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Action For Nature

Encouraging young people to take personal action to nurture and protect a healthy environment in which all life depends

Winter, 2015



President Beryl Kay, Rhiannon, Aarushee, Mikeala, Makayla, Libby, Caroline, Anirudh, Kevin

Celebrating our Eco-Heroes



The attending Eco-Heroes.; Credit: K. Huo



Aarushee speaking at ceremony;
Credit: Tamzina Films

Action for Nature recently celebrated its 13th year of honoring international young Eco-Heroes for their tremendous activism in environmental conservation on Saturday, October 14, 2015.

AFN's annual reception took place in a nestled location at San Francisco State University on a warm Saturday afternoon, with more than eighty attending guests inspired by the work that young people around the globe are doing for the environment. Excitement was already palpable in the room from the Eco-Heroes' interaction, as guests arrived.

One of the attending AFN guests commented on arrival, "With so much [adverse] going on [in the world], I need some inspiration!"

By the end of the event, we were all inspired. The attending Eco-Heroes spoke to the audience about each of their projects and how they are influencing people around the world to protect our environment. As patrons flowed in, so did our 2015 Young Eco-Hero awardees who came from as far away as India and New Zealand. [Continue on next page]



Rhiannon Tomtishen and Kevin Huo; Photo credit: K. Hou



[Left to Right] Caroline, Libby, Aarushee, and Mikeala.

Anirudh speaking at ceremony;
Photo Credit: Tamzina Films



Our founder Shimon, turns 90!

Congratulations to our founder and board member, Shimon Schwarzschild, who reaches his 90th birthday in December. Thank you Shimon for over thirty years of support, creative energy, wise counsel, and continuing passion for AFN!

In honor of his birthday Shimon asks friends of his and of AFN to make a donation. Click here to donate: <http://actionfornature.org/donate.aspx>



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Beryl Kay, Troy Tournat

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Beryl Kay (President), Joan Crotty (Treasurer), Ezra Becker (Secretary) Fiume Drummond, Charles Stegiel, Judith Schiff, and Shimon Schwarzschild (Founder)

Staff:

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You made this possible! Thank you!

A million thanks to our **individual donors**, without whom we would not exist. Deepest thanks to: **Charolais Care, Parnassus Fund, PG&E, and Sidney Stern Memorial Trust.** Matching donations were received from **Adobe Systems, Hewlett-Packard, and Pfizer.**

*And thank you to our **silent auction donors**, who made our 2015 Eco-Hero Award Ceremony possible.*

Coloma Spring Guest House, California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco Zoo, Contemporary Jewish Museum, Tree Frog Treks, Books Inc., Joan Crotty, Shimon Schwarzschild, Fiume Drummond, Hostelling International, Marina Supermarket, Olive Bavins, Goody Goodie Cream and Sugar, NatureBridge, Nob Hill Hardware, Tout Sweet Patisserie, Marius Starkey, Blue & Gold Fleet, My Father's Kitchen, Cole Hardware, Mezzetta Food Basket, Sloat Nursery

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Award Ceremony Continued

Our Eco-Heroes finally got the opportunity to connect with their “comrades-in-co-arms” from around the world. They chatted about their projects and exchanged ideas in an adjacent room until the program began. The full room quieted as AFN President **Beryl Kay** welcomed the crowd, then shared an introductory video that also featured some 2015 Eco-Heroes, produced by **Tamsin Orion**, with **Mitch Field** narrating.

Beryl then introduced keynote speaker **Chris Giorni**, founder of Tree Frog Treks. Giorni’s vibrant personality was captivating as he shared anecdotes from his years of bringing children from inner cities to nature. He offered words of wisdom to both the audience and the Eco-Heroes. Giorni then handed the podium to youth presenter and Eco-Hero **Rhiannon Tomtishen**.

Tomtishen spoke of her journey as a young girl protesting the use of palm oil that is destroying the rain forests of Indonesia, home of the orangutans. Her story was a beacon of hope and grit—of never giving up the fight, even though she had encountered many trials and tribulations like the lack of support by the Girl Scouts, who were not living up to their own motto. Eventually, Tomtishen was successful in getting them to change some of their palm oil uses, and getting recognition from the Kellogg food giant. She is very proud of the fact that Dr. Jane Goodall was her “first follower” and a great supporter.

After Tomtishen’s captivating speech, the other gathered Eco-Heroes proceeded with their presentations. **Makalya Gates** spoke about her invention of the “Acoustic Levitational Solar Cell Cleaner,” impressing the room with her brilliant idea that turned into a nationally recognized design. Then **Mikeala Matera-Vatnick** highlighted her use of videography to document and publicize a little known herbicide issue that adversely affects crayfish. Eco-Hero **Anirudh Suri** educated the audience on improper disposal of batteries and about his recycling program that is intended to combat and reform battery-recycling policies nationwide.

Taking a break from the current Eco-Hero presentations, the program moved to guest speaker **Kevin Huo**, a 2009 Eco-Hero who had the opportunity to visit the Arctic on a scholarship. Huo shed light on the fact that the indigenous people of the Arctic are acutely aware of the effects of climate change because they notice the melting ice cap at their doorsteps. While the changes may not be

apparent to those of us not living there, we must still recognize the urgency of the matter.

Then, 2015 Eco-Hero **Caroline Nolan**

summarized her science experiment on how to decrease toxic algae blooms in a lagoon near her Florida home with the use of fungal mycelia filters. Her impressive experimentation led to her recognition from the White House.

Our last two Eco-Heroes traveled a great distance to attend the award ceremony, and we were so grateful and excited to meet them in person. **Aarushee Nair** from India presented the important reasons behind her invention of a biodegradable baby container of filtered clean water, called Blu Pak. Many children have died in India due to the lack of clean water, and Nair is determined to prevent these premature deaths.

Libby Christophers of New Zealand passionately spoke on behalf of the Maui’s Dolphins, native to the New Zealand waters, and the need to save them from extinction. As of now, only 50 survive in the world and their environment is threatened by the fishing, oil, and gas industries in addition to underwater sonic testing.

Photo Credit: Gates



At the end of the ceremony all Eco-Heroes received a certificate of recognition from **Fiona Ma**, California State Board of Equalization (right). All of these important presentations informed us why Eco-Heroes are needed to be

on the environment’s side. Through successes and reaching out for support, our 2015 Eco-Heroes inspired the audience with their constant determination to keep pushing, even when others are not listening.

We at Action For Nature are proud to usher a new generation of environmental heroes. By bringing these young activists together, to allow for connection building and collaboration, we help develop these young minds to be driven knowing that they have the support of their peers and Action For Nature behind them.

Photo Credit: Gates



Written by Troy Tournat, AFN Staff



Speaker Chris Giorni;
Photo Credit: Gates

In Eco-Hero News

Featured Eco-Heroes: getting to know our 2015 winners

ROCK LEE:

Resident of Seoul, South Korea

Horrified to see food waste and other trash being discarded in his local park, Rock Lee regularly returns

to collect and recycle waste and encourages others to join him. He has become an environmental leader in his community.

Rock currently runs his own foundation, Earth Kids Foundation

<http://earthkid.net/> where youth volunteers collect and recycle trash every Sunday morning. He has also created a cartoon series “Earth Kids – Riki & Piki”

<https://goo.gl/ymqFqG> to draw attention to the need for increased conservation and responsible living habits.

In October 2014, he gave an award winning presentation at an important environmental convention on World Environment Day addressing prevalent threats to the island Kiribati.



EVAN BARNARD:

Resident of Georgia, USA

Evan Barnard has always had a love and appreciation for the great outdoors. It is something he believes everyone should have access to and fully enjoy.

That belief is what led him to embark upon a journey to make nature trails

more accessible to the visually impaired. After a chance encounter with a representative of the Nature Conservancy, Evan got involved with cleaning and repairing the Big Pine Braille nature trail, which had been vandalized, in his home state of Georgia. Wanting to do more, he then met with the Rome Chapter of the Georgia Council of the Blind (GCB) to tell them about the trail and encourage members to use it.

Evan has worked closely with the GCB, has presented at a GCB State meeting, and has spoken on the Georgia Reading Radio Service



show: “Eye on Blindness.”

Information about the Big Pine trail was posted on the International Braille blog, and Evan has received emails from visually impaired people all over the country about trails in their communities and how they would like to have a local Braille trail. He also organized and led a trail hike for 25 visually impaired people. Evan also spoke at a TEDxYouth Talk that you can view here:

<https://goo.gl/KAWcuz>

Evan recently organized the construction of a new Braille trail, the Whispering Woods Braille Trail. The trail, built by students, community volunteers, and members of the visually impaired community, has been completed and dedicated. Evan is now working with legislators to promote increased outdoor access for the visually impaired on a national level.

Quote's from Eco-Heroes

“I see that lots of people... are concerned about the Earth and making things better and it makes me feel like part of a big family that cares.”

– Makayla Gates

“If we work together, it can be synergy for achieving our goal.”

–Rock Lee

“Although I cannot volunteer...until I'm 18, I can still make a difference for the turtles, by raising money, cleaning up their ocean, and educating other kids to do the same thing.”

– Ella Rhodes

2015 Eco-Heroes meet the President

Eco-Hero Makayla Gates (right, shaking hands) and Caroline Nolan (far left) had the amazing opportunity to meet President Obama this past year. Both were 2014 Broadcom MASTERS finalists, and presented their projects at the Smithsonian.

“What a coincidence we're both 2015 International Eco-Heroes!” comments Makayla.



Eco-Heroes visit Vietnam as Rhino Ambassadors



[Left to Right]
Olivia, Monique, and Carter

Three of this year's Eco-Heroes have just returned from Hanoi, Vietnam, where they were invited to attend the final week of the Operation Game Change (aimed at ending wildlife crime, especially rhino horn trafficking). This new campaign was officially launched earlier this year with the goal of reaching millions of Vietnamese to reduce the importation of Rhino horns.

Our Eco-Heroes, Carter and Olivia Ries of Georgia, USA, and Monique Theron of South Africa, were invited by the US Ambassador to Vietnam to attend and participate in the conference. All three are passionately interested in wildlife conservation. They have founded nonprofits that educate others about the challenges facing our planet, the need to protect endangered species, and finding sustainable solutions.

Our Eco-Hero's 10-day whirlwind of a campaign, included:

- Rally for Rhinos, a health and wellness athletic event for the public
- Educational outreach presentations to Hanoi schools on the rhino poaching crisis in South Africa
- Operation Game Change/WildFest's short film competition & screening
- Joining other Youth ambassadors to hand over the World Youth Wildlife Declaration to Vietnamese government officials and Environment Ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries.

To learn more about our Eco-Heroes campaigns please visit:

- <http://onemoregeneration.org>
- <http://onemillionfootprints.org/wp/>
- http://www.actionfornature.org/2015_winners.aspx

"Making this trip to Vietnam and having the ability to reach students around the world is the most amazing thing I've ever experienced."

- Carter Ries



Photo Credit: K. Huo



Late founder, Mimi Griffin-Jones leaves lasting legacy

AFN has received a wonderful gift of over \$70,000 from the estate of Mimi Griffin-Jones. We are overwhelmed with gratitude that Mimi, an AFN founder, board member, donor, and friend, remembered AFN to the end of her life. This will embolden and enable us to enhance the Eco-Hero Awards program and its outreach for years to come. Mimi's daughters, Carol and Joan, attended the October event and presented the check to AFN president, Beryl Kay. Mimi was exceptionally talented and led a remarkable life. You can read more about her at <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/sfgate/obituary.aspx?pid=174475662>

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