

KHS Alumna Recognized for Environmental Work

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

A recent Kodiak High School graduate will be recognized statewide later this year as a Spirit of Youth Award recipient. Leila Pyle graduated from KHS in 2013, and will be honored during an awards dinner on April 5 in Anchorage.

Karen Zeman is the executive director of Spirit of Youth and said the group began in 1996 as a way to recognize positive ways students are contributing to their local communities. She said it is kind of like a year-long recognition

“We receive nominations for over 150 teens every year. These are youth that some community member took the time to nominate for recognition. And every young person is recognized through a ceremony put on by their local school board and they’re also featured on the Spirit of Youth radio series which is aired on virtually every public radio station across Alaska. But the year culminates with the Spirit of Youth award which is given to 22 teens, two teens in each of our 11 award categories.”

Pyle is one of two award winners statewide in the science and environment category. She said she didn’t know she was even nominated until she got the call that she won, but found out the recognition was related to the work she did for the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge.

“I worked there last summer as part of the Youth Conservation Core crew. We spent part of the time in town working at the visitor center and we would lead kids activities and environmental education programs and we had trainings on climate change and recycling in Kodiak. And we cleaned up a beach as part of the Island Trails Network marine debris clean up project. And then we spent three weeks of the summer out in the field on the refuge at remote sites doing maintenance at refuge public use cabins and helping with ongoing refuge field projects.”

Spirit of Youth award winners are selected by a teen advisory council, which is made up of 12 to 19-year-olds that review the student nominations over the course of the year to select the 22 winners. In addition to being recognized at the annual dinner, winners will also receive a \$500 scholarship through the University of Alaska college savings plan.

Pyle is currently a freshman at Reed College in Portland, Oregon, and said she won’t be able to attend the awards dinner, but is thankful for her recognition.

“I’m really grateful that my work at the refuge translated into this because I had so much fun being on the Youth Conservation Core crew and volunteering over the years.”

During her time at Kodiak High School Pyle was also involved with Art Club, Girl Scouts and Alaska Youth for Environmental Action.

