

COMMUNITY CENT

Town Hall Scholars rewarded

Eleven high school seniors who took part in The Ringling College Library Association Town Hall Lecture Series were selected to receive a \$1,000 college scholarship from the Community Foundation of Sarasota County.

The students were among 120 public and private high school juniors and seniors sponsored by the foundation to attend one of the college's six evening Town Hall lectures at Van Wezel as "RCLA Scholars." Participating students were selected by their school principals based upon academics and community service.

Seniors were invited to submit a 500-word essay about their experience meeting **Greg Mortenson, George Will, Elie Wiesel, Tony Blair, Adam Gopnik** and **Malcolm Gladwell** from January through March.

The 11 top essayists, selected from 35 entrants, received \$1,000 college scholarships and were recognized at the Sarasota County School Board meeting on Tuesday.

Three students read excerpts from their essays.

Scholarships are awarded to: **Michael Beckwith, Samantha Black** and **Jose Casteneda**, North Port High School; **Emily Christie**, Venice High School; **Caitlin Covello**, Cardinal Mooney High School; **Sabrina Cummings, Alex Greenfield** and **Sebastian Wright**, Booker High School; **Emily Hardman** and **Kaitlyn Kramer**, Pine View School; and **Nora Jones**, Riverview High School.

"Literacy, education and scholarships are a major part of our mission and this was a multidimensional way to engage these students and reward them for their efforts," **Roxie Jerde**, president and CEO of the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, said in a prepared statement.

Nurse program boost

By RITA STORMES
as told to ABBY WEINGARTEN

In 1944, Englewood, N.J., native Rita Stormes was working as a bookkeeper for a life insurance company in New York City. Moved to contribute to the World War II effort, she joined the Cadet Nurse Corps that September and was assigned to St. Vincent's Hospital in Manhattan until 1947. She worked in every department of care, making sure the medical industry was fully staffed while many nurses were stationed overseas. Now 87, Stormes is a Longboat Key resident and widow who has three children, eight grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

We didn't ever actually go into the war. We made it possible for the hospitals to stay operating during the war. The whole idea of the Cadet Nurse Corps was that most of the population had gone into the service and they were desperate for nurses. They started it to put more nurses in the hospitals in the states.

I had a very nice job at the time, and I was getting promoted and everything, but I just felt I had to do something for the war. You can't imagine what the war was like. I still have a book of food stamps that I kept when food was rationed during the war. It was a very difficult time, and it was important to help.

What we had to do when we first signed in was we had to agree to a three-year program to become a registered nurse; we would do it in 2 1/2 years. One of the first things they did was gather us in the assembly hall and someone from the government gave a talk. We had a class of 125, which was very large.

They told us if we joined the program and fulfilled our obligation, we'd be paid a stipend, which was something like \$10 a month the first year. It got larger every year. I think \$20 a



Rita Stormes served in the Cadet Nurse helping staff hospitals in the United States overseas. COURTESY-OWEN PHOTOGRAPHY

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month and then maybe \$30 a

When you went into the hospitals, there were very few RNs around. We were working as quickly as we could in the hospitals to make up for the fact that they were gone.

We worked six-day workweeks and were taking classes and doing floor work in our hospitals.

After peace was made during the war, nurses didn't come back immediately from overseas either, so there was really a need for us.

When I was in, I had already met the love of my life, so I wasn't looking to go overseas, although a lot of the women in the program did.

I wanted to stay close to home and, fortunately, I was able to do that. Nurses in those days did things a lot differently than they do today. Patients stayed in the hospi-

