Ben Cermeno- Felix A. Williams Elementary School (4th grade)

CHARACTER COUNTS! Pillars: Responsibility and Citizenship

Global Goals: 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 14 (Life Below Water), and 15 (Life on Land)

Nomination description: Ben was chosen to be a member of the FAWE Green Team and ever since he has become a member Ben has been making a real difference around our school and his home (according to his parents). Ben has helpful ideas and reminders for others how to be more dedicated to being green. He has been making an effort to bring litter-less lunches to school. He is also extremely enthusiastic at school about our recycling program.

Vanessa Billings: Jensen Beach Elementary School (5th grade)

CHARACTER COUNTS! Pillars: Citizenship

Global Goals: 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)

Nomination description: Vanessa has been a green team member for 3 years. Throughout this time, she has grown vegetables and learned about healthy eating habits. As a fifth grader she is a leader on our team. She participates in watering the garden and all community activities, including planting native plants for senior developments.

Natalie Tobaisz: J.D. Parker Elementary School (5th grade)

CHARACTER COUNTS! Pillars: Responsibility

Global Goals: 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), 13 (Climate Action), and 14 (Life Below Water)

Nomination description: Natalie has been a dedicated member of Green Club since 3rd Grade and is always willing to help out at in-school and out-of-school green initiatives. She has attended every garden workday, almost all of our street cleanups, and is an ambassador giving "Green Tours" of our school when needed for visitors. In addition, Natalie can be counted on to maintain the school's hydroponic garden system by filling the tanks and adding nutrients to ensure adequate plant growth. She is a dedicated student and encourages others to be green stewards of our school and community as well.

Tyler Daniel: Stuart Middle School (8th grade)

CHARACTER COUNTS! Pillars: Responsibility and Citizenship

Global Goals: 3 (Good Health)

Nomination description: Tyler joined Students4H2O two years ago, and she is always willing to mentor younger members and educate members of our community about the Global Goals at events such as Water Fest. She developed an interest in Global Goal 3, Good Health, once she learned about how Global Goal 3 addresses the relationship between the wellbeing of humans and our environment. Outside of Students4H2O, Tyler continues to be a positive role model to the youth in our community by volunteering at Felix A. Williams Elementary, her alma mater, every week. As a result of her leadership and citizenship, she was nominated for District Volunteer of the Year for both FAWE and SMS.

Noa Vignone: Stuart Middle School (6th grade)

Keep Martin Beautiful nomination for ESA Award in the Youth Engagement and Education category

Noa is a sixth-grade student at Stuart Middle School who is passionate about advocating for our marine life and ending plastic litter, one bag and straw at a time. His desire to protect our environment began when he was in fourth grade at Felix A. Williams Elementary School and became a member of his school's Green Team. Then, in 5th grade, Noa worked on a class project about how to solve the problem of plastics in our oceans. That's when Noa learned how severe the problem was with plastic in our oceans all around the world. More than 40% of plastics are used only once and then thrown out. He then told the owner of Utiki, Jettys, and Kee Grill restaurants about the harmful effects single-use plastics have on our environment (his father is the General Manager of these eateries). Now, as a result of Noa's activism, all three restaurants stopped serving plastic straws.

Noa joined Students4H2O this year and embodies the definition of an environmental steward. As a member of Students4H2O, Noa inspires students of all ages about how they can live eco-friendly lifestyles. In October, he also spoke to the Boys and Girls Club of Martin County's HERO Program members about how they can work together to end plastic litter. Outside of Students4H2O, Noa demonstrated initiative to start a recycling program at SMS. When Noa noticed that his school is not recycling, he met with his guidance counselor and school administration to find out how he can make his vision a reality.

To quote Noa, here are some of his ways of how we can help end plastic litter, "instead of taking plastic straws, buy reusable metal straws and carry them with you along with your reusable water bottle. Also, say no to single-use plastic like lids, bags and plastic utensils."

It is very rare to see a young student that is passionate about the environment like Noa is. What is even more unique is how Noa recognizes a problem within his school, our community, or planet, and utilizes his passion for solving these issues. Noa is one of the most driven, creative and compassionate students I ever mentored. With this being said, I am deeply honored and humbled to nominate such an inspiring young leader in our community.