

# 2011 Barron Prize Winners and Honorees

E = Environmental Project

## WINNERS

### Rujul (16), California (E)

**Rujul** founded Drinking Water for India, a non-profit group that has built 34 wells in rural India, bringing clean water to over 55,000 villagers. Since 2007, he has inspired and mobilized over 450 students in 24 U.S. schools to raise the \$1,000 needed to fund each tube well. Rujul began his work as a 12-year-old, following a trip to India with his family. He was shocked to see villagers in his father's birthplace of Paras walking several kilometers each way to fetch water, which was far from clean.

Returning home, he told a classmate what he'd seen, and the two resolved to raise the \$1,000 needed for a well. They worked for a year to raise the money, holding bake sales, going door-to-door, and organizing events such as a walk-a-thon and car wash. With the needed \$1,000 in hand, Rujul returned to Paras and worked with local villagers to build a well. Since then, he has partnered with Ashoka's Youth Venture and its community of young activists as a way to gain support for his work. Rujul continues his travels to India to oversee the construction of each well, and ensures that each one bears the name of the school that funded it. He then shares photos of the wells with the sponsoring schools back in the U.S. He is also teaching villagers to harvest excess rainwater, and is building rainwater catchments near many of his wells. **"I've come to appreciate the significance of perseverance and tenacity," says Rujul. "Set a goal, and charge at it full-speed."**

### Blakely (17), California

**Blakely** started Cupcakes for Cancer, an organization that bakes and sells \$1.00 cupcakes to raise money to help kids with cancer. So far, she has raised \$80,000 to fund pediatric cancer research, offset expenses for families whose kids are fighting cancer, and grant seven sick children wishes through the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

Blakely was inspired following her diagnosis at age seven with a rare auto-immune disease, which required three years of chemotherapy. Considered terminally ill twice, she beat all the odds and wanted to help other kids with cancer do the same. As an eighth-grader, she learned of a student fighting leukemia and decided to bake cupcakes—something she'd always loved doing—and sell them to raise money for this family. Six weeks later, she threw a huge party for him and presented his family with a \$5,000 check. From there, she purchased a tent, designed aprons, gained her non-profit status, ramped up her baking, and soon found herself raising and donating tens of thousands of dollars.

She has expanded nationally with her "Frosting Hope Across America" campaign, sending cupcake starter kits with her aprons and instructions to volunteer "Cupcake Angels" in twelve states so far. Her annual Cupcake Camp, modeled after wine-tasting events but with cupcake vendors instead, attracts over 1,000 people and yields \$10,000 for pediatric cancer research in a

## **Blakely (17), California, Continued**

single afternoon. Blakely's goal before she graduates high school next year is to reach the \$100,000 mark for her donations and to have "Cupcake Angels" working in all fifty states. **"Treatment and medicine save us from horrible disease," says Blakely, "but hope is what gets us through. I love that what I'm doing gives people hope."**

### **Additional Media Coverage**

Santa Ynez Valley News – 06/12/2012

## **Olivia (11), New York (E)**

**Olivia** has created and donated 500 original drawings of birds and thousands of limited edition prints, raising more than \$200,000 for the Audubon Society and other groups working on the BP oil spill recovery efforts. Olivia, an avid birder and talented artist, was heartbroken when she learned of the April 2010 BP oil spill, having spent summers exploring the Gulf Coast at her grandparents' home. She immediately sat down and wrote a letter to the Audubon Society, asking if she could create bird drawings to give to people who donated to Audubon's wildlife recovery efforts. She signed her note, "11-years-old and willing to help." Audubon embraced her idea, and word of her beautiful drawings spread quickly, thanks in part to her Facebook page, where she has 28,000 fans.

Olivia has lobbied on Capitol Hill to support alternative energy legislation and to express concerns over bird habitat. She recently published a book, *Olivia's Birds: Saving the Gulf*, a collection of bird watercolors and tips on how to live a green and animal-friendly life. Part of the proceeds from the book will benefit the Audubon Society. **"I've learned that everyone can use their talents to make a difference in the world, whether it's with cancer or caterpillars," says Olivia. "I'm here to prove it!"**

### **Additional Media Coverage**

NY Metro Parents – 10/12/2011

## **Jonny (15), Illinois (E)**

**Jonny** invented GreenShields, a polycarbonate shield that attaches to the front of school buses, making them more aerodynamic and nearly 30% more fuel efficient. Jonny conceived of his idea three years ago, walking home from school. Irritated at gas-guzzling buses chugging by, he wondered, "Is there a cost-effective way to make these older, poorly-designed buses more fuel efficient?" An avid scientist and tinkerer, Jonny set to work designing and building a wind tunnel in his garage, and tested his wind shield idea on toy school buses.

By the time he was in ninth grade, he had assembled a team of older students as advisors and was using a force probe interfaced with a computer to collect preliminary data on his model GreenShield. A \$25,000 Pepsi Refresh award allowed him to conduct further research, run computer simulations, and create a prototype plexiglass shield. Jonny has worked with students and professors at Northwestern University and MIT to fine-tune his project, and to build an actual GreenShield. On its first test run, attached to a loaner school bus, the shield reduced gas

### **Jonny (15), Illinois (E), Continued**

consumption by 28%. Jonny continues to hone his prototype, and has enlisted the help of the Illinois Department of Transportation to overcome complex transportation regulations related to attachments added to school buses. **“Working on GreenShields is the most challenging and rewarding experience I’ve ever had,” says Jonny. “I now know that this is what I want to do for the rest of my life—use science to help the world.”**

### **Christina (18), Maryland**

**Christina** led a team of Girl Scouts in designing, fundraising for, and building the \$275,000 Butterfly Boutique at the Chrysalis House, a long-term residential treatment facility that provides drug and alcohol rehabilitation to low-income women. Christina’s Butterfly Boutique features a resale store on the first level and a job skills training center on the second. Income from the boutique supports residents and their recovery program.

Christina’s passion for helping the Chrysalis House began over six years ago, when she and her Girl Scout troop began hosting holiday parties for the residents and their young children. When Christina and her team approached administrators about helping in a more permanent way, they learned the facility needed an 8’ x 10’ storage shed. The girls enlisted the help of an architect, and soon, their “shed” had grown into a 1,700 square foot building. Hoping to complete the project for their Girl Scout Gold Award, they took their plans in front of the Gold Award committee but were told their project was too big and complex, and their proposal was denied. The girls regrouped, revised their plans a bit, and got to work. Six years later, their completed Chrysalis House project became the largest one to achieve the Gold Award in Girl Scout history. During those six years, the girls met tirelessly with contractors and suppliers to enlist their help. In the end, dozens of individuals and businesses, including three general contractors and thirteen Home Depot store managers, donated time or materials to their cause. Once the building was complete, Christina worked for two months to paint an inspirational mural on one wall of the Butterfly Boutique. It depicts the stages of a butterfly—a journey similar to the one made by women recovering from addiction. **“I was just 12-years-old when I started this project,” says Christina. “I’ve learned that anything is possible—even when you’re very young—if you just believe in yourself and in what you’re doing.”**

### **Additional Media Coverage**

Baltimore Sun – 10/27/2011

### **Will (8), Texas**

**Will** created FROGS, Friends Reaching Our Goals, a group of eleven 8-year-old boys who are raising awareness and money for the hungry in their community. He began his work after passing a homeless man on the corner each time his family drove home from baseball games. Will decided to raise money to buy food for the man, but then realized he could do something to help more than just one person. He put his ideas onto paper and, toting three pages of notes, asked his dad to accompany him to the Tarrant Area Food Bank.

There, he explained to administrators that he and his friends would hold garage sales and lemonade stands over the summer to raise money to purchase food for the hungry, with a goal of 1,000 cans. He also outlined his plans for “Hits Against Hunger” and “Kicks Against Hunger,” in which elementary students would find sponsors to pledge money for each run or goal they scored during baseball and soccer games. With the food bank’s full support and blessing, Will then prepared a flip chart and handouts, and the following week, gathered ten friends around a conference table and called his first meeting to order. In the year since then, FROGS has raised over \$12,000 for the food bank, collected over 2,000 cans of food, and begun several community partnerships to help support its cause. **“I’ve learned you can’t just be a watcher,” says Will. “You have to be a do-er!”**

### **Additional Media Coverage**

Kiwi Magazine – Feb/Mar 2012

### **Manasvi (18), North Carolina**

**Manasvi** founded the LIVEbeyond Foundation to educate and recruit bone marrow and cord blood donors. So far, she has registered more than 500 people—all potential life savers. Manasvi works tirelessly for her cause because she knows first-hand the fear and anxiety of waiting for a bone marrow match. Diagnosed with cancer of the lymphatic system at age 12, Manasvi underwent intense treatment and yet the cancer returned—widespread and aggressive—a few weeks later. Only a bone marrow transplant could save her life, and yet no match could be found. After months of searching and when she could no longer survive without treatment, Manasvi resorted to a far riskier transplant of her own stem cells. Complications arose and she battled for nearly two years, undergoing additional chemotherapy and radiation. Against all odds, Manasvi regained her health and soon after, started her foundation. She also “called in,” belatedly, her wish from the Make-A-Wish Foundation, and asked for something way out of the ordinary—the production of a documentary film to help spread awareness of the need for bone marrow donors.

Manasvi wrote and produced the video, reliving and relaying her two-year battle with cancer and her dire need for a bone marrow match. The inspiring documentary has helped her to increase her recruitment rate for donors from 10% to 80%. Manasvi is now working to grow her group nationally, and has recruited over 140 volunteers in a number of cities to help her conduct donor registration drives. **“I decided I was going to be the voice of the patients waiting for a bone marrow match,” says Manasvi. “I decided to make a difference.”**

### **Christina and Eric (13 and 11), Colorado**

**Christina and Eric** created the “Radon Awareness Project (RAP) — Detect to Protect” to educate the public about the dangers of radon and the importance of testing for it. They want people to know that radon is the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers, accounting for an estimated 21,000 deaths each year, and that Colorado has unusually high levels of the gas. The siblings launched their project last year by convening a meeting with three Colorado agencies that had never sat down in the same room together—the Colorado Dept. of Public Health and Environment, the EPA, and the American Lung Association. With input and support from these key players, the siblings set to work preparing presentations for community groups

## **Christina and Eric (13 and 11), Colorado, Continued**

and government officials. They learned how to create a cloud chamber, so as to demonstrate how alpha particles get into your lungs and cause cancer, and have used their cloud chamber in meetings at the EPA and HUD—both groups that work with homeowners in weatherizing their homes, which often elevates levels of indoor radon. They have met with City Councils in their county, demanding that they publicly address radon education and testing, and are working to get their county and others in Colorado to adopt the Radon Resistant New Construction portion of the International Residential Building Code. The children have drafted a resolution for consideration by state legislators that acknowledges the severity of the radon problem in Colorado and its harmful effects on our lungs. **“We’ve learned that kids, no matter how young, can make a positive impact on health and the environment,”** says Christina. **“And we’ve come to realize that every person is part of humanity, and every person deserves clean air,”** adds Eric.

### **Additional Media Coverage**

Kiwi Magazine – Feb/Mar 2012

Time for Kids – 04/27/2012

## **Jeffrey (17), Kansas**

**Jeff’s** original artwork has generated over \$355,000 for dozens of charities around the world, including the Children’s Tumor Foundation, Elton John AIDS Foundation, and the Make-A-Wish Foundation. Jeff is visually impaired due to an optic nerve tumor caused by a genetic condition called neurofibromatosis. During chemotherapy and radiation five years ago, Jeff began painting watercolor note cards as a pastime and soon realized he could sell them as a way to fundraise for charities that have touched his life. He set up “Jeff’s Bistro” in his driveway each Saturday morning during the summer, selling his note cards and Mom’s baked treats, and raised over \$13,000 for neurofibromatosis research.

Within a year, he was creating original works on canvas, and since then, has donated nearly 100 paintings to charitable fundraisers. At his “Generous HeART” show in 2009, Jeff sold 118 paintings in four hours to benefit an orphanage in South Africa and the Kansas City Children’s Mercy Hospital. Recently, Whole Foods markets in the Rocky Mountain states began selling reusable bags featuring Jeff’s artwork. So far, the bags have generated over \$30,000 for Make-A-Wish Foundation chapters in the mountain states. **“I tell people, young and old, to ‘just go do it!’,”** says Jeff. **“Don’t let hardships, adversities, or handicaps keep you from reaching your goals and dreams.”**

## **Madison and Rhiannon (16 and 15), Michigan**

**Madison and Rhiannon** are working to save the endangered orangutan, whose habitat is being destroyed by the production of palm oil, and have focused largely on lobbying Girl Scouts to remove palm oil from Girl Scout cookies. The girls began their crusade as 11-year-olds, when they created Project ORANGS (Orangutans Really Appreciate and Need Girl Scouts) as a way to earn their Girl Scout Bronze Award. Inspired by their hero, Jane Goodall, and working with her

## **Madison and Rhiannon (16 and 15), Michigan, Continued**

Roots and Shoots group for young conservationists, the girls began researching orangutans and fundraising to save them. They were saddened to learn that palm oil plantations are destroying the animals' habitat—and then disheartened to find palm oil an ingredient in nearly all Girl Scout (GSUSA) cookies.

The girls began collecting signatures on petitions, asking GSUSA to remove the palm oil, and rallied groups such as the Union for Concerned Scientists and Center for Biological Diversity to write letters to GSUSA. With the help of the Rainforest Action Network, the girls launched an Internet awareness campaign that has generated over 70,000 emails sent to the head of Girl Scouts. Rhiannon and Madison have persevered in the face of negative feedback and less-than-kind editorials, and their work has paid off. They have succeeded in convincing one of the Girl Scouts' two cookie bakers to purchase GreenPalm certificates to offset their palm oil usage and to support growers' transition to sustainability. Rhiannon and Madison were also recently granted a meeting with Girl Scout executives, who told the young activists GSUSA is committed to working with them to find a solution to the palm oil problem. **“What matters most is that you find your passion,” explain the girls. “It’s passion that inspires hope, courage, and perseverance.”**

### **Additional Media Coverage**

Ann Arbor Journal – 10/18/2011

The Detroit News – 10/24/2011

Livingston Parent – 10/27/2011

Michigan K.I.D.S. – 11/20/2011

## **Kendall (18), Illinois**

**Kendall** founded Kids Caring 4 Kids (KC4K), a non-profit that has inspired nearly 7,000 U.S. kids to raise nearly \$900,000 for children in sub-Saharan Africa. The money funds schools, health clinics, feeding programs, clean water wells, and even bikes. Kendall began her project at age 11, when she learned of the number of orphans in Africa, many of them living with AIDS. The next day, she withdrew money from her savings account and sent it to World Vision to support a young African girl.

Six months later, Kendall found herself undergoing the first of two liver transplants to treat the rare liver disease she was born with. She asked family and friends for donations to help African children in lieu of flowers or gifts for herself, and KC4K was born. She began talking to school groups and service organizations about orphans in Africa, and was overwhelmed by their desire to help. In response, she created “I Care 2 Kits,” which contains a video, t-shirt, poster, and instruction manual on how kids can hold fundraisers to support KC4K programs. Last summer,

## **Kendall (18), Illinois, Continued**

Kendall finally got the okay from her doctors that she was healthy enough to travel to Africa to see the programs she is funding and the children she is helping. She is currently working to raise \$150,000 to support 200 orphaned and vulnerable children at the Lifesong School in Zambia. **“It doesn’t take a lot to change someone’s life,” says Kendall. “Everyone—no matter age, ability, or financial status—can make a difference.”**

### **Additional Media Coverage**

Chicago Parent – 12/2011

## **HONOREES**

***Freya (16), Alaska:*** Freya organized “Energizing the Alaska Legislature” to draft an amendment to Senate Bill 220 to exempt residential renewable energy systems from real property tax assessment. The law provides incentives for homeowners to install energy-efficient improvements such as solar panels.

***Aylah (17), Florida:*** Aylah founded “Charitable Arts,” a non-profit that pairs high school volunteers with disadvantaged children on “art days” to create paintings. Paintings are then sold at fundraising auctions, proceeds going back to the organizations (such as orphanages) that support these children.

***Risha (14), California:*** Risha founded the non-profit “Kids Who Care Foundation” (KWCF) with the goal of cheering up critically ill children around the world and to help healthy children become more compassionate toward kids with chronic medical conditions. KWCF has over 1,800 volunteers and has served over 1,500 children in hospitals.

***John (13), Rhode Island:*** John founded “Project TGIF” (Turning Grease Into Fuel). Students collect waste cooking oil from restaurants, have it converted into clean-burning biodiesel, and then use the fuel to heat the homes of families in need.

***Priya (17), Virginia:*** Priya founded the non-profit “Project Touch” to help financially needy autistic children around the world. She has raised \$60,000 and provided iPod Touch devices to more than 50 autistic children.

***Sean (18), Florida:*** Sean developed the “Stow It, Don’t Throw It” project. Inspired by his internship at Mote Marine Laboratory, Sean repurposes empty tennis ball containers to recycle monofilament fishing line in an effort to reduce the risk to marine wildlife.

***Athman (14), California:*** Athman founded “Bags Gag,” a non-profit that works to raise awareness of the harmful effects of plastic bags (especially on marine wildlife) and to promote the use of reusable bags.

## **2011 HONOREES, Continued**

***Krithika (17), New Jersey:*** Krithika created the “Youth Literacy Fund,” a non-profit that conducts book drives for schools in the U.S. and overseas, and that pairs U.S. high school tutors with elementary students in high-risk communities.

***Joshua (10), Florida:*** Joshua founded “Joshua’s Heart Foundation,” a non-profit which provides food to low-income families in South Florida, as well as to the sick and elderly.

***Alexandra (18), Indiana:*** Alexandra developed the “Peace Bees Curriculum” to educate people about the honey bee’s gentle nature, the decline in their population, and their importance to our food supply.

***Alec (15), New York:*** Alec founded the non-profit “Giving from the Group Up” which has collected and shipped hundreds of boxes of dental supplies to underdeveloped countries. He has also created animated healthcare videos and original science curricula for elementary school children in Africa.

***Rachel (11), Florida:*** Working with the “Food for the Poor” organization, Rachel has raised over \$167,000 to build 27 homes for the destitute in Leogane, Haiti.

***Riana (18), Pennsylvania:*** Riana co-founded project “Independent Thought & Social Action in India,” a program that works with students on writing, critical thinking, and discussion as a way to help them convert their ideas for social change into social activism in their communities.

***Lucas (18), Florida:*** Lucas developed “Fishing for Families in Need,” a free weekly program that teaches economically disadvantaged elementary-age children how to fish, cast rods, tie knots, and become ethical, environmentally-responsible anglers.