

Pass It On®...

Celebrating 25 Years of Young Heroes.

Since 2001, the Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes has honored 625 young people who are making a difference in the world – from providing meals to the elderly to cleaning up local rivers to mentoring young students in after-school programs. But the work is far from over. As founder T. A. Barron says, “We need heroes today more than ever.”

Author and Barron Prize founder T. A. Barron grew up in Colorado ranch country. His mother, Gloria Barron, a teacher at the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind, taught her own kids and her students that every person has the power to make a difference in the world.

T. A. Barron went on to become a prolific author of books about fictional heroes, learning long ago that stories are the best way to convey big, moral ideas. “If we wrap core values inside a story, they’re much more likely to land in the hearts and minds of people,” says Barron.

However, for T. A. Barron, that is not enough. He wanted to take the ideas he cares most about – especially the power of every kid to help the world somehow – and translate them into action. And so he chose to cook up a prize that would turn the spotlight on heroic kids of all backgrounds so that their stories could inspire others.

“My mother, Gloria Barron, was the inspiration for the creation of the Barron Prize,” explains Barron. “The Barron Prize honors her and her conviction that every individual has power, their choices matter, and they can all help lift the boat we’re in by their actions and words.”

Like many parents, Barron realized that in the realm of stories, there’s nothing more powerful than true tales of bravery, compassion, and generosity – especially if the stories are about young people who are living those qualities. That’s why all Barron Prize young heroes are honored not only for the difference they’re making in the world but for the heroic ideals behind their work – qualities like courage, perseverance and deep commitment. Barron Prize recipients light up the world with those qualities while helping their communities and protecting the environment. Alexa delivers gently

used books to underserved students. Austin creates community murals in Washington state to help save salmon. Jahkil distributes Blessing Bags to the homeless, and Te’Lario grows produce to feed the hungry. Srihan is inventing new ways to remove microplastics from waterways while Anisha uses AI to help mitigate climate change. Matthew provides free music lessons to youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities. All of these young leaders are changing the world in creative ways and inspiring others by their example.

Even decades after recognition by the Barron Prize, a number of winners continue to make a meaningful difference. Ashley Shuyler Carter was honored at age 16, back in 2001, for her work to support education for girls in Africa. Twenty-five years later, her nonprofit (originally called AfricAid and now Daring Girls) helps secondary girls in Tanzania complete their education and become catalysts for change in their communities. Ryan Hreljac won the Barron Prize in 2002 at age 11 for using his earnings from household chores to help provide clean water to developing countries. Today, his Ryan’s Well Foundation has provided clean drinking water and sanitation to more than 1.6 million people around the world.

Reflecting on 25 impactful years, T. A. Barron shares, “The young heroes we’ve honored fill me with renewed gratitude and hope. The world has changed, but the importance of these young people and their inspiring stories has never diminished.” Looking to the future, Barron adds, “The path to achieving the world we all want is to awaken in every young person the importance of their choices and actions to help the world. **Every kid can make a difference.** And if millions of kids realize that, the force of their goodness will be completely unstoppable.”

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