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San Diego Teen Among 2022 International Young Eco-Hero Award Winners

Local Student Receives Top Honor for Contributions to Solving Environmental Problems

San Francisco – Jessica Ong, a 16 year-old from San Diego, California, is one of sixteen young environmental activists from across the globe to receive a 2022 International Young Eco-Hero Award, announced Action For Nature today. This award honors eco-conscious youth ages 8 to 16 who are taking crucial steps to solve tough environmental problems.

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

Jessica won Third Place in the 13-16 year-old category for her project, "Toys2Care."

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.

"Young people like Jessica have shown that 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 young people like Jessica have created are having real and important impacts on their communities, helping to solve global climate challenges, and are inspiring others – including adults – to do what they can to help."

"When I heard about children not getting toys, it did not make sense to me that children had to go without when so much was being thrown away," said Jessica Ong. "We have resources. We have kids who need it. We just needed something to connect them."

To read more about Jessica's work, visit toys2care.wixsite.com.

To learn more about this year's International Young Eco-Hero Award winners, visit 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.