



Barron Prize encourages youths who 'make the world better'

In the 15 years since its founding, The Barron Prize has awarded more than \$540,000 to some 364 young leaders who have collectively raised more than \$15 million for their causes.

By David Karas, Correspondent

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Courtesy of Aimee Giese | [View Caption](#)

Maybe it's Katie, the North Carolina native who started a community garden at her elementary school as a means to support her local food bank, forming an organization that has since spread to nearly 30 states.

Perhaps it's Ashley, the Colorado student who, while on a field trip to Africa, saw the plight of young girls there and decided to find a way to help them. She went on to found an organization that has since provided education for more than 40,000 African girls through 13 new schools in East Africa.

It is hard for T. A. Barron – a Colorado native, former Rhodes Scholar, and author of more than 30 highly acclaimed books – to pick the young hero that impresses him the most. In fact, they all inspire the veteran writer, honored for his contributions to literature for children and young adults. “These kids renew our hope,” Mr. Barron says. “I know they renew mine. They really give me hope for the future.”

In 2001, Barron founded The Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes, a program that strives to recognize and encourage the heroic efforts of young people and, as Barron describes it, “to spread the word about their examples as young heroes, so that other young people from all backgrounds will be inspired to do something themselves to make the world better.”

The 2015 winners of the Barron prize were announced today, Sept. 21, (see the list of 2015 winners at <http://barronprize.org/meet-the-winners/2015-winners/>).

In the 15 years since its founding, The Barron Prize has awarded more than \$540,000 to some 364 young leaders. The honorees have come from 46 states, the District of Columbia, and Canada, and have collectively raised more than \$15 million for their causes.

The Barron Prize, named for the quiet hero that Mr. Barron's mother was in his own life, has a deep connection to the bestselling author's own writing.

"Every story I write features a young person who has to overcome huge obstacles in order to not only save themselves, but to help the people they love and the place they love," he explains. "The idea in all my books is that any child, any person, whatever their background and no matter how lost or alone they are, has heroic potential down inside."

That same heroic potential, he says, shines through the stories of the young men and women that the prize honors. "Every single year we have kids that just knock me over with how amazing they are, and the wonderful things they have done to help others, or help the environment, or to help their community," he says.

Each year, The Barron Prize honors 25 leaders between the ages of 8 and 18, with the top 15 winners receiving \$5,000 to support their cause or their higher education.

"These kids are from every conceivable background," Barron says, adding that their stories far outweigh any that he could pen. "These are real stories of real kids, and they are the most powerful stories of all."

The latest batch of honorees will be announced Sept. 21, and will include Mary-Pat. Tired of attending more funerals than school graduations, she flew from Atlanta to Chicago, determined to receive help from Burrell Communications, one of the largest multicultural marketing firms in the world, for her "Think Twice" ad campaign against gun violence.

Barron says he hopes the ever-growing list of prize winners will serve to inspire other young people.

"I hope their examples will empower other kids to do the same thing, in whatever way they choose," he says.

To learn more, visit www.BarronPrize.org.