 2017 Christina River Watershed Cleanup.

Members of the Cooch family who graciously hosted the participants at the historic Cooch homestead at Cooch's Bridge, on Old Baltimore Pike in Newark, Delaware were the Hon. Richard Cooch, Superior Court Judge, his wife, Barbara Cooch, their daughter Merrit Cooch, and her husband Shawn McDonnell. Richard Cooch told the gathering that his father was a lifelong environmentalist who was a founder of Delaware Wildlands, a longtime participant and leader in the Christina Conservancy, and a champion of land preservation.

Judge Cooch spoke of the rich history of the family home and Cooch's Bridge dating back to 1746, including the popularly held belief that the Betsy Ross American flag was first flown in battle during the Revolutionary War battle of Cooch's Bridge in 1777. The battle, Cooch said, was the opening salvo in the British attempt to take Philadelphia.

### **Scholarship eligibility and selection criteria follow:**

#### **Eligibility**

1. Must be applying to a properly accredited junior college, college, or university for the fall semester 2017;
2. Must be a Delaware resident;
3. Must be a senior in a Delaware high school or returning veteran of the U.S. armed services;
4. Must have a grade point average of 3.0 or greater;
5. Must major in an environmental field of study;
6. Must demonstrate an interest in the environment (example: participate in cleanups, engage in school Eco-club projects, elect to take environmental classes).

#### **Selection Criteria**

- The recipient will have a strong interest in the natural environment and water resources and will have demonstrated this interest through engagement in the community in these areas.
- The recipient will clearly communicate academic and career goals as it relates to the natural environment and water resources.
- The scholarship will be awarded to a student with a grade point average of 3.0 or greater.

Interviews with Melissa Vorn may be requested by contacting:

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*The Christina Conservancy was established in 1982 to improve the water quality and to protect the river's natural and historic resources. The Christina Conservancy is an all volunteer membership organization (501(c) 3 operated by a board*