

## Kiwanis Club Honors Academic Leaders

*Written by Bella Lindauer for Midland Daily News May 3, 2017*

One might wonder how grade point averages, a set of triplets and Haiti could possibly tie together, but on Monday evening at **Midland Kiwanis Club's** 60th Annual Scholarship Honors Banquet, these three things created an event to be remembered.

And inspiring words from keynote speaker **Mallery Neptune**, a missionary in Haiti and a 2005 **H.H. Dow High School** graduate, made sense of it all.

The club is dedicated to improving the quality of life for people throughout the community and the world, with an emphasis on youth, and its purpose was relevant and on display Monday night. The event was hosted at **First United Methodist Church**, and 96 students from Midland County were honored for making it into the top 10 percentiles of their classes, celebrating among family, friends and faculty.

Following an invocation by Pastor Wally Mayton and a dinner prepared and served by members of the church on a voluntary basis, opening remarks were made by Chairperson **John Anderson** of the **Kiwanis Scholarship Committee**. Throughout the program, students were awarded certificates for their academic achievements.

Bullock Creek had 13 recipients, **Calvary Baptist Academy** had four, **Coleman High School** had four, **Dow High School** had 30, **Meridian High School** had 10, **Midland Academy** had two, **Midland Christian School** had two and **Midland High School** had 31.



*Aaron Reardon-H.H. Dow*



*Kayleigh Jones, Sarah LaClair  
Midland Christian*

Among the driven students were three sisters, triplets, who are recognized as the first ever set of triplets in memory to receive their certificates at the same time at the banquet. Karleigh, Kassidy and Kennedy Zmikly are seniors at Meridian High School. Not only do they excel in athletics, but all three have received Summa Cum Laude awards this year for having 3.9 GPAs or higher. Only four students at Meridian High received the award this year and the Zmikly girls are three of those.



“I have been working with these young ladies for four years now,” said **Amy Boxey**, dean of students at Meridian. “They are all so thoughtful and hardworking. They do so much within the school. They are active in athletics, student council and the **National Honor Society**. I mean, these girls do it all.”

“I couldn’t be a prouder parent,” said **Phil Zmikly**, the girls’ father. “They have just accomplished so much in their sports and academics. We really like to remind them that life can be hard. But you just work harder if you really want it, and they live by it.”

Next year, all three of the triplets plan on attending college, but not the same college. “We have always worked together in a lot of classes,” said Karleigh, the oldest of the three. “Being able to excel together is a good feeling.”

Karleigh plans to attend **Alma College** next year and major in sports medicine.

“It’s going to be weird separating next year,” Cassidy said. “We have just always been together and done everything together. We are all so much alike.”

“But they are better at math,” added Kennedy. “They both proved that this semester. Aside from that, we are pretty much equal in a lot of ways.

Kassidy plans to attend either **Olivet College** or **Macomb Community College** and play softball. She also wants to do something in the medical field.

Kennedy will be attending **Grand Valley State University** and is still undecided in her major, but is leaning toward the medical field as well.

Honoring the students was not the sole purpose of the banquet; encouraging them was also of importance. Enter Neptune, a Midland native who founded and directs the non-profit organization **Haiti Foundation** Against Poverty. The organization primarily focuses on poverty, orphan prevention and childhood education.

Anderson’s introduction was succinct.

“I am pleased to have Mallery here to share some of her story and her secrets to success,” he said. “Especially because her commitment to the well-being of other people is something that Kiwanis really believes in and it is a strong commitment that we like to make in the community. And Mallery is making it (that commitment) all the way down in Haiti.”

She didn’t disappoint, and she was just as succinct.

“I want to share two important lessons with you that I have learned throughout my experience,” Neptune said. “The first is this: your education is a gift. Families all around the world have sacrificed meals and shelter trying to afford education for their children. Some children walk miles each day in ill-fit shoes to sit in mosquito-filled classrooms just to gain an education.”



“In 2007, in a village in Haiti, a community got together and pleaded for a school to be built in their community for their children. Even over food, they prioritized education. And then they explained that education was the key to change; it was the door to walk out of poverty. So that year, we enrolled 120 students and to them school isn’t just a routine, it is an honor and a privilege, not to be taken for granted.”

“You must value education to some degree since you are all receiving this award, so please never take it for granted. Even on the hard days when our minds are tired and you feel like there’s other things you’d rather be doing, please remember what a gift your education is,” she continued.

“The second lesson is this — the time to make a difference is now. Later may never come. You can always find a reason or an excuse as to why you’re not impacting the world around you. People in your community and around the world need you to step up. They need you to be not too busy to care and to offer your hand and your heart,” she said. “It is possible to care for both your own interests and the interests of others. Every person can make a difference every day.”

In closing, Neptune said, “Be doers. Be grateful. Your mind, your education and your time are all gifts. Use them wisely.”