

## 2010 Young Women in Public Affairs Award Recipients

Zonta International is pleased to announce the five international recipients of the 2010 Young Women in Public Affairs Award.

District 3 – Briana Hilfer (USA)  
District 4 – Bethany Saul (Great Britain & USA)  
District 6 – Sundus Shahbaz Arain (USA)  
District 12 – Natalie Wright (USA)  
District 18 – Zahra Roji Baitie (Ghana)

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### Briana Hilfer (USA)

Briana Hilfer has demonstrated strong leadership skills in her school community, serving as a student ambassador and peer tutor and initiating a Peer Leader program for high school students to mentor younger students and help them with study skills and social issues. As a participant in the Model United Nations at her high school, she has had the opportunity to interact with international students in her school community, enhance her understanding of other cultures, and represent different countries' positions on issues, including the status of women, human trafficking, family planning and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As a high school sophomore, she volunteered at her community middle school, teaching students about the United Nations and encouraging them to think about creative, collaborative solutions to the world's problems.



Briana is also an intern for the Holocaust and Human Rights Education Center (HHREC), where she is supporting efforts to educate the public about the Holocaust and raise awareness to help prevent other genocides. In 2009, she was selected to be a delegate to the Empower Peace Women2Women Conference where she joined young women from around the globe to develop leadership skills and discuss women's issues and public service.

Briana plans to study history and international relations with a focus on human rights and social justice in college and hopes to study abroad. After college, she would like to go to law school and specialize in international law and conflict resolution and will use her law degree to fight human rights violations. Throughout her studies, she would like to work with human rights

organizations that defend the rights of women and children and think tanks that focus on ethical conflict resolution.

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### **Bethany Saul (Great Britain & USA)**



Bethany Saul is an active member of the student body at her school, serving as editor-in-chief of the school newspaper, a member of student government and president of the Mock Trial team, Model United Nations team and the National Honors Society. As a judge and attorney for her town's Youth Court, a court for juvenile offenders, Bethany has been able to use her interest in law to help the youth of her community.

In addition to her numerous school-sponsored activities, Bethany has led the Orchard Park Educational Outreach program's efforts to build five schools and an internet café for girls in Afghanistan. She is communicating with students at one of the schools in Kabul, Afghanistan and is helping them with their English speaking skills via Skype. She also volunteers for a number of other non-profit organizations in her community, including a local mission and Habitat for Humanity. She is an active member of her church, playing piano, clarinet and saxophone during church services and volunteering as a church school teacher.

Passionate about working to implement concrete solutions to the issues of social injustice and gender inequality, Bethany plans to double major in International Relations (with a concentration on the Middle East and Women's Affairs) and Political Science at Boston University, where she hopes to establish a program that will provide educational opportunities for girls and women in Afghanistan. After college, she plans to attend law school and hopes to become a diplomat and advocate for women.

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### **Sundus Arain (USA)**

Sundus Arain is a very active high school student. She is one of five elected class officers on the student council, an elected officer of the Key Club and president of the National Honor Society. As a high school sophomore, she organized the Political Club during the 2008 elections to provide a forum for students to discuss and debate their political opinions. She is also a member of the Emerging Women's Saloon where senior girls get together to talk about issues relating to women and society as they prepare for adult life. As a student advisor on the Education & Careers Committee, Sundus collaborates with a team of guidance counselors, teachers, coaches, school board members and community officials to improve the quality of her school district.



Outside the classroom, Sundus volunteers her time teaching young children about the principles of Islam at her mosque's Sunday school. She has also been involved with a local event called "AIDS Awareness Week" to raise awareness of the growing AIDS crisis in Africa and around the world. This year, she organized the "Women and AIDS Day" where the female participants wore cultural outfits from around the world with AIDS statistics for that country.

One of the biggest problems Sundus sees limiting the status of worldwide is the use of women as tools of war and violence. She and her mother have been participating in a program through which they have sponsored a number of women in areas of conflict around the world. Their support helps these women escape violent situations and teaches them to be financially independent through the use of their own skills. Sundus believes that individual contributions like hers, with the collaboration of larger organizations for women, can help women across the world break free of the endless cycles of violence and abuse.

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### **Natalie Wright (USA)**



Natalie Wright is an involved student and active member of her community. As president of the Interact Club Finance Committee, Natalie helped raise money and resources for a number of service projects, including a service trip to a Mexican orphanage. She was also president of the French Club and a member of the soccer team at her former high school. Now a senior at Cheyenne East High School, Natalie is a member of the International Baccalaureate Steering Club Executive Committee and the National Honor Society.

Outside of school, Natalie has interned for the Steamboat Springs Arts Council and the Wyoming Arts Council. She also manages a Wyoming arts blog to promote creativity and culture across the community. In addition to volunteering in the arts, Natalie tutors elementary and high school students and volunteers as a foster parent for the Steamboat animal shelter.

Natalie believes experiencing new cultures is increasingly important in today's global world. Her own international awareness began in the two years that she attended a French lycee near Paris, France. She then traveled to Africa with five classmates and spent a month in Zambia at a wildlife orphanage where she volunteered in the care of chimpanzees, painted a girls' dormitory at a nearby school and taught English to students in the compound.

An enthusiastic member of the EHS Cinema Club, Natalie began making movies her sophomore year and has since made several short films. This summer, she attended a New York Film Academy summer course in Paris to expand her knowledge of filmmaking. She plans to pursue a major in International Relations and a minor in Cinematography when she begins college next year and will continue to serve her community.

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## Zahra Roji Baitie (Ghana)

Zahra Roji Baitie is a leader in her school community. As a member of the Model United Nations club, she has acted as a delegate, a chair of various committees and as the club's secretary-general, learning how to organize and plan conferences that create platforms from which students can explore global problems and their potential solutions. She is Prep and Academic Affairs Prefect, a position through which she tutors her mentees and encourages them, especially the girls, to expand their horizons beyond the restrictive roles society places on them. As captain of the girls' swim team, she has learned discipline, self-motivation and the value of teamwork.

Community service has been an important part of her education. As an intern at Ghana's Commission of Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), Zahra researched child labor in Ghana and developed a policy paper on how to address and end this phenomenon. Using the skills she gained in the Model United Nations, she helped plan a nationwide Model United Nations Conference to expand students' awareness of their rights as children. As project overseer for her school's Pan-African Club, Zahra explored the unique issues Africa faces and took an active role in bringing about change, planning and designing projects to address these problems at the local level. She also coordinated a literacy project for disadvantaged schools, increasing her own awareness of the status of education in Ghana and the educational challenges that girls in particular face.

Zahra has broadened her own international awareness, first at the 2008 Global Young Leaders' Conference and then at the 2009 Harvard Summer Program. She intends to study ethics, politics and economics at Yale University and hopes to work as a development economist for an organization such as the UNDP.

