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Making sense of the world

THE BEST MAGAZINE FOR CURIOUS KIDS

THE WEEK

Junior



GOOD
EYE!

Announcing the winners of our 2026 Nature Photo Contest **p12**

GRAND PRIZE
Ages 11-14
CLARA

In Clara's words:
"In this photo of an anole lizard poking its head through a gap in a leaf, the animal is shown in its natural habitat—our backyard."



This week's big news



A winner who's still a hero



Ryan Hreljac (shown above) was 11 years old in 2002, when he received the Gloria Barron Prize for creating the Ryan's Well Foundation. The nonprofit provides clean water to people in Africa. Today, he is executive director of the foundation, which has helped more than 1.7 million people in 17 countries.

Barron Prize awarded to young heroes

On September 15, the recipients of the 2026 Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes were announced. The award recognizes children and teens in the US and Canada who “have made a significant positive impact on people and the planet,” according to its organizers.

What is the prize?

The prize was established by T.A. Barron, an award-winning author of books for children and young adults. It is named for his mother, Gloria Barron, a teacher who died in 2005. Each year, a committee of judges selects a group of 25 finalists ages 8 to 18, then names 15 of them as winners. Each winner receives \$10,000 they can use to support their work or help pay for college. T.A. Barron said the finalists “remind us of the power we each hold to make a difference—and they offer us great hope.” Since the award was created in 2001, 650 winners from Canada, all 50 US states, and the District of Columbia have received more than \$1.5 million in prize money. They have gone on to raise more than \$31.8 million for their causes.

Who are some of the 2026 winners?

Many of this year’s winners developed new medical technologies. Alexander Du, a 17-year-old

from Pennsylvania, invented IRIS (Intelligent Responsive Imaging System), a low-cost eyeglass system that uses vibrations to help people who are blind and visually impaired navigate around obstacles. Ameya Kharade, age 17, of New Hampshire, created HALO-Vox, which translates brain activity into speech for people who have lost the ability to talk due to medical conditions. Lidia Rak, who is 18 and from Florida, studied the connection between chemicals in drinking water and pediatric brain cancer and helped increase funding for pediatric cancer

research. Srihith Chennareddy, age 16, from Washington, created MConAI, an inexpensive artificial intelligence (AI, when a computer imitates human learning) system that screens people for Alzheimer’s disease in many languages.

Who are some of the other winners?

Other prize recipients focused on the environment, food instability, and inclusiveness of people with disabilities. Caymus Maxson, a 16-year-old from California, created Trash Turtles, a group that fights plastic pollution, hosts beach cleanups, and encourages people to pick up three pieces of trash wherever they go. Isaac Nelson, age 13, of Florida,

is helping to restore the natural coastal ecosystem around the historic Jupiter Lighthouse in his state. Kaitlyn Tran, age 17, from Texas, founded Rain Barrels for Runoff to create upcycled, hand-painted rain barrels that prevented 45,000 gallons of stormwater runoff. Nathan Tan, age 17, also from Texas, founded the Shared Skies Initiative to educate and help low-income and minority families facing the effects of air pollution. Apollin Lu, a 17-year-old from British Columbia, Canada, founded the Food Recovery Alliance to distribute extra produce from local farms to shelters and food pantries. Lucas Rojas, age 16, of Florida, established LINKball: Kickball for ALL, a free kickball league for people with differing abilities.

What will happen next?

Winners received the cash prize, a plaque and certificate, a signed copy of T.A. Barron’s book *The Hero’s Trail*, which profiles young people doing great things, and a copy of *Dream Big*, a documentary film about former Barron Prize winners. “This year’s young heroes are caring for other people and protecting our environment with such courage, compassion, and commitment,” he said. “The purpose of the Barron Prize [is] to shine the spotlight on these amazing young people so that their stories will inspire others.” A full list of current and past honorees, as well as details about their projects, can be found at barronprize.org.

GIFT FROM A TEACHER
Gloria Barron created a nature museum at the Colorado School for the Blind where visitors could touch eagle feathers, polar bear fur, and a hummingbird nest.



This week's big news

Jewish holidays are observed

Jewish people around the world are celebrating the High Holidays, starting with Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, from September 11–13, and ending with Yom Kippur, from September 20–21. The 10-day period is a time for self-reflection, prayer, and atonement (making up for any offense), when people consider their actions for the past year and seek forgiveness for any wrongs.

During Rosh Hashanah, Jews believe that God weighs their behavior and records their deeds in the Book of Life. Jewish people go to synagogue and eat traditional foods like apples dipped in honey (shown below) to symbolize sweetness in the year ahead. On Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement and holiest day of the year, the Book of Life is sealed again. Many Jews do not eat or drink for 25 hours.

This year, there is widespread and rising concern over antisemitism (prejudice against Jewish people) around the world. Government, religious, and community leaders are working together to ensure a safe holiday period.



IT'S AN AMAZING WEEK FOR...

A VERY TALL HORSE

A horse named Hugo stands 6 feet 6 inches tall at his shoulders and has been named the world’s tallest horse—and he’s not even done growing yet. Hugo, who lives in the UK, is “a big softie, like an oversized dog,” his owner said.



DOLLS ON THE RUNWAY

Brooke Sumpter, age 11, is the first girl to design clothing for American Girl Dolls. Sumpter, who is from New Jersey, created four outfits for dolls and a matching dress for girls, which were shown at New York Fashion Week. “You’re never too old or too young to chase your dreams,” she said.

A NEW KIND OF COOKIE

Girl Scout Cookies have a new addition: Patch Pals, the first-ever offering for dogs. The soft and chewy treats taste like blueberry muffins and are shaped like Girl Scout patches. They will be available to order online starting in January 2027 and will “give your four-legged bestie another reason to smile from tip to tail,” the national organization said.



Gloria Steinem in her home, where she hosted “talking circles” until shortly before her death

HIGH HONOR
In 1993, Gloria Steinem was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls, New York.

Equality advocate is remembered

Trailblazing journalist and activist Gloria Steinem, a leading figure of the modern women’s movement, died on September 2 at age 92. She advocated for equal rights for women through writing and political organizing.

Born in Toledo, Ohio, in 1934, Steinem graduated from Smith College in 1956 and became interested in activism while living in India. She moved to New York City in 1960 to pursue journalism and co-founded *Ms.* magazine in 1971. It was the first national publication owned, run, and written by women and brought women’s issues, such as pay inequality and gender discrimination, to a national audience.

The same year, Steinem was a founder of the National Women’s Political Caucus. She went on to establish women’s shelters across the US and, in

2005, co-founded the Women’s Media Center. After critics said she had overlooked working-class, Black, and Indigenous women in her work, she acknowledged the issue and expanded her focus.

Steinem wrote nearly a dozen books, including a 2015 best-selling memoir, *My Life on the Road*. In 2013, she received the Presidential Medal of Freedom (highest US civilian honor). Another memoir, *An Unexpected Life*, is due out this month.

Tributes to Steinem poured in after her death. Flowers and notes of appreciation were also left outside her New York apartment. In an essay Steinem wrote for *The New Yorker* magazine, published the day after she died, she said, “The biggest leaps are those that we make within ourselves. Standing up for your own full humanity is an example you can give to others.”