



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Nicole Green, Animalearn
Phone: 1-800-729-2287 ext. 302
Email: ngreen@animalearn.org

Students Awarded for Compassion in Science Education



.....

Jenkintown, PA (January 2024) – The national humane science education program, Animalearn, recognized three students from different grade levels who exemplified compassion and a desire to advocate for animals in 2023.

Michele Graham, a student at College of Charleston in South Carolina, was selected as Animalearn’s 2023 Humane College Student of the Year. **Katie Carson**, a student at Bishop Watterson High School in Ohio was identified as Animalearn’s 2023 Humane High School Student of the Year. **Elie De La Garza**, a student at Paradise Valley Christian School in Arizona, was chosen as Animalearn’s 2023 Humane Middle School Student of the Year.

Animalearn learned about **Michele Graham**, who is a biology major at College of Charleston, earlier this year after she won the 2023 College of Charleston Student Entrepreneur of the Year Award for her inventions, the [Surro-Kitty®](#) and [Surro-Pooch™](#). Michele, who has always been passionate about animal welfare, created these surrogate nursers after working at an animal shelter and caring for nursing kittens and puppies. Michele found that many nursing kittens and puppies would be euthanized if there wasn’t a lactating mother in the shelter or the resources/staff to bottle feed them. By giving nursing kittens and puppies the simulation of a real nursing experience, Michele has provided a nurturing and comforting environment, while providing optimal care. Many kittens and puppies can be fed at once instead of needing to be bottle fed one at a time.

Michele stated, “Humane education is the foundation of empathy for our animal friends and fosters a more compassionate society. Receiving Animalearn’s Humane College Student of the Year award is validation of my efforts to advocate for the ethical treatment of animals. This recognition fuels my commitment to fostering compassion and empathy for our animal friends.”

Katie Carson was selected as Animalearn's Humane High School Student of the Year for taking a firm stand against dissection. Katie discovered that her high school did not offer an alternative to dissection in any of its biology classes. Katie was advised that if she did not participate in the dissections, she would receive a failing grade. Not willing to accept that ultimatum, Katie researched the harmful effects of dissection and surveyed other schools in the area, finding that 80% offered alternatives. She then presented this information to the school administration, who allowed her to be the test case for using alternatives in their educational setting. Katie received an A in her labs and in the biology class. She is working on a proposal requesting that alternatives to dissection be offered to all future students at her school.

Upon news of her winning the award, Katie stated, "I am honored to have been selected as the 2023 Humane High School Student of the Year. I have worked very hard during my life to do my best to treat all living things with respect and to share my love of animals and the knowledge that I've gained through research and experience whenever I have the opportunity. As the junior class president of my high school, I was able to bring awareness to the importance of finding ways to elevate our education and develop our understanding of the world around us without harming animals in the process. So, being selected as the 2023 Humane High School Student of the Year means so much to me because it shows that every person can do their part, no matter how small, to make a difference in the lives of animals. And together our small victories for animals can have national and global impacts."

Elie De La Garza was selected as Animalearn's Humane Middle School Student of the Year for his ongoing and life-long compassion for animals. Elie already has several years of kindness towards animals in science education under his belt. He has chosen not to eat meat, attend zoos, or participate in anything he feels is cruel to animals. For a previous science project where insects were to be caught, frozen to death, and pinned to a board, Elie elected to take photographs and use those instead. He stood firm in his stance to not dissect a fetal pig this year, using an alternative from Animalearn's free loan program, The Science Bank instead.

"Animals are vulnerable species that need to be cared for instead of harmed, especially in the name of science. There has to be better ways to do science," Elie stated. "Animals are my friends....and I don't dissect my friends!"

"All of these students are amazing, compassionate individuals. I am enthusiastic about the future of humane science education with these admirable students leading the way," said Alisa Brooks, Assistant Director of Animalearn.

As part of their award, Michele Graham, Katie Carson, and Elie De La Garza will receive gift cards and Humane Science Education Action Packs from Animalearn to assist in furthering their pursuit of humane science education for all.

Animalearn, a division of the American Anti-Vivisection Society, works with educators, students, policy makers, and others to achieve quality humane science education without the harmful use of animals. Animalearn's free loan program, The Science Bank, is the largest lending program in the U.S. and offers humane science products that enable educators to teach and students to learn anatomy, physiology, and psychology lessons without harming animals. For more information visit TheScienceBank.org.