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BAY AREA PHILANTHROPIST AWARDS FIVE REMARKABLE CALIFORNIA TEENS WITH \$36,000 EACH FOR “REPAIRING THE WORLD”

Young Activists Take on Genocide, Better Education, Clean Water and Public Gardens

~ Building a Legacy of Service and Civic Responsibility ~

SAN FRANCISCO, June 24, 2011—The Helen Diller Family Foundation and The Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties today announced the 2011 recipients of the prestigious Diller Teen *Tikkun Olam* Awards. Nearly 125 teens from across the state of California were nominated and considered for this impressive award—five recipients were chosen to each receive \$36,000. Each Diller honoree has initiated an innovative social action project exemplifying *tikkun olam*, a central precept of Judaism meaning *repair of the world*. These volunteer projects have truly made a difference in today’s economically volatile world.

The teens will be recognized at a celebratory luncheon in San Francisco on August 29, 2011. This is the fifth year the awards have been given, and a special commemoration of past recipients and the impact their efforts have made in the world will also be celebrated at the luncheon.

Diller Teen *Tikkun Olam* Award winners for 2011 are:

- **Gabriel Ferrick from Santa Rosa (age 16)**
- **Liza Gurtin from La Jolla/San Diego (age 17)**
- **Naftali Moed from Pacifica (age 16)**
- **Casey Robbins from Carmichael (age 17)**
- **Daniel Sobajian from Los Angeles (age 17)**

“This is the fifth year for our *Tikkun Olam* Awards and we could not be more excited by what these remarkable teens have achieved,” said Helen Diller, president of the sponsoring foundation. “There is no doubt that this year’s honorees see how much our world needs help. With creative and committed solutions, they are tackling global issues of access to education, availability of natural resources and distribution of sorely needed humanitarian aid—with every step they truly do repair the world.”

The awardees’ projects include a fundraising and advocacy movement to provide lifesaving relief for refugees from genocide; a clean water initiative that creates global awareness and brings essential resources to impoverished families; a student-run community garden that has engaged students and the greater public; a textbook donation program benefitting students in Liberia; and a charitable school supply program for less-fortunate Los Angeles youth. Each project required leadership and careful organization in addition to fundraising. Use of the award money is largely unrestricted, and recipients can use it to fund college or to further implement their vision for making the world a better place.

The teens were selected by a panel composed of educators and community leaders from San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, Marin, Yolo, Fresno, Placer, Contra Costa, Alameda and Orange Counties. Candidates completed a detailed application describing their projects, goals, inspiration and challenges, fundraising tactics and ultimate accomplishments. Eligible applicants were California residents, between 13 and 19 years old, who self-identify as Jewish. The community service projects focused on any area of interest to the teen.

2011 Diller Teen *Tikkun Olam* Award Recipients and their Projects:

Gabriel Ferrick (Santa Rosa): ‘Envision No Victims’ Campaign Supports Young Refugees in Darfur

In the fifth grade Santa Rosa native Gabriel Ferrick learned about the horrors of genocide and was shocked to learn that such atrocities still exist today. He vowed to never again stand idly by in tolerance of these inhuman acts. Inspired to educate others and advocate for change, Gabe’s path toward activism began to unfold with a bar mitzvah project and \$360 of his own money. He mobilized his classmates, friends, family members and others in the Santa Rosa community through a Jewish World Watch Backpack Project that raised thousands of dollars and brought essential provisions such as shoes, books, school supplies, soap, toothpaste and other items to nearly 500 children in the Oure Cassoni refugee camp in Chad. The project became a “jumping-off point” for local and national efforts and has grown to include a Walk for Darfur and a Walk to End Genocide series. To date, Gabe has raised nearly \$60,000 for genocide relief causes, become the Northern California organizer for Jewish World Watch, and enlisted government leaders to fight for a world without genocide.

Liza Gurtin (La Jolla): Walk for Water Fundraising Facilitates Clean Water Systems Globally

La Jolla’s Liza Gurtin first learned about *tikkun olam* when she was in the second grade and a Holocaust survivor came to speak to her Sunday school class—just months after the “horrors of 9/11.” It helped her put things into perspective and understand the importance of making a difference in the life of another. A recipient of the Presidential Community Service Award, she has led or participated in dozens of community service projects, all of which are prelude to her current passion—bringing clean, safe water to thousands of impoverished families whose young daughters cannot attend school because they spend their days walking countless miles, for hours on end, to retrieve water needed for their survival. Liza spearheads an awareness and fundraising initiative called Walk for Water—a 5K walk where participants carry buckets of water simulating the conditions that women and children around the globe endure daily. She restructured the San Diego Walk for Water event to include sponsorships that resulted in nearly \$35,000. Her efforts have helped deliver clean water to more than 500 people in Nicaragua and 1,000 people in Tanzania, and taught villagers how to adopt improved sanitation and hygienic practices, greatly improving the health of each community.

Naftali Moed (Pacifica): Locally-Supported Oceana High School Garden Nourishes Community

Pacifica teen Naftali Moed, with his distinct enthusiasm for gardening and green space, felt compelled to share the benefits of urban gardening, sustainability and environmental work with his community. With the help of a local biologist-turned-mentor, Naftali began to get involved in community gardening initiatives and national parks organizations. His work with these groups precipitated an invitation to attend the prestigious 2009 Rooted in Community Conference in Maine, where he was inspired to return home and share the message of food justice and sustainable agriculture with his own community. His first course of action was to conceptualize and develop the Oceana High School Garden, a community-supported garden and a true labor of love for the young horticulturalist. The project required hundreds of volunteers, and thousands of pounds of gravel and waste removal. The end product was a remarkable hands-on learning oasis that offers volunteers an opportunity to garden, explore renewable energy sources, understand irrigation systems and landscape construction, and study sustainable agriculture. Naftali has guided his project to fruition, creating a garden that unites the school and the community around a powerful green initiative while showcasing the benefits of organic gardening, resource conservation and nutrition.

Casey Robbins (Carmichael): Textbooks for Liberia Opens Doors for Education in Africa

Carmichael teen Casey Robbins heard a startling radio interview with Liberia's Deputy Minister for Public Affairs Gabriel Williams in which he spoke urgently about the need to rebuild the country after a 14-year civil war that ravaged Liberia's infrastructure. Inspired to help, Casey contacted Mr. Williams and decided she could best correct the pressing lack of educational materials in Liberia, by donating the surplus of books from her school. Thus, Textbooks for Liberia was born. To transport the textbooks overseas, Casey conquered excessive shipping obstacles including distance, rising gas prices, a stubborn recession and natural disasters. Now in its fifth year, Textbooks for Liberia has grown from its first donation of 450 books to nearly 4,000 each year – helping to provide a better and more meaningful education for her peers in Liberia. This spring, Casey took an incredibly moving trip to Monrovia, Liberia to meet with students who received the textbooks and visit the Casey Robbins International School, founded in honor of her tireless work. Casey's next shipment proves to be her largest yet, doubling in size with a 60,000 lb. container of textbooks to be shipped this fall.

Daniel Sobajian (Los Angeles): School and Art Supply Drive Revives Los Angeles Schools

After transitioning to a public high school, Daniel Sobajian learned that 60 percent of his new classmates' families lived at or below the poverty line. Daniel felt compelled to help his less-fortunate peers, and while working at Councilman Bill Rosendahl's office he began the 11th District Los Angeles Youth Council and a non-profit called StudentsDo.org. Daniel's first project was a back-to-school supply drive, and he has had great success over the last three years coordinating multiple school and art supply drives that have distributed \$8,000 worth of supplies including pencils, crayons, paper, notebooks, backpacks and the like. This past year, Daniel secured seven schools, two youth councils, two libraries and one church to participate in the drives. Daniel's efforts have had a strong impact on his local community, providing donations to places like the Westside Children's Center, the Boys and Girls Club of Santa Monica and the Mar Vista Family Center. He says, "It's not glamorous like doing something for a foreign country, but I see first hand what a difference I am making." With Daniel's support, students of the Los Angeles area can excel in school with adequate tools to reap all the benefits of their educational experience.

The Diller Teen *Tikkun Olam* Awards initiative 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. Helen Diller believes that philanthropy is a fundamental part of living a full and accountable life. Now in its 12th year of giving, the Helen Diller Family Foundation has granted more than \$200 million to support education, the arts, medical research and development, leadership training programs for teens, and many other charitable endeavors.

For more information please visit www.sfjcf.org/diller/teenawards or contact Jacque Seaman at (212) 561-7456 jacque.seaman@morris-king.com; Erica Schwartz at (212) 561-7462 erica.schwartz@morris-king.com; Lisa Kurtz at (212) 561-7478 lisa.kurtz@morris-king.com.

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