

COMMUNITY BY PJ FEINSTEIN

Local Mom Makes Air Travel Less Stressful for Families

If you've ever wished for an extra set of hands at the airport, you're in luck.

SkySquad (theskysquad.com) is a new concierge service at Dulles Airport and Reagan National Airport designed to help families get from the ticket counter to their gate with less stress.

For \$39 an hour, SkySquad assistants can help with ticketing, preparing for security and pushing luggage, strollers and car seats through the airport. They can also watch your bags as you take the kids to the bathroom or grab something to eat before your flight.

"Airport employees are so busy doing what they have to do, they generally don't have extra time to help people on an individual level," says SkySquad founder, Julie Melnick. "This service allows us to help people one-on-one and just make their airport experience much better."

SkySquad assistants are all off-duty airport employees, so they've already been background checked, fingerprinted and badged by their airport to get through security. They also have childcare experience and are fluent in a variety of languages.

When Melnick first conceived of SkySquad, she thought the service would appeal mostly to single moms traveling with little kids. To her surprise, many of her customers have been families with more than one child who simply need a helping hand.

"This has been a passion of mine for the past 10 years, when I started traveling coast to coast frequently with my baby and toddler," says Melnick, who lives with her family in Bethesda, Maryland. "I am so excited to help the world travel happier — starting with D.C." ■

Applications Open for National Award Honoring Young Heroes

The Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes, which recognizes public-spirited youth in the U.S. and Canada, is now accepting applications for its 2020 awards.

The Barron Prize honors 25 inspiring leaders ages 8 to 18 who are working in creative ways to help their communities or protect the planet. The top 15 winners receive \$10,000 to support their service project or higher education.

"The purpose of the Barron Prize is to showcase young heroes of all descriptions, inspiring other young people to take action," says author T.A. Barron, who founded the award in 2001, naming it after his mother.

Two local teens were among the winners of the 2019 Barron Prize. Addison Barrett of Germantown, Maryland, who was 11 when she won, founded Gorilla Heroes to raise awareness and funds to help save endangered mountain gorillas. Since 2017 she has raised more than \$11,300 through fundraising, including selling homemade cookies and lemonade, designing and selling T-shirts and organizing an annual Gorilla Gala.

After learning about the high cost of relief food while volunteering in Malawi, Garyk Brixi of Potomac, Maryland, spent five years developing a less expensive option to address malnutrition that could be produced using local crops. "My work does not end here," said Brixi when he won at 18 years old. "I'll continue striving to make nutritious food more readily available to starving children around the world."

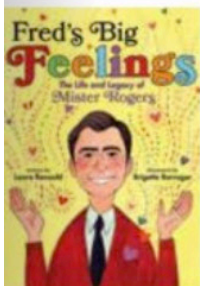
To learn more about the 20th Annual Barron Prize and apply online, visit barronprize.org. ■



Addison Barrett



Garyk Brixi



New Picture Books Tell Inspiring True Stories

Looking to add some nonfiction titles to your child's book collection? These new picture-book biographies take young readers back in time as they celebrate two inspiring, yet very different, role models.

"The Only Woman in the Photo," written by Kathleen Krull and illustrated by Alexandra Bye, follows the life of Frances

Perkins, the first woman to serve in a presidential cabinet and the mastermind behind FDR's New Deal. A shy and quiet girl, Perkins challenged herself

to make her voice heard in order to fight injustice and build programs to protect people across the nation.

"Fred's Big Feelings: The Life and Legacy of Mister Rogers," written by Laura Renauld and illustrated by Brigette Barrager, tells the story of Fred Rogers through the framework of his feelings: scared, lonely, playful, joyful. After testifying on Capitol Hill to save government funding for public television, including "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood," Rogers spent the next 30 years teaching children that it's normal to have feelings — and important to share them. ■

YOUNG HEROES: COURTESY OF THE GLORIA BARRON PRIZE FOR YOUNG HEROES