

The Journal Times

Prairie student named national winner of Gloria Barron Prize



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BOULDER, Colo. - David Sanchez of Racine has been named one of 10 national winners of the Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes. The Barron Prize honors outstanding young leaders who have made a significant positive difference to people and our planet. Barron Prize winners each receive \$2,500 to be applied to their higher education or to their service project.

Sanchez 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, Sanchez 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, Sanchez applied for a grant to study the issue of homelessness, and was disheartened to learn of the high number of homeless

children in the 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, Sanchez 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 the local library where teens could get help with job applications. Sanchez 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, Sanchez 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 Sanchez 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."

The Barron Prize was founded in 2001 by author T.A. Barron and was named for his mother, Gloria. Each year, the Barron Prize selects 10 winners nationwide. Half of the winners have focused on helping their communities and fellow human beings; half have focused on protecting the health and sustainability of the environment.

"Nothing is more inspiring than stories about heroic people who have truly made a difference to the world," says Barron. "And we need our heroes today more than ever. Not celebrities, but heroes - people whose character can inspire us all. That is the purpose of the Gloria Barron Prize: to share positive examples of heroism with as many young people as possible."

For more information, visit the website

<http://www.barronprize.org>