

## **2010 Barron Prize Winners' & Honorees' Bios**

### **E= Environmental Project**

#### **Winners**

##### **Erich (17), Florida (E)**

Erich developed a biodiesel production facility at his high school that converts used vegetable oil (UVO) into fuel that powers the school's lawn equipment. For two years, he experimented with the biodiesel production process and won numerous regional science awards for his work. But that wasn't enough for Erich. He then put together a committee of supportive faculty and students, wrote grants to obtain funding, and worked with the county Environmental Protection Department, fire marshal, and building inspector, among others, to obtain a permit and license to manufacture biodiesel. After setting up the actual facility, he began appealing to restaurants, Girl Scout troops, and his school community to collect UVO, receiving such large donations of it that his county's Environmental Protection Department was inspired to purchase a larger, more sophisticated biodiesel reactor for the county's use.

He also got busy writing a "how to" manual so that other schools and organizations could develop their own facilities. As part of this, he felt compelled to address the cumbersome Florida state statutes he'd encountered that make it very difficult for schools to produce biodiesel. With help from his biodiesel committee, Erich convinced members of the state House and Senate to sponsor amendments to change those statutes. Erich testified in support of the two new bills, both of which passed unanimously. "I've learned that an idea that benefits society, promoted by an energetic individual, however young, can start a movement," says Erich.

##### **Additional Media Coverage**

Gainesville Sun – 10/31/2010

Insite Gainesville – Jan 2011

##### **Jaclyn (16), New York**

Jaclyn created Friends of Jaclyn, a non-profit foundation that has paired more than 200 children fighting brain cancer with college or high school athletic teams that provide support and encouragement. All this came from Jaclyn's own personal struggle: At age 9, she was diagnosed with a brain tumor, soon after she started playing her favorite sport, lacrosse. When Jaclyn's coach learned of her diagnosis, he contacted a friend who is the head women's lacrosse coach at Northwestern University. The coach and team began calling Jaclyn and sending her cards, gifts, and text messages – anything to help lift her spirits during the trials of radiation and chemotherapy. Instead of feeling alone throughout the treatments, Jaclyn felt like part of a team, which helped immeasurably with her healing. At the same time, the lacrosse team found themselves with a renewed sense of purpose and increased gratitude. Interestingly, they progressed that year for the first time ever to the finals of the NCAA. They resolved to win the championship for their friend Jaclyn and succeeded, making school history and delighting their youngest "teammate."

## **Jaclyn (16), Continued**

Soon after, Jaclyn realized that other children could benefit from “having a team,” and Friends of Jaclyn was born. Jaclyn helps match kids with teams, attends as many “adoptions” as she can, and loves knowing there are hundreds of teams waiting to be paired with young cancer patients. “This experience has taught me that when bad things happen in your life, there are still opportunities to make a difference in the world,” says Jaclyn. “I don’t focus on what I can’t do any longer, but rather on what I *can* do to inspire other children who are fighting this disease.”

## **Cole (9), North Carolina (E)**

Cole took a second-grade homework assignment and turned it into a large-scale environmental action campaign involving his entire elementary school. Asked to write a government official on behalf of an endangered species, Cole instead chose to help protect an entire forest ecosystem. To help, he contacted the Dogwood Alliance, whose mission is to protect Southern forests. (He exchanged emails with the Alliance for nearly a month before Alliance staff found out he was just 8-years-old – not the high school student they’d assumed!) Through the Alliance, Cole learned that many of North Carolina’s coastal forests are being destroyed to make paper for fast-food restaurants.

He resolved to write McDonalds to ask the CEO to use less packaging and more recycled paper, and hand-drew four postcards representing different forest habitats for his campaign. Betting that many voices would speak louder than just his own, Cole printed 2,250 postcards – enough for his entire school. He wrote a speech explaining his research and project, and over the course of three days, led a team of 24 students as they stormed all 51 classrooms to present the speech and get the postcards signed. Soon after sending his massive mailing, Cole heard from McDonalds that they would soon be switching their bags to 100% recycled paper. Cole and his classmates are working to get other schools involved in their work, and have inspired the Dogwood Alliance to develop a youth organizing program. “I have learned that children do have a voice in the world and can make changes,” says Cole.

### **Additional Media Coverage**

Davidson News – 11/2/2010

## **Chloe (17), Maine (E)**

Chloe formed the Climate Action Club at her high school to help residents of her rural town fight global warming. In the past two years, Chloe and club members have established a “No Idling” policy on campus, installed smart strips and vending misers in school computer labs and on vending machines, and recycled 4,000 batteries and 20 pounds of cartridges in her hometown of Damariscotta. The club recently won a \$5,000 community impact award, which they are using to purchase solar panels for the school.

Most notably, Chloe’s club launched Maine’s largest student-led reusable bag campaign, which has kept 700,000 bags out of local landfills. The group raised \$4,300 from fourteen businesses, purchased 1,900 reusable bags featuring sponsors’ names and logos, and then sold out of the bags soon after they began selling them. The project is ongoing and self-sustaining, with each

## **Chloe (17), Continued**

year's profits used to fund the next year's batch of bags. The state's largest supermarket chain recently came onboard to sell the bags. Additionally, Maine has launched a state-wide reusable bag campaign, using the Climate Action Club's project as a model. On top of all this, Chloe also started and maintains an online network of young environmentalists called First Here, Then Everywhere, which has spread to eight countries. "I want the environment to remain sacred, animals to remain in their natural habitats, and humans to thrive in a harmonious relationship with nature," says Chloe. "This is my purpose. I know it in my soul."

### **Additional Media Coverage**

Portland Press Herald – 10/6/2010

Lincoln County News – 10-6-2010

## **David (18), Wisconsin**

David founded Job-Link Racine to connect homeless and low-income teens with part-time job opportunities. He began his work at age 14, when he locked eyes one evening with a homeless man on a corner as his mom drove him to his job at a restaurant. Later that night, David asked his mom to return to the same corner, hoping to hand over his night's tips to the man, but he was gone. Soon after, David applied for a grant to study the issue of homelessness, and was disheartened to learn of the high number of homeless children in his county. He began sharing his research with the media and in community forums, and started volunteering at shelters.

Knowing the importance of his own part-time job in his life, David decided "to find jobs for teenage kids who could really use a break in life." He developed partnerships with high school counselors and businesses, and began offering sessions at his local library where teens could get help with job applications. He was awarded a \$10,000 grant from Best Buy/Youth Venture to help applicants with clothing, training, and transportation. He has gone to bat for dozens of teens, placing them in jobs that for many, have proven to be turning points in their lives. During the summer of 2009, David was asked by the local Workforce Development Center to partner with them in offering a youth summer employment program. The program was so successful (800 youth interviewed, with 220 of them placed in jobs), that it was deemed a national model, and David traveled with Workforce staff across the country, leading workshops on the program. "I often think back to the night this all began, when I encountered that homeless man on the corner," says David. "He showed me the enormous disparities in our communities and the importance for each of us to find solutions, rather than look uncomfortably at the problems and head in the opposite direction."

### **Additional Media Coverage**

Boys' Life – May 2011

Relate Magazine – 4/1/2011

The Journal Times – 11/9/2010

## **Sarah Jo (16), Texas (E)**

Sarah Jo designed and built a carbon neutral, 800-square-foot environmental education center, and constructed it entirely from green, earth-friendly materials. Built for Girl Scouts at a camp in West Texas, the building is named Lorax Lodge after the Dr. Seuss character who “speaks for the trees” in his work to protect the environment. As Sarah Jo began fundraising and planning for the building, she found herself facing naysayers who said she was dreaming too big. With quiet determination, she began fundraising for the \$235,000 building, and then began reviewing design plans, researching materials, and convincing construction professionals to help.

Nearly two years later, Lorax Lodge is a beautiful octagonal building made of compressed earth blocks that uses solar energy and has a radiant heated floor and cool-air intake system. By project’s end, Sarah Jo had rallied and organized more than 2,200 people, including 700 teens, to help with the building. As the finish work was completed, she painstakingly wrote each of their names on one of the clay interior walls as a way to say “thank you.” Lorax Lodge is but one component of Sarah Jo’s three-part project called the Vision is Green, for which she was awarded the Girl Scout Gold Award. She has also created an environmental curriculum guide full of hands-on, green activities (which she has translated it into Spanish), and has developed a new Girl Scout badge that challenges girls around the world to address environmental problems. “I’ve learned that everything can change if you believe it can,” says Sarah Jo. “‘Impossible’ doesn’t have a place in my vocabulary.”

### **Additional Media Coverage**

Official EPA Blog – 10/26/2010

Avalanche-Journal – 11/26/2010

## **Michala (13), Kentucky**

Michala created “Beading to Beat Autism,” a program that has raised over \$300,000 for autism treatment and research in the past few years. Michala began her project at age 10, when her younger brother, who is autistic and can’t speak, was receiving an experimental treatment at a local children’s hospital. When the results of the treatment proved promising, the hospital wanted to organize a larger trial involving more autistic children, but didn’t have the \$200,000 needed to do so. Hearing this, Michala took the \$7.35 in her piggy bank, bought beading supplies with it, and began selling bracelets for \$3.00 as a way to raise money for the hospital.

She rallied dozens of volunteers to help her create and sell bracelets and in just six months, had raised the \$200,000 needed for the hospital’s trial treatment program. Since then, Michala has raised an additional \$150,000. Her new goal is to raise \$300,000,000 to fund a new autism research and treatment center in her hometown of Louisville, Kentucky. She has inspired thousands of people across the U.S. and around the world – including schoolchildren, church groups, and women in correctional facilities – to join her in creating and selling bracelets. Michala is undaunted by the number of \$3.00 bracelets she’ll need to sell to reach her new goal, and explains the cumulative power of each small donation: “One snowflake might not amount to much, but when a lot of snowflakes get together and start falling, they can stop traffic!”

### **Additional Media Coverage**

Courier Journal - 2/8/2011

Congressional Mention – 2/10/2011

## **Heidi (18), Vermont (E)**

Heidi founded a free magazine, *Regeneration*, which educates residents in her rural Vermont town and the surrounding area about important environmental and humanitarian issues. A member of Change the World Kids (CTWK), a local group of youth activists, Heidi began the magazine as a way to promote an ecologically and socially responsible lifestyle – especially for the next generation – and to raise funding for CTWK’s service efforts around the world.

Heidi designed the 24-page magazine and recruited a team of teens to write articles for it. Determined to provide her publication free of charge so that everyone could access it, she launched an extensive ad sales campaign to cover production costs. The campaign proved wildly successful, enabling her to print 3,000 copies of each issue, three times per year, delivered to twelve surrounding towns. Heidi directs 100% of the magazine’s profits – over \$12,000 so far – to local CTWK service efforts, as well as to its projects in places such as Africa, Costa Rica, and Haiti. “Education is the key to affecting changes both big and small,” says Heidi. “My magazine teaches people from all walks of life about living more sustainably.”

### **Additional Media Coverage**

Girls’ Life – 11/18/2010

## **Shannon (16), New Jersey**

Shannon founded Shannon’s After-School Reading Exchange (SHARE) to educate and empower girl ages 10-17 in Tanzania. She began her work two years ago as her Girl Scout Gold Award project by collecting children’s books and school supplies to take with her on a family trip to Tanzania. She arrived with 500 pounds of donated books and supplies, and with the help of her family, transformed a dilapidated school room into a library. She began a “girls only” reading program for 23 Tanzanian girls with the motto, “Today a reader, tomorrow a leader.”

Since then, Shannon has returned to Tanzania twice to oversee and expand her program, and has now created four libraries at four different schools. Her libraries, which combined house 23,000 books, are made available to the entire communities where they’re built. Shannon pays African teachers to stay after school and work on weekends so that girls can practice their reading “after hours.” She proudly reports enormous gains in the girls’ reading and English skills each time she visits Tanzania. Her biggest challenge has been convincing the girls’ families that time studying is well-spent, since the norm is for girls to cook and clean in their spare time. Shannon recently raised \$20,000 to install electricity in two libraries and solar power in another, so that girls are no longer studying in near darkness during the eight-month rainy season.

## **Shannon (16), Continued**

With her newest initiative, SHARE Scholars, she is raising funds to sponsor girls to attend the highly-regarded Hekima Girls' Secondary School. "These Tanzanian girls crave and value education – something my friends and I take for granted every day," says Shannon. "I want the girls to experience a future of opportunities, which will mean that both their dreams and mine come true."

### **Additional Media Coverage**

Girls' Life – 11/18/2010  
Somerset Hills in Jersey – 12/23/2010  
My Central Jersey – 12/23/2010  
Relate Magazine – 1/19/2011  
NJ Countryside – Jan/Feb 2011  
My Central Jersey – 5/11/2012  
White House Guest Blog – 5/22/2012  
Forbes – 6/19/2012

## **Alec (15), California (E)**

Alec founded Kids vs. Global Warming as a way to educate his peers about climate change and to rally them to action. His passion for climate change began at age 12, soon after he first saw Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* film. Determined to become a climate change spokesman for Gore's organization but turned down because of his age, Alec designed his own slideshow, geared to youth. As he traveled about presenting his program, he met Gore, who immediately invited Alec, then 14, to a training, making him the country's youngest presenter of *An Inconvenient Truth*.

Alec's current initiatives make use of technology and social networking to inspire and organize teens. He has created a short video he calls "iMatter" that uses iPod-style images to translate the complexities of global warming into simple terms that inspire youth to get involved in solutions. He's now using the video as part of his iMatter campaign, which includes web and mobile phone applications to help youth organize events that address global warming. At the center of the campaign is the iMatter March: One Million Youth Stand Up for Their Planet, a series of marches to be held around the world. Alec has also recently launched C3Y, the California Climate Council of Youth, working to get youth who are passionate about climate change appointed to high-level boards and coalitions. "I believe that youth are the moral authority on climate change and therefore, their voices must be heard and taken seriously," explains Alec. "With my work, I provide a model for youth to say, 'If he can do this, so can I.'"

### **Additional Media Coverage**

Ventura County Star – 12/28/2010

## Honorees

**Allison (9), Colorado:** Allison raised more than \$22,000 making and selling dog biscuits to buy companion dogs for children fighting cancer.

**Sydney (15), California:** Sydney created “Emerald Trees Project” to reforest the lands around her home following the 2008 wildfire. Planted nearly 3,000 trees.

**Neha (13), Pennsylvania:** Neha founded the non-profit organization “Empower Orphans” to help orphaned children in India become self-sufficient. Also raised \$33,000 to fund two libraries and provide 1000 children with food, clothing, and dental care.

**Erik (9), Maryland:** Erik wrote and illustrated the book *Butterflies Shouldn’t Wear Shoes* to raise money to protect endangered animals. Sold, thus far, 700 copies, raising \$3,100.

**Sarah (17), California:** Sarah started “A Blanket of Their Own,” which recruits volunteers to make no-sew fleece blankets for foster children. Has made over 3,500 blankets and created Legacy Blanket Kits containing all the supplies needed for making a blanket.

**Ethan (18), Virginia:** Ethan initiated and organized a large-scale recycling program in his school district involving 4,000 students.

**Amy (18), Oregon:** Amy created “Teens Fighting Hunger,” a group of young artists that has raised \$63,000 to combat childhood hunger by making and selling jewelry, scarves, and greeting cards.

**Riley (17), Colorado:** Riley’s non-profit, “Breaking the Chain,” has raised over \$125,000 to build schools in Africa and to purchase 12,000 new books for U.S. classrooms.

**Justin (17), Texas:** Justin recruited nearly 100 volunteers and raised over \$40,000 in order to build fourteen homes for the poor in Juarez, Mexico.

**Taylor (13), Oregon:** Taylor created “Read for the Need,” an annual used book sale that has raised over \$50,000 for his community’s food bank.

**Rebecca (18), Massachusetts:** Rebecca founded “MINGA,” a non-profit group that mobilizes youth to combat the global child sex trade and which has raised over \$75,000 for its cause.

**Samuel (17), South Carolina:** Samuel started a program that each weekend provides a backpack full of healthy food for 100 elementary and middle school students in need.

**Clay (15), Ohio:** Clay founded the “Wetlands Education Team” (WET) to educate Ohio residents about their state’s massive loss of wetlands. This team has also recently begun a “no diesel idling” initiative to protect air quality in their town.

**Jordyn (15), Wisconsin:** Jordyn founded the “Wisconsin Prescription Pill and Drug Disposal” program, so far collecting and disposing of 800 pounds of pills, keeping them out of the water supply and out of the hands of potential abusers.

**Casey (12), North Carolina:** Casey founded the “Love a Sea Turtle” (L.A.S.T.) program that has raised nearly \$5,000 to protect sea turtles and to educate people about the turtles’ plight.