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## **Action For Nature Announces 2022 International Young Eco-Hero Award Winners**

### ***Sixteen Eco-Conscious Youth from Around the World Honored for Environmental Achievements***

San Francisco – Today, Action For Nature (AFN) announced its 2022 International Young Eco-Hero Award winners, honoring sixteen young environmental activists from across the globe for their creative initiatives to tackle the world's most pressing environmental challenges.

For nearly 20 years, the International Young Eco-Hero Awards have annually honored global youth ages 8 to 16 whose work has had a significant impact on raising awareness of environmental issues and finding innovative solutions to tough environmental problems.

"The next generation of leaders is here, and they are taking action across the globe now to address the climate crisis and solve local, national, and global environmental challenges," said Beryl Kay, president of Action For Nature, an international non-profit organization that encourages young people to nurture a love and respect for the Earth and to take personal action to improve the environment. "The projects that these young people created will have real and important impacts on their communities, help solve global climate challenges, and will inspire others – including adults – to do what they can to help."

Since 2003, Action For Nature has recognized more than 341 Eco-Heroes from over 31 countries and 26 U.S. states. The winning projects are selected by a panel of independent judges, including experts in environmental science, biology, and education.

This year, the organization is unveiling two new special awards. The Shimon Schwarzschild Award, named for the founder of Action For Nature, honors a young environmentalist and activist who is a visionary thinker, as Shimon was. The Dr. Mary Griffin-Jones Award, named for physician, author, artist and founding member of Action For Nature, honors a young person who is pursuing environmental activism through art and literature.

"I am so inspired by the hard work, dedication, and optimism of these young climate activists who show us that we are all in the fight to save our planet together no matter how old or young we are and that the time to act is right now," said Kay.

The winners will present their work at a virtual event, the 2022 International Eco-Hero Awards Conference, anchored in San Francisco on October 15th at 10 am Pacific Time and shared live via Zoom. For more information about how to attend and to RSVP email [holly.shulman@gmail.com](mailto:holly.shulman@gmail.com).

### ***This year's International Young Eco-Hero Awards go to:***

**First Prize (8-12 Year-old Category) – Prasadhi Singh** (Age 9, Chengalpattu, Tamil Nadu, India)  
Prasadhi Singh has been planting trees since the age of two. Now, at nine years-old, she has created her own forest organization that has planted more than 75,000 trees, created 21 fruit forests, and created three community nurseries that can house 25,000 saplings. The Prasadhi Forest Foundation is continuing to work toward its ambitious goal of planting 100,000 acres of trees by the end of 2022.

**First Prize (13-16 Year-old Category) – Vinisha Umashankar** (Age 15, Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu, India)

Charcoal-operated ironing carts are common in Vinisha Umashankar's neighborhood and other African and Asian countries. Concerned with air pollution and deforestation, Vinisha decided to take advantage of India's abundance of sunshine and designed a solar-powered ironing cart that could save millions of trees, reduce pollution, and be less costly than charcoal. Vinisha's plan is to soon begin production of the carts, starting with twenty in her own town, 100 for the state, and then scale up production for national

and overseas distribution.

**Second Place (13-16 Year-old Category) – Adhi Daiv** (Age 15, Gurugram, Haryana, India)

Adhi Daiv wanted to investigate what could be done to address the lack of water for people, crops, and livestock in desert areas like Rajasthan. He recruited hundreds of volunteers in rural districts to implement the Urvara Initiative, a special method to take advantage of the monsoon season for irrigation. In this irrigation method, a sapling tree is inserted into a deep hole filled with one liter of water. As the climate turns dry, the tree's roots stretch down into the aquifer, allowing the tree to grow. The aquifer naturally replenishes when the next monsoon season arrives. The project's pilot phase had great success with a 95% tree survival rate and has saved approximately 725,000 liters of water.

**Second Place (13-16 Year-old Category) – Anna DeVold** (Age 16, Soldotna, Alaska, United States)

In 2018, Anna created Promote Our Pollinators (P.O.P.), an environmental program designed to educate her community about the importance of pollinators, why their numbers are declining, and what action can be taken. She designed "Pollinator Packs" – six-pack pots containing six different pollinator-friendly seedlings to be placed in urban areas to attract pollinators. Each spring, she has grown 150 of these packs and distributes them to local businesses and organizations. Her campaigns to raise awareness about pollinators have reached many people through community presentations, public booths, classroom lessons, and social media.

**Second Place (8-12 Year-old Category) – Bianca Noyes** (Age 11, Salt Lake City, Utah, United States)

When former President Trump reduced the size of Utah's Bears Ears National Monument by one million acres, Bianca Noyes set out to change the fate of the area. She made paintings of Bears Ears and printed up 100 postcards with a message to restore the monument. Bianca wanted to deliver her message to someone who could actually make a difference, so she persuaded presidential candidate Joe Biden to promise to restore full protection for the monument. Bianca, who is now known as the "little girl who persuaded a president," successfully saved Bears Ears. She has now decided to help Native Americans living at Bears Ears by creating and delivering 250 back-to-school backpacks equipped with hand sanitizer and school supplies.

**Second Place (13-16 Year-old Category) – Francisco Marin** (age 16, Tegucigalpa, Honduras)

When he was 12 years old, Francisco started a project he called Jum Te Rum, which means "paper, tree, earth" in the Mayan Chorti language. His aim was to help the environment through reforestation, recycling, and raising awareness among young people about climate change. Francisco raised enough money from gathering and selling one thousand pounds of recycled paper to purchase 150 mahogany tree saplings, which were planted in areas damaged by deforestation. Now, he's launched a campaign in support of a government declaration to change Honduran school curricula to include lessons about climate change.

**Second Place (8-12 Year-old Category) – Sawyer Anderson** (Age 12, Fargo, North Dakota, United States)

After hearing stories about children in Zambia without access to clean water, Sawyer Anderson wanted to fundraise to help those in need. Her father told her that \$50 provides clean water for one person for life, and that began Sawyer's mission and eventually her non-profit organization, Water Works. With the help of church volunteers, Sawyer began designing, sewing, and selling bags made of authentic African Chitenge fabrics, and raised \$26,000 in less than one year to build wells and bring clean water to villages in Zambia. To date, Sawyer has raised more than \$1 million in donations, built more than 72 wells, and saved 22,000 lives.

**Third Place (8-12 Year-old Category) – Cash Daniels and Ella Rossen** (Both age 12 and from Chattanooga, Tennessee, United States)

Cash Daniels and Ella Rossen have made cleaning up the environment their mission. For their largest project, "One Million Piece Pickup," they have enlisted their peers in the US, Canada, and the Bahamas to pick up one million pieces of trash - and are already more than halfway to their goal.

**Third Place (8-12 Year-old Category) – Henry Day** (Age 8, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, England)

Henry created a YouTube Channel where he documents his adventures in nature, discusses conservation success stories, and gives advice on how to take practical action to protect wildlife. The channel, which is called "Naturetastic with Henry," has over 50 nature videos and thousands of views. Henry also makes educational nature films in collaboration with The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire.

**Third Place (13-16 Year-old Category) – Jessica Ong** (Age 16, San Diego, California, United States)

The concept of throwing things away was foreign to Jessica Ong before she moved from Thailand to the United States. She was shocked to see the extreme amounts of waste produced in the United States, and when she found out that 80% of usable toys end up in landfills after only 6 months of use, she took action. In December 2020, Jessica founded Toys2Care, which helps to relocate toys from privileged communities to those in need. She has now helped 100,000 families living in San Diego who were unable to provide gifts for their children during birthdays and holidays, and she has significantly reduced waste.

**Third Place (13-16 Year-old Category) – Sushil John Amalor** (Age 16, Nairobi, Kenya)

In 2018, Sushil's family was very short on food. Living from fruit trees and offerings from neighbors, he realized the importance of food and knew that many other families were in similar situations. He decided he had to act. Sushil started small, with bake sales and car washes to help the community. Sushil then planted 2,500 fruit trees in the outskirts of Nairobi. The fruit produced by the trees — pawpaw, avocado, mango, oranges — allowed him to start up a food bank, while also supporting a healthy ecosystem. Sushil then successfully partnered with local supermarkets and restaurants to collect food headed to the trash and get it to hungry people in need. Not only does this program strengthen the community, it also reduces methane emissions that are created from food waste.

***Young people receiving honorable mentions include:***

**Honorable Mention – David Yoon** (Age 16, Greenville, North Carolina, United States)

In 2019, David Yoon founded Plastic Free NC, a youth-led organization dedicated to combating multiple environmental challenges through mentorship and community service. Over the course of just three years, Plastic Free NC has mentored more than 250 youth, assisted in the donation of 30,000 pounds of produce to more than 400 at-risk families, raised about \$2,500 for student-led environmental initiatives, and spread more than 625 stickers across the country to raise environmental awareness.

**Honorable Mention – Sparsh** (Age 16, Patna, Bihar, India)

Sparsh has had an interest in solving the renewable energy dilemma since he was young. His Thermal Floater device efficiently converts thermal energy from the sun into electrical energy using a complex yet small mechanical system that can generate up to 10 kWh of electricity per day.

**Honorable Mention – Vedant Janapaty** (Age 16, San Jose California, United States)

Devastating mega-fires in California have destroyed 4.5 million acres of land, released toxic fumes, and significantly strained fire agencies and local communities. Vedant Janapaty is working to identify the increased risk factors that can cause mega-fires that put California communities at risk. His goal was to identify geographical areas with a high propensity for fire damage using satellite data and machine learning models and advocate action for mitigating such damage through proactive land management. After learning that the risk of fire damage is increased when non-native plants are present, Vedant started working with environmental agencies such as Grassroots Ecology and Elkhorn Slough Foundation to advocate for the speedy removal of non-native species from high fire-prone areas.

**Dr. Mary Griffin-Jones Award – Linh Nguyen** (Age 14, Hanoi, Vietnam)

Since sixth grade, Linh's dream has been to help trees. Her book "A Little Piece of Forest for You" provides information for children about what a forest is, its trees, plants, and animals, and why its protection is important. The first 2,000 copies sold out, and the book is now in its second printing. Nguyen donated her over \$4000 in book profits to the Forest Plantation Fund for the Meo Vac District in the Ha Giang Province of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. Linh continues to visit schools and festivals to promote the book and to raise awareness about the importance of forests.

**Shimon Schwarzschild Award – Diana Michaelson** (Age 16, Long Beach, California, United States)

After a long-fought campaign that she launched in 2020, Diana persuaded the Long Beach Unified School District in California to adopt a resolution to implement 100% clean energy by 2030, committing the district to a transition off fossil fuels. But success didn't happen overnight, and it wasn't easy. Diana organized other students, reached out to some of the most powerful people in the district for support, obtained petition signatures, secured coalition partners, and gained community support.

***Young people receiving notable mentions include:***

- Kean Dao and Sunook Yoon, both age 16, Winterville, North Carolina, United States
- Deeya Viradia, age 16, San Jose, California, United States
- Dipta Darma, age 15, Bali, Indonesia
- Roman Phillips, age 16, Fort Mills, South Carolina, United States
- Tristin Anderson, age 9, Stockton, County Durham, England

To learn more about the Young Eco-Hero Awards and this year's winners, read about all of their projects, access high-res images, and view the winners' project videos, visit [www.actionfornature.org](http://www.actionfornature.org).

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*Action For Nature. (AFN) is an international non-profit organization based in San Francisco, California, that encourages young people to nurture a love and respect for Earth's natural resources and to take personal action to protect the environment.*