



Conley student wins national award

Monday, September 29, 2014
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D.H. Conley High School student Casey Sokolovic has been named a national winner of the 2014 Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes.

Casey, 16, of Winterville, was a finalist for the award in 2008. She has worked for nine years as the founder of L.A.S.T. (Love A Sea Turtle), raising more than \$370,000 for sea turtle protection and educating people about the need to protect the planet. She founded L.A.S.T. following a third-grade field trip to the Karen Beasley Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Center on the North Carolina coast. She began baking and selling turtle-shaped sugar cookies to fundraise for the sea turtle center and soon decided to sell coffee, too. She partnered with local company Joe Van Gogh Coffee and helped it develop a Fair Trade Organic "Sea Turtle" blend. Nearly a decade later, Casey has baked and sold 10,000 cookies, and her coffee blend is now sold in more than 120 of The Fresh Market stores across the country, with a portion of profits benefiting the sea turtle center.

Five years ago while volunteering at a local Boys & Girls Club, she learned that many of the children there had never been to the beach, much less snorkeled or kayaked. She founded the Upstream Downstream Connection summer camp to give at-risk students a chance to experience nature and participate in STEM subjects. Her camp traces the path of freshwater sources from her community to the coast through hands-on investigative science. With the help of her "Turtle Team" of high school volunteers, Casey offers free camps for Boys & Girls Club members, with more than 525 youth participating this past summer at A Time for Science Nature and Science Learning Center.

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