

# 2012 Barron Prize Winners and Honorees

E = Environmental Project

## WINNERS

### Avalon (11), Florida (E)

**Avalon** founded Conserve It Forward as a way to inspire other kids to take care of the natural world. Passionate about frogs and protecting them, she began her work when she was just 9 years old. Since then, Avalon has reached thousands of children and adults at schools, parks, and zoos with her frog awareness and conservation booths and presentations. She organizes the annual “Save the Frogs Day” event in the Tampa Bay area, and identifies and records frog calls to share with scientists. She has even created a video about the effectiveness of digital frog dissection as an alternative to dissecting the real animals.

Avalon has also started a small business in order to raise money for conservation causes. She creates environmental designs and then makes and sells bottle cap magnets and jewelry from them. So far, sales have yielded \$1,500, which she has donated to Save the Frogs, Camp Bayou Outdoor Learning Center, and Friendly Water for the World, which builds biosand water filters for people in developing countries. **“Find a project you love, act on it, and share it with others,” says Avalon. “If we all do a little bit, then together, we can do a big bit to make the world a better place.”**

#### Additional Media Coverage

Voice of America – 10/19/2012

The Laker/Lutz News – 11/21/2012

Time for Kids – 4/12/2013

### Victor (18), New York

**Victor** created EcoRyders, a youth program that promotes environmental awareness and activism through workshops, discussions, and skateboard design. Victor’s project is based in his community of Hunts Point, an area of the South Bronx where 40% of New York City’s garbage is processed. Over 15,000 trucks hauling trash travel into the area each day, spewing fumes and causing the highest rate of asthma anywhere in the U.S. Victor considered this situation “normal” until four years ago, when he began attending art classes at The Point, a youth and community development center. There, he learned about environmental justice and activism, and realized he had the power to change things in his community.

He and two friends began brainstorming ways to share this message with their peers and in the summer of 2009, launched Eco Ryders, a program that continues today. Participants design and build skateboards – an eco-friendly way to get around – while becoming aware of the problems in their community and the ways in which they can work to solve them. Victor is currently leading the effort to create New York City’s first eco-friendly skateboard park, to be located in Hunt’s Point. **“I don’t have to move out of my neighborhood to live in a better neighborhood,” says Victor, “I can make my neighborhood better.”**

## **Jackson (14), Hawaii**

**Jackson** founded Dream of a Better World, a non-profit group that has raised over \$105,000 to help children in need around the world, including 57 children living with HIV at an orphanage in Uganda. The funds have allowed the orphanage to realize its longstanding dream of building a permanent home for the children. The orphanage has completed the construction of a large dormitory built on four acres of fertile land that can support feeding the kids for six months. The funds have also purchased a van that is used to transport the children to and from school and doctors' appointments. Jackson was thrilled to spend a month in Uganda last year, working with and living among the children he is helping.

He was inspired to start his fundraising several years ago following his mother's diagnosis with breast cancer. Touched by all the neighbors and even strangers who brought meals during their mom's recovery, Jackson and his sisters asked for the meals' recipes and created a cookbook from them. They titled the book "Special Delivery" and have sold thousands of copies in order to fund their projects. The siblings have also raised money by selling vegetables from their garden, holding garage sales, and selling handmade items from Africa. **"I've learned not to take things for granted, like having running water and shoes," says Jackson. "It's been humbling to be around the kids in Africa who have so little, but have so much."**

### **Additional Media Coverage**

MidWeek – 10/10/2012

## **Brooklyn (9), Georgia (E)**

**Brooklyn** acts as "Earth Saver Girl" in teaching thousands of elementary students about ways they can help save the planet. At age 7, she wrote a book called Adventures of the Earth Saver Girl – Don't Be a Litterbug! as a way to convince her school's environmental club that littering was a problem worth tackling. She has since developed a skit to go with her book, complete with a splashy and wildly popular Earth Saver Girl costume. She has visited over 100 schools to teach students about not littering and what it means to "go green."

Brooklyn also blogs about ways to protect the Earth and organizes an Earth Day Festival each year. Her website contains information, games, and activities, and invites visitors to upload videos of themselves pledging not to be a litterbug. She recently revamped her website and created the Earth Saver Girl organization to make it easier for her to respond to the constant stream of emails she receives from other kids, and to support them in figuring out what they can do to protect the planet. **"My goal is to tell millions of kids about the importance of protecting the Earth," says Brooklyn. "And I won't stop at millions. I will never stop. I will be on a mission for the rest of my life."**

### **Additional Media Coverage**

Time for Kids – 4/12/2013

## **Ben (18), New York (E)**

**Ben** founded the Lit! Project to provide solar lanterns to children living without electricity in the developing world. He has distributed lanterns to improve the lives of 11,300 people, and is working to increase that number to 100,000 in the coming year. Ben's lanterns replace kerosene lamps, which cause innumerable burns as well as indoor air pollution – the estimated equivalent of inhaling two packs of cigarettes each day. His solar lanterns are a healthy alternative, allowing families to read, do homework, and work on trades such as sewing after dark. The lanterns also combat global warming, since fuel-based lighting is a major contributor of carbon dioxide.

Ben has created a unique revolving fund financial model to ensure that his work is sustainable. Families try out the free lanterns for two weeks, enough time to realize their benefits, including the savings in not having to purchase kerosene. They then make modest payments to “buy back” the lanterns at a fair price. These payments are used to purchase lanterns for the following year's students. Ben founded his project at age 15, after learning about his neighbor's literacy project in Nairobi's Kibera slum and envisioning a way for kids there to read safely at night. He spent last summer with children in Kibera, and got to see firsthand the difference his work is making. His solar lanterns can now be found in Kenya, Fiji, the Philippines, and South Africa, with many more countries in the works. **“I've learned that to have a lasting impact, it's important to work with both head and heart,” says Ben. “I've also learned the power of one person to make a difference, and the delight in joining with others to change lives.”**

### **Additional Media Coverage**

NY Metro Parents – 10/2012

## **Wyatt (9), California (E)**

**Wyatt** has combined his passion for creating art with his love of the ocean to raise more than \$5,000 for ocean conservation efforts. Wyatt spent eight months creating 70 clay sculptures of sea creatures, and then used them to make a six-minute claymation film called “Save the Sea from the Trash Monster.” The film tells the story of sea creatures dying from all of the plastic in our oceans, and ends with a human holding the secret to overcoming the Trash Monster.

Wyatt took pictures of his clay figures and used the photos and his film script to make a beautiful book by the same name. He then organized an art gallery event, attended by 350 people, where he sold all of his sculptures and raised nearly \$3,000 for Oceana, an ocean conservation group. He has since created a website, where people can view his film and purchase his artwork and book. His website also allows visitors to sign a pledge, where they promise to try seven things to save our oceans, such as using only reusable shopping bags and water bottles. Once so shy that he opted out of speaking during classroom presentations, Wyatt has made great strides with his fear of public speaking and has given presentations to audiences of more than 300 people. **“I've learned that we can't just sit back and wait for the ocean to be destroyed,” says Wyatt. “We should stand up and help as many things as we can.”**

### **Additional Media Coverage**

L. A. Parent – 11/14/2012

## **Max (16), Massachusetts**

**Max** founded Puzzles to Remember, a non-profit organization that has distributed over 14,600 puzzles to facilities that care for Alzheimer's and dementia patients. His puzzles have reached patients at 1,470 care-giving facilities in all 50 states, as well as in several other countries. Max began his work at age 11, inspired by his great-grandmother, who lived with Alzheimer's for many years. He observed that Alzheimer's patients seemed calmer and more themselves while working jigsaw puzzles. He also noticed that the most effective puzzles seemed to be brightly colored, with fewer, larger pieces and peaceful images, and that most puzzles of this sort were made for kids, not adults.

Backed by research that supported what he'd seen, Max approached leading puzzle manufacturer Springbok, and worked with them to develop a line of puzzles made specifically for Alzheimer's patients. Springbok introduced their "Puzzles to Remember" line in 2010, and several large corporations, including American Express, jumped on board to help with the cost of shipping the puzzles to Alzheimer's care facilities. Max is now working with groups in Portugal and Australia to set up similar programs. He is also volunteering year-round at Boston University Medical Center, researching biomarkers for Alzheimer's. He plans to spend his life continuing to help Alzheimer's patients and their caregivers. **"I believe that passionate, hard work can make a difference in the world," says Max. "Anyone who has the ability to help another person has the responsibility to do so."**

## **Devin (14), New Hampshire (E)**

**Devin** began a Take Back the Tap campaign, convincing his community to buy less bottled water and to use tap water in reusable bottles instead. He was inspired by the film Tapped, where he learned of the Pacific Garbage Patch, an area of floating plastic trash twice the size of Texas that accounts for the death of 100 million marine animals each year. When he learned that 90% of plastic water bottles are not recycled, he knew he had to act. He arranged for five community screenings of Tapped and was thrilled when, following one of them, the school superintendent pledged to replace all of the district's water fountains with hydration stations. The stations, now in place, allow students and teachers to easily fill reusable water bottles. They also provide a running tally of how many thousands of plastic bottles are being kept out of landfills. Devin has worked with his town's councilors and school board members to eliminate bottled water from all athletic events. His passion for protecting the planet began five years ago, when he discovered and started devouring books by John Muir and Rachel Carson. Inspired by their words and example, he convinced his family to embark on a six-month-long cross-country trip, visiting 42 states and dozens of national parks. **"The world won't magically fix itself," says Devin. "We need to roll up our sleeves and do it ourselves, and that we includes me."**

### **Additional Media Coverage**

Food & Water Watch – 10/12/2012

## **Clay (18), Ohio (E)**

**Clay** founded WET, the Wetlands Education Team, which has educated over 10,000 students about the importance of wetlands and how they can protect them. Clay began his work at age nine, after learning that 90% of his state's wetlands have been destroyed. Since then, he has built three outdoor classrooms at area schools, complete with nature trails, bridges, and rain gardens. He has created "Creature Cards" featuring animals native to Ohio, which have been distributed statewide, and has put together a traveling trunk of wetlands activities used by the Ohio National History Museum.

He has received over \$200,000 in grants, bonds, and donated materials for his work, including \$5,000 for entering and winning the Student Conservation Association's "Greenest High School in America" contest. Clay initiated an "idle free" program in his school district, for which he received \$64,000 in grants, and his organization started a recycling program that has recycled nearly 300 tons of paper. He has also built four osprey nesting platforms and planted 1,000 trees in his county's parks.

Most recently, Clay celebrated the passage of a new state law that he proposed three years ago and for which he has been testifying ever since. The law names a wetlands dweller, the Spotted Salamander, as the state amphibian and ensures that all elementary students in Ohio will learn about the salamander and its wetland home. **"I've learned that everyone I meet wants to preserve the environment in some way," says Clay. "They just need to know how to do it."**

## **Sophia (17), California (E)**

**Sophia** created the Seedling Project, a farm-to-school initiative at her school that is built around an edible garden. The garden provides produce for her school cafeteria and teaches students and community members in Los Angeles about food systems, agriculture, and sustainability. She and her Action Team of twelve students have also created an eco-literacy program that teaches K-12 students across Los Angeles how to garden, compost, and prepare healthy meals. Sophia was inspired to start her project three years ago, when her school launched a "go green" initiative that included plans for a new cafeteria. She drew up a garden proposal and after nine months of planning, speaking, and persuading school administrators, her project was approved. Just a few months later, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) learned of her plans and offered Sophia a summer internship and national platform. With their support, she created an online forum where people across the country can share school-based gardening and nutrition projects. Sophia and her team plant vegetables four times each year, and continually harvest produce for the school's cafeteria. She has organized a cooking class for students as well as a speaker's series featuring women passionate about nutrition and sustainability. She has also developed a composting program, creating compost from her school's food waste and selling what she can't use to other gardeners. Proceeds benefit the Los Angeles Food Bank. **"Witnessing my seed of an idea grow into a living, vibrant reality has given me independence and confidence," says Sophia.**

### **Additional Media Coverage**

L. A. Parent – 11/14/2012

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

**Zach** co-founded SNAP, Special Needs Athletic and Awareness Programs, a non-profit organization designed to improve the athletic and social abilities of special needs children through sports clinics and educational programs, while also raising awareness in the community. SNAP provides free or low-cost programs five days a week for over 150 special needs families, giving children the chance to play basketball, soccer, and baseball, as well as participate in swimming, music and art. Over the past six years, Zach has raised more than \$70,000 for the program and has inspired over 450 middle- and high-school students to volunteer for it.

Zach recently began offering sensitivity training to students and teachers across New Jersey, with workshops designed to promote acceptance of special needs kids and to prevent bullying. By integrating props such as blindfolds, earplugs, and balance balls, Zach helps people experience what it's like to have a disability. He has conducted 108 workshops, reaching nearly three thousand students and helping them to see the "ability" in each person. He has also trained local police, fire, and emergency responders on how to handle situations involving individuals with special needs. **"I've learned to see beyond any disability," says Zach. "I've learned to try a little harder, give a little more, open my heart, and to be more patient and accepting."**

### **Additional Media Coverage**

Woman's World – 5/6/2013

## **HONOREES**

**Mary-Brent (16), Louisiana:** Mary-Brent co-founded Kids Wanna Help, a non-profit group that has helped hundreds of kids raise over \$100,000 to donate to charities of their choice. Kids learn business basics from local leaders, and then raise money by selling lemonade and organizing an annual fashion show.

**Victoria (17), New Jersey:** Victoria founded Students Saving Energy, a non-profit group that helps students make their schools more energy efficient. She expanded a Turn Off the Lights initiative at her high school into a national event involving 18 schools in four states.

**Zachary (18), California:** Zachary started Fruit for All, a non-profit group that harvests fruit from homeowners' trees and donates it to local food banks and rescue missions. Since creating the group in 2010, he and his volunteers have picked over 75,000 pounds of fruit to help nearly 7,000 families in need.

**Neha (15), Pennsylvania:** Neha founded the non-profit organization Empower Orphans to help orphaned children in India. She has provided annual scholarships for 50 kids and has created five libraries, three computer labs, and a sewing center for older girls.

**Olivia (9) and Carter (11), Georgia:** Olivia and Carter founded One More Generation, a non-profit group that works to save endangered species for at least one more generation—and beyond. The siblings focus on addressing the problem of plastic pollution, and have made presentations to thousands of students.

**Michelle (17), California:** Michelle created the Chance to Dance program to provide dance opportunities to low-income children. She has secured \$55,000 in funding to support her group, which is now a sanctioned program of the national Boys and Girls Club organizations.

**James (15), Ontario:** James works tirelessly to teach children and adults about apes and the need to protect them. His 1,000 Classrooms initiative has involved thousands of school kids across Canada in raising over \$6,000 to help children, women, and apes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

**Gracie (14), Kansas:** Gracie has raised \$22,000 to help children in Africa and Haiti by recording and selling CDs of her original music. The money has funded two fish ponds in Africa, providing a sustainable food and revenue source, and has built a home for twelve orphaned boys in Haiti.

**Will (17), Utah:** Will created Camp Einstein, a week-long summer science and social studies enrichment camp for children living on the Navajo reservation in Southern Utah. He offers the camp free of charge to 35 students in a remote town with limited access to basic services, and with no summer programs for children.

**Brook (15), New York:** Brook created a documentary film titled "The Second Day" to relay the experiences of students like himself who were in school near Ground Zero on September 11, 2001, his second day of kindergarten. The 37-minute film has been seen in 21 countries and has been incorporated into school curriculum about 9/11.

**Daniella (14), Illinois:** Daniella founded G.I.V.E.—Go, Innovate, Volunteer, Educate—to connect kids at schools in the U.S. with school children elsewhere in the world. She fosters friendships, global connections, and understanding through letter-writing, Skyping, and online tutoring.

**Cameron (12), North Carolina:** Cameron created the Children's Book Legacy, which collects new and gently-read books for children in need. In the past four years, he has donated over 5,000 books to twelve area non-profits, which have distributed the books to the families they serve.

**Zoe (17), Texas:** Zoe started her own business, Faux Paws, at age 11, creating and selling faux fur flip-flops as a way to raise money for animal advocacy groups. So far, she has donated \$17,000 to a cat sanctuary and to groups that cover the costs of pet care for families in need.

**Luke (17), Connecticut:** Luke has raised \$323,000 over the past 12 years for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. He recently raised \$20,000 in a matter of months by creating 14,000 bracelets from rubber bands and selling them for \$1. Luke has written about his life with Cystic Fibrosis and shares his story at school and community events.