



Detect to Protect

Siblings Christina and Eric Bear are raising awareness about testing for radon gas

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COURTESY THE BARRON PRIZE FOR YOUNG HEROES

Siblings Christina and Eric Bear, from Golden, Colorado, are on a mission to educate homeowners about the dangers of radon, a radioactive gas that can get in homes and cause lung cancer if left undetected. After learning about the gas, the siblings created the “Radon Awareness Project (RAP)—Detect to Protect.” It’s a grassroots, or locally driven, campaign to educate the public about the gas and how to test for it. “We wanted to get the word out about radon,” Christina, 14, told TFK. “You can protect yourself and your family.” For their efforts, Christina and Eric are one of the national winners of this year’s Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes.

Each year, the prize is given to 10 winners (and 15 finalists) who have made a significant positive difference to others and to the planet. The award includes \$2,500 to be used toward their service project or for higher education. “It’s cool to know that our outreach to our community has been

nationally recognized,” Christina said.

Detecting Radon

Radon is an odorless, nonvisible, radioactive gas that comes from the breakdown of uranium in soil, rock and water. It mixes in the air. “You can’t see it. You can’t touch it,” Eric, 12, said. While radon can be found all over the U.S., it is more present in areas with high levels of uranium in the soil, including Colorado. The gas can collect on the lowest level of homes and get into lungs. Over 21,000 people die in the U.S. from radon-related lung cancer.

But the long-term affects are preventable by detecting and removing radon early. Home testing for radon is easy and inexpensive. You can usually find short-term test kits at your local home improvement store or county health department.

The siblings have been working on their cause since 2010. They researched radon and organized a meeting to collaborate with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, the Environmental Protection Agency and the American Lung Association. They have also created public service announcements (PSAs) and given presentations to city councils about the importance of educating the public on the

dangers of radon. Their efforts are making an impact. “Kids can deliver really passionate messages to their communities,” Christina said. “Adults will listen to kids who want to make a difference.”

People are certainly listening to Christina and Eric. They plan to use part of the Gloria Barron prize money to keep spreading the word about their cause. “Everybody should test for radon,” Eric said. For more information about radon and how to test for it, visit radonawarenessproject.com and epa.gov/radon/pubs/citguide.html.

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