



# WDHOF 2012 Advanced Dive Training Grant Opened Door To Pursue Knowledge Of Underwater World For Danielle Claar

In Danielle's letter she expressed thanks, particularly to Bonnie Toth, award sponsor, for her welcoming support at BTS, but also to the WDHOF members she was honored to meet at 2012 BTS. She wrote, "I was inspired by all the knowledge, experience, and innovation represented by all of your many accomplishments. I hope to remain in contact with the WDHOF members, and continue to learn from you in the future."

Danielle has since graduated with honors from the University of Hawai'i at Hilo with a Bachelors of Science in Marine Science. She currently works full-time for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection at the Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve (EBAP). She explained, "There, I coordinate several scientific research and monitoring programs, including monitoring of seagrass, water quality, and bird nesting. I am traveling across the state next week to participate in scientific diving training with another Florida Aquatic Preserve. At EBAP, I also work with the public, leading Estuary Wading Adventures to show people the unique ecosystems that form the foundation for our coastal communities."

In the Fall of 2013, Danielle will attend graduate school at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada, where she plans to pursue her PhD in the Biology Department under the direction of Dr. Julia Baum, a preeminent coral reef ecosystem scientist. Danielle wrote, "I will be studying corals and their symbionts, and how these ecological communities are influenced by human impacts. I am excited to be diving extensively during my graduate studies and research. In fact, I was also invited by Dr. Baum to travel with a small field team to Kiritimati (Christmas atoll) and participate in three weeks of diving-intensive research this summer (July/August). I will be participating in a variety of surveys, including fish counts, coral/benthic composition, urchin counts, and collecting coral samples for genetic analysis."

"I used the WDHOF Advanced Dive Training Grant course funds to participate in two advanced



diving courses, and to purchase equipment that would expand my opportunities underwater. In June 2012, I completed my NAUI Instructor Training Course through the University of Hawai'i at Hilo using a little less than half of the training grant course funds to pay for the ITC course fees. This was a fantastic opportunity to develop my dive leadership skills. I currently teach Open Water courses on weekends in Florida. I enjoy being able to give back to new students and to share my passion for the underwater world with these new divers. I have also assisted teaching a few scientific diver courses, and plan on expanding this in the future.

I used the other half of the training grant course funds to enroll in a TDI Advanced Nitrox course in Key Largo. This course was my first step towards technical diving, and I enjoyed the challenge of learning to dive with doubles and stage bottles. The funding from WDHOF allowed me to explore technical diving, and provided a springboard for me to pursue further technical diving training.

I used the WDHOF Advanced Dive Training Grant equipment funds to purchase a used dry suit (DUI CF300 in pristine condition, customized with side pockets, Kevlar knee pads, and Turbo Soles) and dry suit accessories (currently ordering a low pressure inflator hose, clips, adaptors). Although my primary research will be in the tropical Pacific, I will also be attending field courses in British Columbia. I also plan to be a graduate teaching assistant at Bamfield Marine Sciences Center, where I hope to assist with Scientific Diver training. I am excited to utilize my new dry suit to explore and research the Pacific Northwest environment.

Thank you again for your support. The Women Divers Hall of Fame Advanced Dive Training Grant has opened many doors for me, and has provided inspiration for me to continue my passionate pursuit of knowledge in the underwater world."



Advanced Nitrox Course dive



Scientific diving – in between research sites



NAUI ITC – pool session