

## **2004 Barron Prize Winners and Honorees**

**E = environmental project**

### **WINNERS**

#### **Gina, age 17, British Columbia (E)**

Gina has invented a new type of road-paving material made largely from recycled plastic bottles. An avid inventor and scientist, Gina conceived of the idea while driving with her family along Cash Creek (known locally as Trash Creek), where she noticed hundreds of plastic bottles littering the stream. She took her idea of using the bottles to pave roads to businesses such as LaFarge and Husky Oil, where she worked for several summers learning how to blend oil for asphalt and experimenting with adding plastic to the mix. She finally landed on a winning formula that she named PAR (PolyAggreRoad) and recently convinced local officials to pave a quarter-mile section of road with her material. It is proving to be more stable and to crack less than conventional asphalt, and to reduce noise pollution by 5%. "A wise woman once said, 'No dream is too small to become a reality and no effort goes unnoticed,'" says Gina. "I hope I can inspire others to see that their ideas and dreams can become realities."

#### **Additional media coverage:**

[www.myhero.com](http://www.myhero.com), June 2005

Weekly Reader's *Current Science*, January 7, 2005

*The Christian Science Monitor*, April 22, 2003

#### **Ellie, age 17, California**

Ellie is the founder of [www.RepeatAfterUs.com](http://www.RepeatAfterUs.com), a web site that provides copyright-free literature with accompanying audio clips for people learning English as a second language. Her web site features over 5,000 texts, running the gamut from Mother Goose to Hamlet to Martin Luther King's speeches. Ellie conceived of her web site idea while running a poetry workshop and tutoring program for Hispanic children in the Los Angeles area. Realizing the need for English language learners to hear a wide range of material read out loud, Ellie got busy typing thousands of texts and recording them read aloud by classmates, teachers, community members, and young children. To date, over 70,000 visitors have used RepeatAfterUs.com, including teachers, Peace Corps volunteers, and students in literacy programs throughout the world. "I've learned that the world is full of opportunities and helping hands for those who dare," says Ellie. "I've realized that people *do* care about others, and they *do* want to help."

#### **Additional media coverage:**

*Teen People*, April 2005

National Geographic Kids website, March 2005

*Los Angeles Times*, October 15, 2004

**Kevin, age 18, Texas (E)**

Kevin founded the Sustainable Development Committee at his high school to study ways the campus could reduce energy costs and demonstrate the importance of sustainability. Kevin and his committee of forty students have installed SnackMiser motion detectors on school vending machines in order to regulate their electrical usage, started a recycling program, planted shade trees, and will soon have the school's roof resurfaced in energy-saving reflective material. They have also developed a web site for teachers and students, helped rewrite the Texas state curriculum on sustainable development, and organized an Energy Carnival for local elementary students. Additionally, Kevin has recently launched a new project, called *The Global Teaching Network*, which will work to build "green" schools around the world. These schools will teach the importance of sustainability, and will prepare students to address social and economic issues in their countries. "All of this work has helped me to see the world as a place of hope and grand possibilities," says Kevin.

**Renee, age 12, Ohio (E)**

Renee started a battery recycling initiative in her elementary school that has grown to serve as the model for Lorain county's battery recycling program. After learning how discarded batteries contribute to pollution and wildlife destruction in nearby Lake Erie, Renee decided she had to act. She contacted the Board of Education and asked to speak at one of its meetings, where she was granted permission to place battery collection boxes in each of the district's sixteen elementary schools. With funding from the county's Solid Waste Management group, she then produced an informative video and created recycling bins for each school. She also enlisted students in each building to serve as "Battery Buddies," spokesmen who would make posters, distribute flyers, and read announcements on each school's PA system. By the end of the school year, Renee had collected over 3,000 pounds of batteries and drawn the attention of county officials, who had been researching the possibility of a battery recycling program but had made little progress. Lorain County is now in the process of placing battery recycling bins in all of the county's government buildings, libraries, non-profit groups, and churches. "I've learned that you don't have to be rich or well-known to make a difference," says Renee. "You just have to have a dream and the guts to see things through."

**Additional media coverage:**

National Geographic Kids website, March 2005

*Elyria Magazine*, 2005 edition

**Laurel, age 17, California**

Laurel founded the Truckee Youth Music Program, an after-school program for elementary school children whose families cannot afford private music lessons. A talented pianist, Laurel was inspired to start her program when she learned of the severely limited funding available for public school music programs in California. She took her music program idea to local service clubs and businesses, asking for donations, and wrote a grant proposal to her community

foundation. Her efforts have yielded nearly \$20,000 to pay for instruments and materials. Laurel developed contracts, applications, and brochures for her program and translated the materials into Spanish for the Latino community she serves. In her first year, she recruited three high school peers who, along with Laurel, volunteered to teach weekly lessons in piano, flute, and clarinet to twenty young students. In its second year, the program grew to eight volunteer teachers instructing 35 students, with the addition of lessons in trumpet, violin, and percussion. The program is now in its third year. "It saddened me to think that some kids simply can't afford to learn music when music is such an important part of my life," says Laurel.

**Additional media coverage:**

*Young Miss*, November 2003

**Emily, age 18, Washington (E)**

Emily has designed a renewable energy system to replace the gasoline-powered one at a global warming research station located outside of Juneau, Alaska. While helping scientists at the station document global warming by measuring glacial retreat, Emily noticed the researchers' reliance on gasoline for heat and electricity, and wondered if their system could be reconfigured to run on wind and solar energy. After much data collection and cost/benefit analysis, Emily designed a wind and solar system that will save the research station more than 3,000 gallons of gasoline and \$4,000 over its lifetime. Her system will be installed over the next two years. Emily's renewable energy system is just one example of her commitment to protecting the environment. She is president of the Earth Service Corps at her high school, a group of thirty students who manage the school's large-scale recycling program, organize monthly bike-to-school events, install oil filters on storm drains, and work to protect and improve salmon habitat.

**Shawn, age 18, New York (E)**

Shawn created Garden Angels, a non-profit organization that has transformed an abandoned, trash-filled vacant lot into a park and community garden. Shawn, who has volunteered at the Brooklyn Public Library for nearly six years, was inspired to start his project after reading the book *Seedfolks*, which chronicles volunteers' efforts to create community gardens in a number of urban settings. Realizing that more young people in his community were involved in gangs than were volunteering, Shawn began the hard work of convincing his peers that they *could* make a difference, and succeeded in rallying fifty of them to join his initiative. Shawn applied for and received a \$1,000 start-up grant from Youth Venture, and worked diligently to obtain permission from the city to begin clean-up of the vacant lot. Shawn's Garden Angels also paints murals throughout the community, organizes poetry readings and chess tournaments, and works to increase multicultural awareness. "There is so much we can do to make this world, if not perfect, at least safer, healthier, and cleaner," says Shawn. "It may sound like an illusory dream, but we have it in us to live that way. We do."

**Additional media coverage:**

*The Christian Science Monitor*, December 7, 2004

### **Micaela, age 17, Connecticut**

Micaela created Unified Theater (<http://www.unifiedtheater.org/>), a non-profit program that gives students with disabilities the chance to participate in theater. Micaela's project combines her love of theater with her compassion for disabled students such as her cousin Kelsey, just a few years younger than Micaela and born with numerous developmental and physical disabilities. Micaela serves as director of Unified Theater, leading students with and without special needs in daily rehearsals to create, practice, and perform musical productions based on different decades in American history. Building on the success of Unified Theater at her own high school, Micaela has recently begun offering start-up assistance to other high schools via a web site that provides information on Unified Theater and her experience with it. "Unified Theater has shown me that though being in the limelight is exciting," says Micaela, "it's not nearly as fulfilling as giving someone else that opportunity."

### **Matthew, age 18, North Carolina (E)**

Matthew founded a non-profit organization called the Woodland and Wildlife Restoration Committee to address the problem of deforestation in the greater Charlotte area. Matthew was inspired to start his organization two years ago, when a favorite forest in his neighborhood was cleared to make way for a housing development. With \$60 of his own money and \$101 earned from a garage sale, Matthew purchased and planted his first group of hardwood trees. The media took note, word spread of his work, and soon Matthew had launched his "One Tree At A Time" project with the goal of planting 1,000 trees. An initial grant from the local Parks and Recreation Department led to a grant of \$15,000 from the North Carolina Forestry Department, as well as the donation of 1,000 seedlings from International Paper. Matthew and more than 200 volunteers have planted over 1,200 trees in public spaces, and are working toward planting even more. "The day I saw my neighborhood forest leveled to make room for more houses, I realized that society isn't changed by idle words but by action," explains Matthew. "I knew I had to do something."

#### **Additional media coverage:**

Weekly Reader's *Current Science*, December 17, 2004

*The Christian Science Monitor*, December 7, 2004

### **Anna, age 13, Colorado**

Anna founded a non-profit organization called Sight Angels to provide free eyeglasses to those in need. Anna conceived of her project after noticing how many of the homeless in downtown Denver had broken glasses, or none at all. Knowing how much her own glasses help her in school and with daily life, Anna felt compelled to get glasses to those who needed them. She established her non-profit group and obtained funding for it, and then visited several shelters and free eye clinics in Denver, where she learned of the great demand for reading glasses. She figured out how to buy bulk lots of reading glasses, solicited for donations of used ones, and recruited dozens of volunteers to help sort and deliver the glasses to shelters and clinics.

To date, Sight Angels has donated more than 5,000 pair of eyeglasses to those in need within the U.S., Honduras, Mexico, and West Africa. “I figure if you can help, you should,” says Anna. “So I have!”

## HONOREES

***Caitlin, age 18, Massachusetts:*** Organized a job fair for Boston’s homeless population, working with area shelters, employers, and the city government for this event that served 1,500 job candidates and over twenty employers.

***Chance and Josh, ages 11 and 13, Texas:*** “Wildlife ambassadors” who share their expertise and love of animals with thousands of children and adults. The boys are best known for the wildlife videos they produce and provide free of charge via their website.

***Devin, age 17, New York:*** Devin has worked tirelessly for the past three years to arrange corporate donations of toys, video games, tricycles, books, and sports paraphernalia for hospital playrooms and treatment centers for critically ill children.

***Eddie, age 18, Florida:*** Started the “Eddie Garza Baseball Camp” for children of migrant workers, organizing funding, uniforms, equipment, guest speakers, and field trips.

***Holly, age 17, Nevada:*** Works with the Nevada Childhood Cancer Foundation to help critically ill children. Her group, “Generation Hope,” has raised over \$50,000, mainly for donation of toys to children’s hospitals.

***Jessica and Sara, ages 12 and 14, Wisconsin:*** Created “Change for Cranes” as a way to help their classmates become active in the fight to protect cranes. They have raised \$1,500 so far, allowing dozens of classrooms to “adopt a crane” through the International Crane Foundation.

***Julia, age 12, Oklahoma:*** Organized “Thirst Aid for First Aid,” a lemonade stand fundraiser for the American Red Cross, raising over \$4,100 in one day. Julia organized four lemonade stands in her town, recruited 69 child and 22 adult volunteers.

***Justin, age 14, Iowa:*** Led the effort to create a half-mile long biking and walking trail between his small town and the local school. Originally raising \$3,800 for the project, he learned that the fully-accessible trail would actually cost nearly \$60,000. He appealed to the city for funds and helped the town secure a grant from the state to complete the project.

***Lindsey, age 11, Ohio:*** Started a weekly farmer’s market in her small town. She worked with local government and the Ohio Dept. of Agriculture to organize 29 vendors every Saturday during the summer. The market provides locally-grown produce for the community, as well as a much-needed weekend gathering place for residents.

***Nick, age 16, Washington:*** Leader of his community’s “Alki Salmon Team,” which gathers data in an effort to protect wild salmon populations. He shares his knowledge of and passion for

salmon by teaching stream ecology to students in his high school's science classes.

***Robyn, age 16, California:*** Founder of "Project Books and Blankies," a program that donates books and homemade quilts to children with limited access to books and/or who are struggling to learn to read. Has donated her handmade quilts and nearly 10,000 books to classrooms, literacy programs, and shelters across Los Angeles.

[www.booksandblankies.com](http://www.booksandblankies.com)

***Samita, age 12, New Hampshire:*** Collected books, school supplies, and art materials to ship to a village in India where she has relatives. While visiting there during the summer, Samita tutored fifty children. She plans to continue her efforts.

***Seth, age 15, Arkansas:*** Has been monitoring water quality in the Illinois Bayou as part of the Arkansas Fish and Game Commission's "Stream Team" program, revealing unhealthy concentrations of coliform bacteria, a likely by-product of the large amount of livestock production in the area. He is helping local officials make more informed land-use management decisions.

***Stacey, age 14, Florida:*** Started a non-profit group called "Pennies to Protect Police Dogs," raising over \$250,000 to provide protective vests to 312 dogs in 21 states.

***Wyatt, age 13, Florida:*** Started "Wyatt's Ruff Rescues" to save dogs and cats at the local shelter from being euthanized. He has rescued over 200 dogs and cats so far, finding homes for all of them.