



For Immediate Release  
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San Francisco-based Helen Diller Family Foundation Awards *Tikkun Olam*

**Five California Teens Win \$36,000 Each for Extraordinary Social Action**

For the second year, five outstanding California teens have been named winners of an award for community service that comes with a cash prize of \$36,000. The Diller Teen *Tikkun Olam* Award was created to recognize teens who have initiated an exceptional social action project that helps to repair the world (*tikkun olam*). The awards will be presented at a luncheon in San Francisco on September 15.

Diller Teen *Tikkun Olam* Award winners are Ronit Abramson, 17, San Diego; Eric Heimark, 18, Palo Alto; Shelby Lane, 17, Pacific Palisades; Frederick Scarf, 18, Sherman Oaks; and Sarah VanZanten, 19, Palo Alto.

The awards are funded by the Helen Diller Family Foundation, a supporting foundation of the Jewish Community Endowment Fund of the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties.

*Tikkun olam* are the Hebrew words for repairing the world. It is one of the basic precepts of Judaism. “Today’s youth are tomorrow’s leaders,” said Helen Diller, president of the sponsoring foundation. “This award reflects our confidence in them and our encouragement to them to continue their outstanding work in the spirit of *tikkun olam* for all of us and for future generations.”

The awardees’ projects ranged from scientific research on global climate change to a campaign to inform teens and their families about teenage dating abuse and how to prevent it. Each project included leadership and careful organization and most included fundraising. Award money is to be used for college or to further implement the winner’s vision of making the world a better place.

Close to 100 teens competed for the five prizes, which were awarded by a team of judges composed of educators and community leaders from the San Francisco Bay Area, Fresno, San Jose, Los Angeles, San Diego and Orange County. To be eligible, teens had to be nominated by an adult and then complete a detailed application describing their projects, its goals, their inspiration and challenges, fundraising tactics and more.

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Nominees had to be California residents, between 13 and 19 years old, and be self-identified as Jewish. While nominees had to be Jewish, their community service projects can benefit the general community.

Projects include:

Environmentalist & San Diego Zoo's Arctic Ambassador for the Year of the Polar Bear - Ronit Abramson

Ronit has been involved in environmental activities ranging from research on water quality to the affect of climate change on the polar bear. She founded the Inquiry Club, a student group dedicated to mentoring students in scientific inquiry and research. Selected by the San Diego Zoo as its Arctic Ambassador, she spent 10 days in the Canadian Arctic with a small group of international colleagues who updated students around the world on their work through daily blogs. Her goal is to inspire, inform and empower people of all ages to make changes in their own lives to reduce the human impact on the environment.

Free the Children – Eric Heimark

At 10 years old, Eric became involved with Free the Children (FTC), a Canadian-based grass roots group that teaches children that they can be socially conscious global citizens and agents of change for their peers around the world. He started a London group of FTC when he lived there and is a founding member of what will be the organization's first development office outside of Canada, in California this fall. During summers, he has volunteered in Kenya and India, building schools and working with HIV-positive children and raised funds for FTC.

Live Buy Give: Solar Cookers for Darfur – Shelby Layne

Shelby has raised more than \$32,000 to purchase 21,000 solar powered stoves for 1,050 families in Darfur refugee camps through sale of jewelry – some which she made and some that was donated. Solar cookers cost \$30 and each family received two. Solar cookers alleviate the need for women and children to leave the safety of their camps to search for firewood where they are often raped or beaten by the Janjaweed. Shelby is on the Jewish World Watch Speaker's Bureau and addresses young people about the atrocities in Darfur.

The Shiri Foundation – Frederick Scarf

The first words Frederick says about his foundation are shocking: "I was the first speaker at my best friend's funeral." His best friend and prom date died of osteosarcoma or bone cancer at 16. He tells the story of his friend's fighting this disease and the lack of research in the area whenever he can. Since setting up the Shiri Foundation, Frederick has raised \$20,000 toward a \$60,000 initial goal for research. Among other projects, Frederick holds proms for young people with life threatening diseases, who like Shiri, may not live long enough to attend their own prom.

Spokesperson Against Teenage Dating Violence – Sarah VanZanten

Sarah was involved with an exciting boyfriend who insisted that she focus her life on only him, not friends and family. When he kicked her at a party and she flew across the

room, hitting her head and becoming unconscious, she realized she needed help. Her boyfriend was arrested and she was shunned in her high school. Subsequently, Sarah has told her story and become a spokesperson and advocate against abuse in teen relationships. She has appeared on television, including NBC's Today show, and has spoken to teens and their parents in more than 35 venues.

The Diller Teen *Tikkun Olam* Awards is one of a number of projects funded by the Helen Diller Family Foundation through the Jewish Community Endowment Fund to develop leadership in teens and enhance Jewish education.

For information on this year's Diller Teen *Tikkun Olam* Awards, please visit [www.sfjcf.org/diller/teenawards](http://www.sfjcf.org/diller/teenawards) or contact Robyn Carmel at [RobynC@sfjcf.org](mailto:RobynC@sfjcf.org)