

‘Inspiring the Hero in Every Child’ the **Barron Prize for Young Heroes** is Awarded to a Student for Community Efforts

By Karli Morello
Curious Parents Magazine, January 2010

Each year, a prize is given to ten young people, ages eight to 18, to recognize a significant difference that they have made to better their community and country as a whole.



The prize is called the Barron Prize for Young Heroes. The first awards were given in 1999 by leading children’s book author, T. A. Barron. He started this award to make young people aware of “their power to be heroic.”

The Barron Prize consists of ten, \$2,500 cash stipends to be applied to the winners’ continued education or service project. This year, one of the winners is from Wynnewood, PA.

Jonathan Leung, 18, created “Helping Hunger” as his service project to enter the contest. “Helping Hunger is a student-driven organization that ‘rescues’ food from caterers and restaurants and transports it to soup kitchens and homeless shelters.”

Leung’s project started off as a small service for his community when he began with rescuing the food from his own school cafeteria and delivering it to a homeless shelter in Philadelphia. When he and a friend realized how big this could become, they set out to recruit restaurants to participate in their efforts. What they found was a road block while trying to grow a community service. Restaurants were unwilling to donate because of liability reasons so Leung did his research and was determined to find a way around it.

He came across the Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act, passed in 1996 by Congress. After presenting this to local restaurants, they were much more enthusiastic and willing to help. His next step was to recruit peers as helpers. “He created a Google spreadsheet and then a Google map, allowing him to quickly determine how to best match volunteers with businesses for food pick-up and shelters for deliveries.”

With all of his hard work in recruiting, researching, convincing restauranteurs and getting his plans into place, Leung was now delivering 20 times more food than he was on his own. His project is extremely successful and clearly improves the lives of others in an incredibly positive way.

He has expanded his peer volunteers to sales (recruiting more restaurants for donations), presentations to encourage other students to join and coordinators of logistics of pick-ups and deliveries. Leung has started his own business within a group of his peers and he is doing it out of the goodness in his heart, not for a paycheck.

“I’ve come to believe that if you really want to change the world for the better, and you work hard to achieve that goal, then there will always be people to help you along the way,” says Leung.

His goal is to see “Helping Hunger” spread to many more schools that will keep students involved with helping their community. Needless to say, Leung is a hero in his generation and is greatly deserving of the Barron Prize for Young Heroes; after all, he is a hero in so many people’s eyes.