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**AMERANT BANK ANNOUNCES STUDENT WINNERS  
OF 2019 ZOOLENS<sup>SM</sup> PHOTOGRAPHY PROJECT**

***Middle school student finalists celebrated during awards ceremony emceed by Zoo Miami's wildlife expert Ron Magill***

**CORAL GABLES, FL. (Apr. XX, 2019)** – [Amerant Bank](#) (NASDAQ: AMTB and AMTBB), one of the largest banks headquartered in Florida (formerly known as Mercantil Bank), announced the student finalists and winners of its recognized 2019 **Zoolens<sup>SM</sup> Photography Project** during an award ceremony held at the Bank's Headquarters in Coral Gables on April 18.

Welcomed by Miguel Palacios, Chief Business Officer of Amerant, and Beatriz Junco-Gonzalez, Corporate Communications and Social Responsibility Manager at Amerant, more than 100 guests were in attendance to celebrate the students, including families, contest sponsors, judges and Zoo Miami's Director of Communications and Nikon® Ambassador, Ron Magill.

**"Watching the Zoolens Photography Project grow throughout the years in the community has been a true joy and we are proud of the hundreds of submissions we receive from the talented students who participate in the contest,"** said Millar Wilson, Vice-Chairman and CEO of Amerant. **"This year's talent was no exception and thanks to our partners - Ron Magill, Zoo Miami, the Zoological Society of Florida, Pitman Photo Supply and Nikon – we are able to continue making this engaging program a reality and an art program that local students so eagerly anticipate every school year."**

Founded in 2010 and developed in partnership with [Zoo Miami](#) and the Zoological Society of Florida, the Bank's photography contest was created to encourage and increase appreciation for

photography and wildlife amongst middle school students from both public and private schools in Miami-Dade County. With a deep commitment to supporting the community and the arts, Amerant invited students to visit Zoo Miami to creatively photograph wildlife and submit their favorite animal photo during the month-long contest that ran from February 1<sup>st</sup> through March 1<sup>st</sup>. Hundreds of submissions were received from students across the county for a chance to win a range of prizes and up to \$2,000 in cash.

The 2019 photography contest held a kick-off event on February 1<sup>st</sup> at Zoo Miami in celebration of the project, where students joined noted wildlife photographer Ron Magill for an exciting behind-the-scenes tour and wildlife photography tips. Special guests Miss Florida Taylor Tyson and Diana Pombo, semifinalist of NBC's World of Dance Season 1, were also onsite for a meet and greet experience with student participants. Pitman Photo Supply representatives provided access to loaner digital Nikon® camera equipment for up to 30 students.

“It’s immensely rewarding to see the talent in each of the students’ submissions, the thought behind each photo and caption, and I’m proud to be a part of such an inspiring program that bolsters the love of photography and wildlife within the local students in our community,” added Magill. “This year’s submissions were competitive and it’s exciting to see this contest continue to expand and successfully expand over the years.”

Submissions were reviewed by a distinguished panel of judges based on composition, artistic merit, technical ability and title. The panel of judges included Ron Magill, Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalist Patrick Farrell, internationally-acclaimed photo artist María Martínez-Cañas, New World School of the Arts visual arts professor and curator Rosario Martínez-Cañas and Miss Florida Taylor Tyson.

During the ceremony, the finalists’ photographs were celebrated as Magill announced the student winners and honorable mentions, as well as the Top Teacher award given to the teacher with the most student submissions, Facebook Fans’ Choice for the photo with the most likes as well as Employees’ Choice winner.

- **First Place:** Olivia Dignman from Palmer Trinity School with her photo titled, “Every Line Counts in a Memory,” winning the grand prize of a \$2,000 Amerant savings account, Nikon camera and a North American Nature Photography Association membership

- **Second Place:** Samuel Cruz from Southwood Middle School with his photo titled, “Portrait of an American Symbol,” winning a \$1,500 Amerant savings account, Nikon camera as well as the North American Nature Photography Association membership
- **Third Place:** Marianna Rivas from Southwood Middle School with her photo titled, “The Crowned Prince,” winning a \$1,000 Amerant savings account, a professional Nikon camera and a student membership to the North American Nature Photography Association
- **Honorable Mentions:** Each of these students won a \$100 Visa gift card
  - Ashley Berestycki, from Doral Academy Prep, with her photo titled, “Snake Eyes”
  - Kevin Bustamante, from Doral Academy Prep, with his photo titled, “Piercing Gaze”
  - Maria Grant, from Southwood Middle School, with her photo titled, “Focus”
  - Sophia Regalado-McCoy, from South Miami K-8 Center, with her photo titled, “Photogenic Bird”
  - Gianna Rodriguez, from Doral Academy Prep, with her photo titled, “Tangled in Envy”
  - Kaylee Leidel, from South Miami K-8 Center, with her photo titled, “Evil Eye”
  - Jose Ramirez, from Doral Academy Prep, with his photo titled, “Into the Rainforest”
  - Andrea Villamizar, from Doral Academy Prep, with her photo titled, “I Got My Own Water Gun”
  - Gabriella Nassiff, from Doral Academy Prep, with her photo titled, “Fizzy Hair Don’t Care”
  - Andrea Tomasso, from Doral Academy Prep, with her photo titled, “Don’t Get It Twisted”
- **Facebook “Fan’s Choice” Award:** Jose Ramirez, from Doral Academy Prep, with his photo “Into the Rainforest”
- **Top Teacher Award:** Jennifer Rizo and Patricia Cruz, from Doral Academy Prep, with the school that had the most submissions and qualified for the top 30
- **Employees’ Choice Award:** Andrea Villamizar, from Doral Academy Prep, with her photo titled, “I got my own water gun”

The schools of the first, second and third place winners will also each receive a donation, courtesy of Amerant.

For more information on the Zoolens<sup>SM</sup> Photography Project, visit [www.Zoolens.com](http://www.Zoolens.com). To learn more about Amerant, visit [www.amerantbank.com](http://www.amerantbank.com).

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**About Mercantil Bank Holding Corporation and Amerant Bank**

Mercantil Bank Holding Corporation is a bank holding company headquartered in Coral Gables, Florida. The Company operates through its subsidiaries, Amerant Bank, N.A., Amerant Investments, Inc. and Amerant Trust, N.A. The Company provides individuals and businesses in the U.S., as well as select international clients, with deposit, credit and wealth management services. The Bank, which has operated for almost 40 years, is the largest community bank headquartered in Florida. The Bank operates 23 banking centers – 15 in South Florida, 8 in the Houston, Texas area, and loan production offices in Dallas, Texas and New York, New York. For more information, please visit [www.mercantilbank.com](http://www.mercantilbank.com) or [investor.mercantilbank.com](http://investor.mercantilbank.com).

**ABOUT THE ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF FLORIDA AND ZOO MIAMI:**

The Zoological Society of Florida is a non-profit 501(c)(3) that supports Zoo Miami through education, conservation and outreach programs; marketing and public relations; volunteer services and financial support for the construction of new exhibits. As of October 1, 2015, the Zoological Society of Florida will officially change its name to Zoo Miami Foundation to better state its mission. Visit [www.zoomiami.org](http://www.zoomiami.org) for additional information. Zoo Miami is located at 12400 SW 152 Street, Miami, FL 33177. General Zoo Admission is: \$17.95/adult and \$13.95/child (3-12), plus tax. Also as of October 1, 2015, admission prices will change to \$19.95/adult and \$15.95/child, plus tax. Children under two, Zoo members and parking are free. Zoo Miami's hours are 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. on weekdays and 9:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. on weekends and holidays; ticket booths close at 4 p.m. For more information please visit [www.zoomiami.org](http://www.zoomiami.org).