

2002 Barron Prize Winners

Joying, age 10, South Carolina

Joying initiated a beach clean-up campaign called “No Butts on the Beach!” Concerned with the amount of litter on local beaches, as well as the negative health effects of smoking, Joying rallied her Girl Scout troop to action. She convinced local schools, businesses, and carpenters to donate labor and materials needed to construct cigarette butt disposal containers for each entrance to the local beach. Thanks to Joying’s efforts, local beaches are noticeably cleaner. “I have learned that even children can do good things for the earth,” says Joying.

Barbara, age 17, Texas

Barbara, an active 4H member, created the “Don't Be Crude” motor oil recycling program in her rural Texas county. She began her project after realizing that local farmers were pouring used motor oil on the ground in order to kill weeds. Concerned about the effects of this practice on the environment, Barbara decided to act. She worked with county commissioners and local sponsors to place five federally-approved motor oil recycling units in her county. Today, her program has expanded to seven counties, with over 18 recycling units that have collected 60,000 gallons of used motor oil. Barbara says, “I know that with support and creativity, we can create solutions to environmental challenges and inspire others to do the same.”

Ryan, age 11, Ontario, Canada

Ryan has worked tirelessly for the past four years to provide clean drinking water for African villages. As a six-year-old, Ryan learned of the dire need for clean water in Africa and took on extra household chores to raise \$70 toward the effort. Today, he has raised over \$500,000 and provided over 70 wells in Africa. Ryan has created the Ryan’s Well Foundation, a non-profit organization through which he will continue his work. Ryan says, “Mother Teresa said that there are no great acts -- only small acts done with great love. What I did wasn’t really great, but what WAS great is that lots and lots of people in 54 countries around the world have been helping me get clean water for all of Africa.”

Bethany, age 18, Ohio

Bethany saved a six-acre wetland on her family farm from destruction by a multi-billion dollar petroleum company. After learning that a proposed pipeline would destroy “her” wetland and many others, Bethany began a determined effort to stop or re-route the pipeline. Despite being told repeatedly that she’d never win in taking on a large corporation, Bethany plowed onward. She contacted the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, who worked with her to survey and monitor the wetland. In the process, they discovered an endangered plant and were able to force the re-routing of the pipeline.

Speaking of her work, Bethany says, “Everyone can defend the environment, whether you’re 15 or 75 years old. You can make a difference.”

Kyle, age 16, Oklahoma

Kyle created Project READ (Reading Encourages All Dreams), a reading mentorship program based in his town’s public library. Kyle started the project after learning that less than half of the members in his community had graduated from high school. READ pairs high school students with elementary students who are struggling academically. Over 150 students are involved in the program that has seen students’ reading grades improve as much as two letter grades. “I found that one person truly can make a difference in the community,” says Kyle.

Erin, age 18, Connecticut

Erin has taken the lead in promoting her community’s pesticide management policy. This policy involves educating residents about controlling pests in the most environmentally-friendly way. Erin met with town selectmen, wrote articles for her local newspaper, organized scientists in a panel discussion, worked with local elementary students, and produced a local television program -- all in an effort to educate her town about ways to control pests and to protect the health of her community. Thanks to her work, a number of other towns in Connecticut are adopting similar policies. “I hope my project will have a ripple effect and grow even bigger as time goes on,” says Erin.

Lauren (Lo), age 18, Oklahoma

Lo is dedicated to raising money to fund research for cystic fibrosis, a disease she has struggled with since birth. Lo serves as chairperson for the Great Strides Walk for Cystic Fibrosis, and has achieved a five-fold increase in funding for cystic fibrosis research. She was the nation’s top fundraiser one year, and personally raises over \$60,000 each year for the Walk. Through her work, Lo says, “I have learned that if one person wants to make a difference, he or she can,” says Lo. “They just have to try.”

Rebecca, age 17, Colorado

Rebecca combined her desire to make a difference with her passion for singing to organize “United We Sing,” a major benefit concert at the Pepsi Center in Denver following the tragic events of Sept. 11, 2001. The event raised over \$23,000 for the American Red Cross. An avid choir member, Rebecca channeled her grief into organizing the concert that brought together over 1,000 youth choir members from 30 high schools across Colorado. The students performed for an audience of nearly 8,000 people. “I learned that for all the anger and hatred out there, there is an even greater amount of love and compassion,” says Rebecca. “That makes me very hopeful.”

Niko and Theo, age 15, California

Twin brothers Niko and Theo are committed to reducing gun violence in Los Angeles. They organize neighborhood marches, speak regularly at City Council meetings, and are working with City Council members and the Chief of Police to propose a city-wide ban on certain kinds of ammunition. The boys have created the organization “Kids Voice-LA” and through it, have collected signatures from over 7,000 children in Los Angeles, asking for citywide efforts to reduce violence. Niko says, “I have learned that as a kid, I’m a lot more powerful than I thought I was.”

Nina, age 18, West Virginia

Nina is founder and president of American Cancer Society (ACS) Teens, a nationwide network of youth volunteers working to fight cancer through education, advocacy, fundraising, and service. ACS Teens has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for cancer research and has helped change state tobacco laws. Nina has also created the National Youth Health Advisory Board Initiative Team (NYHABIT) to address the mental, physical, and spiritual health of youth. NYHABIT focuses on designing literature that addresses communities’ health concerns. “My service has helped me believe in myself and in the humility and kindness of mankind,” says Nina.