



Barron Prize Announces 2026 Winners

Boulder, CO, September 15, 2026 – The **Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes**, an award that celebrates inspiring, public-spirited young people, is thrilled to announce its 2026 winners.

Established in 2001 by author T. A. Barron, the Barron Prize annually honors 25 outstanding young leaders ages 8 to 18 who have made a significant positive difference to people and the environment. Fifteen top winners each receive \$10,000 to support their service work or higher education.

Over the past 25 years, the Barron Prize has honored 650 young heroes from across the U.S. and Canada. They have helped the hungry and the homeless, invented life-saving technologies, protected our oceans and endangered species, and addressed climate change, among myriad other initiatives. They have raised more than \$32 million for their causes and have inspired countless people by their example.

The 2026 winners are:

Alexander Du, age 17, of Pennsylvania, who invented IRIS (Intelligent Responsive Imaging System), a \$170 wearable AI navigation assistant for the blind and visually impaired that is built into discreet, lightweight glasses.

Ameya Kharade, age 17, of New Hampshire, who invented HALO-Vox, a brain-reading system that translates brain activity into speech as fast as million-dollar surgical implants -- for \$1,800, and without surgery.

Apollin Lu, age 17, of British Columbia, who founded Food Recovery Alliance, mobilizing more than 140 youth volunteers to harvest nearly 9,000 pounds of locally grown surplus produce and redistribute it to shelters and community organizations.

Caymus Maxson, age 16, of California, who created Trash Turtles to fight plastic pollution, promote sustainable living, and inspire environmental action. Her nonprofit has hosted more than 50 beach cleanups, created the #LeaveWith3 trash pickup initiative, and helped pass legislation to protect beaches.

Emily Herra, age 17, of New York, who co-founded Veggie Nuggets, a climate activism group in Jackson Heights and greater Queens that empowers youth voices, strengthens environmental stewardship, and maintains a previously neglected 3,600-square-foot community garden.

Everett Leigh, age 16, of California, who founded EverEverest, a nonprofit that supports foster children through educational programming, mentorship, and needed supplies. One of the country's top young concert pianists, he has organized more than 50 benefit concerts to raise \$70,000 to support foster youth.

Isaac Nelson, age 13, of Florida, who is restoring the coastal ecosystem surrounding the historic Jupiter Lighthouse in Florida after a retaining wall replaced the native habitat. He is rescuing mangroves, creating vertical oyster gardens beneath docks, and restoring native clams.

Kaitlyn Tran, age 17, of Texas, who founded Rain Barrels for Runoff to create upcycled, hand-painted rain barrels to reduce stormwater runoff. She also developed a GIS mapping method to predict how different urbanization scenarios could contaminate groundwater.

Katelyn Liu, age 17, of California, who founded WOW! That's STEM to provide free hands-on science to underserved students. She and her team of 60 teen volunteers have taught 375 in-person science workshops and assembled over 13,000 STEM kits for students around the world.

Lidia Rak, age 18, of Florida, who is working to ensure that children with cancer are no longer overlooked in research. Her independent environmental epidemiology study and advocacy contributed to Florida legislation mandating a \$30 million, five-year investment in pediatric cancer research.

Lucas Rojas, age 16, of Florida, who created LINKball: Kickball for ALL, an inclusive kickball league that allows the special needs community to experience the joy of playing sports. Each fall and spring, 48 individuals with special needs and approximately 60 teen volunteers play side-by-side as teammates.

Natalie Flaherty, age 12, of Minnesota, who founded I Stand with Anne, a global initiative that aims to transform Holocaust remembrance into daily action. Her work centers around bracelets she created that read "I stand with Anne, put a stop to hate," a token of Anne Frank's courage and compassion.

Nathan Tan, age 17, of Texas, who founded Shared Skies Initiative, a nonprofit addressing environmental injustice in Dallas, where low-income and minority families have been disproportionately burdened with air pollution for decades.

Sophie Kim, age 18, of California, who founded The Clean & Green Initiative, an online community that works to educate individuals on environmental issues and convert climate anxiety into local action. She has also created Bipartisan Bridges to address political polarization and raised \$8,000 for Ukraine relief.

Srihith Chennareddy, age 16, of Washington, who created MConAI, a low-cost, multilingual AI system for early Alzheimer's screening that analyzes speech transcripts to identify subtle cognitive-linguistic biomarkers and classifies individuals as cognitively healthy, mildly impaired, or developing Alzheimer's.

www.barronprize.org