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BAY AREA PHILANTHROPIST EMPOWERS TEEN CHANGEMAKERS WITH NEARLY \$1.5 MILLION

Ten U.S. Teens Rewarded for Taking on Poverty, Autism and Teen Empowerment

SAN FRANCISCO, June 27, 2013 —The Helen Diller Family Foundation today announced the recipients of the 2013 Diller Teen *Tikkun Olam* Awards. Ten young leaders in volunteerism will each receive \$36,000 in recognition of their leadership, innovation and commitment to making the world a better place. Now in its seventh year, the program has granted a total of nearly \$1.5 million to further the vision of 40 Jewish teens.

This is the inaugural year that the Diller Teen *Tikkun Olam* Awards have been offered nationally, recognizing teens both inside and outside of California. It is also the first year the Jewish Federations of North America has been an active partner promoting the awards program among Jewish Community Federations across the United States. From San Francisco to Hastings-on-Hudson, each of these 2013 recipients have demonstrated a commitment to *tikkun olam*, a central precept of Judaism meaning *to repair the world*. The teens have provided unique solutions to some of our world's most critical social issues by developing projects that support social justice, equality and education, environmental sustainability and engagement opportunities for their peers. Recipients of the 2013 Diller Teen *Tikkun Olam* Awards are:

- **Jake Bernstein, 19, St. Louis, MO: VolunTEENnation** – a nonprofit that connects youth with available volunteer opportunities across the country.
- **Skylar Dorosin, 18, Palo Alto, CA: Project 2020** – a program that teaches swimming and water polo to girls from low-income communities, boosting their self-confidence and fostering friendships.
- **Ellie Dubin, 17, Beverly Hills, CA: Kesem Shel Shir** – a musical theatre program that fosters self-esteem, collaboration and language skills for underprivileged American and Israeli children.
- **Jordan Elist, 18, Beverly Hills, CA: Save a Bottle, Save a Life** – a program that collects bottles and cans and uses the CRV proceeds to support the work of food pantries.
- **Ben Hirschfeld, 19, Hastings-on-Hudson, NY: Lit! Solar** – a project that supports children's health and literacy, using a revolving fund to replace dangerous kerosene lamps with safe solar lanterns.
- **Ido Kedar, 17, West Hills, CA: Ido in AutismLand** – an awareness initiative that provides first-hand insight into the hidden realities of those living with nonverbal autism for educators, families and others.
- **Talia Leman, 18, Waukegan, IA: RandomKid** – a website that provides tools and resources for youth to launch and lead their own community service projects and endeavors.
- **Nick Lowinger, 15, Cranston, RI: Gotta Have Sole** – a foundation that donates new footwear to children living in homeless shelters across the country.
- **Max Wallack, 17, Natick, MA: PuzzlesToRemember** – a nonprofit that designs, collects and distributes puzzles to serve as therapeutic tools for those living with Alzheimer's.
- **Talia Young, 18, Lafayette, CA: Looking for Home** – a poetry club that works to empower high school students with confidence and eliminate stereotypes.

**Complete descriptions below*

"I'm so gratified to be able to support the creativity and passion of these remarkable teens. And I hope the Awards will inspire teens—and adults—to take action to improve the world around them," said Helen Diller,

president of the Helen Diller Family Foundation. “We are so pleased that beginning this year we are able to recognize teens not just from California, but from across the entire U.S. and that our contribution will support the teens’ important work and impact.”

Past Diller Teen *Tikkun Olam* Award recipients have engaged with world leaders and been acknowledged for their social action service by prestigious institutions, including the Clinton Global Initiative and the White House. Whether it’s providing school supplies for 14,000 children in Haiti or implementing sustainable solar energy systems for schools that save one million dollars annually, these teens aren’t waiting until they “grow up” to be entrepreneurs and philanthropists.

“The Diller Teen *Tikkun Olam* Awards recognize some of our nation’s brightest Jewish teens for taking action that brings about meaningful social change,” said Jerry Silverman, president and CEO of the Jewish Federations of North America. “We congratulate the 2013 recipients and applaud the Helen Diller Family Foundation for focusing community attention on teens making a real difference in the world.”

The 2013 recipients were selected by committees of educators and community leaders from across the United States. Candidates completed a detailed application describing their projects, goals, inspirations and challenges, fundraising tactics and ultimate accomplishments. Eligible applicants were United States residents, between 13 and 19 years old who self-identify as Jewish. A celebratory luncheon honoring the teens will be held in San Francisco on Monday, August 26, 2013.

2013 DILLER TEEN *TIKKUN OLAM* AWARD RECIPIENTS AND THEIR PROJECTS:

Jake Bernstein (St. Louis, MO): Connects Kids with Volunteer Opportunities Across the Country

Inspired by the overwhelming support his family received during his father’s military deployment, Jake Bernstein developed a passion for volunteering at a young age, but he found that very few volunteer activities existed for teens and tweens. Motivated to create more opportunities, he recruited his peers to lead one-on-one sports clinics for more than 575 youth with special needs—starting with one tennis clinic and growing into an ongoing initiative that is spreading across the country. Through his success with the clinics, Jake and his sister created a nonprofit and website ***volunTEENnation.org*** that connects teens with available volunteer opportunities and encourages organizations to allow teen participation. Countless teens contribute to the website, promote volunteer opportunities and are involved with its ambassador and intern program. Through social media, ***volunTEENnation*** has made connections with local, national and international schools and nonprofit organizations. Jake continues to broaden his work to match teens with volunteer and service-learning opportunities and support youth-led service projects worldwide.

Skylar Dorosin (Palo Alto, CA): Athlete Gives Confidence to Young Girls Through Water Polo

A competitive water polo player, Skylar Dorosin knows first-hand how sports can foster self-confidence and self-esteem. After participating in a water polo tournament in a working-class Los Angeles suburb, Skylar realized that some of her neighboring communities did not have the resources to support athletic programs. In 2010, she created ***Project 2020*** to give young girls from lower-income communities the opportunity to be a part of a team, to learn how to swim and to play water polo—building their self-esteem and encouraging them to work together. To date, ***Project 2020*** has worked with more than 250 girls throughout the San Francisco Bay Area with more than 50 teenagers coaching and mentoring participants, including four-time Olympian Brenda Villa who has joined the program full-time. Skylar and Brenda work together to expand the program; most recently they partnered with the East Palo Alto YMCA, and they are gearing up now for an after-school tutoring program.

Ellie Dubin (Beverly Hills, CA): Musical Theatre Orchestrates Harmony on Stage with U.S. and Israeli Youth

Passionate about teaching and performing arts, Ellie Dubin created a student-run musical theatre program called ***Kesem Shel Shir (the Magic of Music)*** for students at public schools with little or no arts programming. She began by directing 20 elementary school students from Los Angeles in a production of Cinderella. Over the course of eight weeks, they covered acting, singing and choreography, as the students built community, self-confidence and respect for one another. Ellie’s deep-rooted connection with Israel inspired her to forge a

partnership with the Youth Renewal Fund to run a similar two-week program for middle school students in Ramla. She used theatre not only to foster harmony in that religiously diverse community, but also as a vehicle to improve English-speaking skills for the 22 participating students. This summer, **Kesem** is bringing its program to elementary school students at a small rural school in Costa Rica. Ellie also hopes to train other teens in the Los Angeles area to lead the program and plans to create a template for future Israeli programming as well.

Jordan Elist (Beverly Hills, CA): Feeds the Hungry, One Recycled Bottle at a Time

Jordan Elist spent several summers volunteering at his local food bank. One day when food was running low, the organization was forced to give families a short supply of groceries—this was a transformative moment that inspired the creation of **Save a Bottle, Save a Life**. The nonprofit provides canned food donations to local food banks, raising 5 to 10 cents at a time through the collection and recycling of bottles and cans. He has engaged his whole community in this effort, collecting recyclables from house to house. **Save a Bottle, Save a Life** has raised \$22,500 with seven teens now collecting weekly recyclables from 180 homes. Jordan has transformed countless bags of cans and bottles into nearly 30,000 pounds of canned goods distributed to 400 clients of partner food banks. He routinely advocates and presents at schools to encourage teens to start similar programs, working to inspire more people in his community and abroad.

Ben Hirschfeld (Hastings-on-Hudson, NY): Uses Power of Sun for Literacy – Gives Students Light to Learn By

During a Jewish holiday that promotes devoting time to study, Ben Hirschfeld learned that students in the developing world have to study by the light of kerosene lamps, which put them at risk for burns, asthma, pneumonia and breathing in toxic carcinogens. With the vision and desire to improve health and literacy among youth worldwide, Ben was inspired to help them gain access to clean, healthy light. In 2009, he created **Lit! Solar**—a revolving micro-finance fund that helps families replace their dangerous kerosene lamps with safe, emission-free solar lanterns. **Lit! Solar** has worked directly with youth to produce a solution that works best for them, providing the benefits of solar lanterns to more than 10,000 people, which has prevented thousands of tons of greenhouse gases from entering the atmosphere. Growing his team and his program, Ben plans to expand **Lit! Solar** to reach more than 20,000 people and extend outreach to new schools throughout the world.

Ido Kedar (West Hills, CA): Teen Gives a Voice to the Voiceless Living with Severe Autism

Ido Kedar suffers from non-verbal autism. Growing up, he could not communicate and was presumed to have very limited comprehension. At the age of seven, when his mother held her hand over his to address birthday invitations, she noticed that he was writing independently under her hand. This breakthrough led Ido down a unique educational path that allowed him to communicate—he now uses an iPad to express himself freely. Eager to help his peers escape their own “silent prisons,” Ido began a written journey that he calls **Ido in Autismland**—an effort that has helped change the way parents, educators and researchers think about severe autism. Ido has pushed himself beyond his comfort zone to share his story with UCLA Medical School students, at Autism Society events and at numerous other forums. He collaborates with the Moses-Aaron Cooperative, which pairs speaking teens with non-verbal autistic youth so their written words can be shared aloud. Ido has published a book, **Ido in Autismland**, which has been assigned as required reading in California State University, Northridge education classes. He also blogs regularly to reach an ever-expanding audience of autistic individuals, parents and professionals to inspire and educate.

Talia Lemman (Waukegan, IA): Visionary Unites and Empowers Youth with the Tools to Give Back

In 2005, instead of trick-or-treating for candy, 10-year-old Talia Lemman decided to trick-or-treat for change to fundraise for Hurricane Katrina/Rita relief. She then asked her classmates to do the same, and her idea spread via national news coverage and her little brother’s outward opposition. Talia was able to unify 4,000 school districts across the country to collectively raise more than \$10 million. She quickly realized the power of her peers and worked to establish the nonprofit **RandomKid**, a website that provides youth with the tools and resources they need to formulate and develop community service projects by sharing possible ideas, strategies and funding opportunities. **RandomKid** has facilitated the efforts of 12 million youth from 20 countries bringing aid on four continents, reporting \$11 million for youth’s causes and delivering a 100%-1,000% return

for every dollar invested. Talia's next venture is to create a **RandomKid** mobile app so kids can use their smartphones to access these tools from anywhere.

Nick Lowinger (Cranston, RI): Helps Homeless Children Across the Country to Step Forward

When five-year-old Nick Lowinger visited a homeless shelter, he was surprised to find that many children did not have properly fitting shoes, if they had shoes at all. This experience stayed with him, and at age 12, as part of his community service project for his bar mitzvah, he created the **Gotta Have Sole Foundation** so that throughout his lifetime, he could provide new footwear to children in homeless shelters. Since launching **Gotta Have Sole** just three years ago, Nick has gathered more than 1,000 volunteers to help him donate new shoes to more than 9,000 children living in homeless shelters in 15 states across the country. **Gotta Have Sole** has partnered with footwear manufacturers, coordinated shoe drives and organized fundraisers to provide homeless youth with comfortable shoes to call their own. As a result, they have the self-confidence to attend school more regularly and participate in extracurricular activities alongside their peers. Nick is expanding the reach of his nonprofit to encompass 10 additional U.S. states by the end of 2013. He has also recently launched SOLEdiers, an initiative that provides veterans with a dignified way to purchase new shoes; and Serving Love, a project that equips disadvantaged youth with the active footwear they need to participate in sports.

Max Wallack (Natick, MA): Pieces Together Puzzles to Confront the Global Alzheimer's Epidemic

Max Wallack witnessed his great-grandmother's decline with Alzheimer's first-hand, and as he strove to help make life easier for her, he discovered that puzzles had a therapeutic effect and contributed to her sense of accomplishment. After she passed, he launched **PuzzlesToRemember** to give other Alzheimer's patients an opportunity to feel the same therapeutic relief his great-grandmother felt. To date, Max has raised significant funds and coordinated countless collection drives to support the distribution of more than 23,000 puzzles to 2,000 nursing facilities around the world. Through **PuzzlesToRemember**, Max has involved hundreds of students in community service and partnered with a major puzzle manufacturer to create specialized puzzles tailored to the needs of individuals with Alzheimer's. A 17-year-old junior studying neuroscience at Boston University, Max is actively researching Alzheimer's and will be presenting findings at an upcoming conference. He will also soon complete work on a book that aims to teach children about Alzheimer's.

Talia Young (Lafayette, CA): Creates Art, Creates Community – Helping Teens Bond through Poetry

Talia Young saw her peers struggling with depression, eating disorders and the pressures of high school. She saw her classmates trapped in silence, with no constructive outlets for conversation. Inspired by her Jewish upbringing and its focus on the transformative power of community, Talia created a spoken word club entitled **Looking For Home** to nurture a supportive environment where teens could express themselves freely. As the visionary behind **Looking For Home**, Talia facilitated a high school poetry club and workshop series that enabled students to discuss serious issues in their lives and turn their struggles into art. **Looking For Home** has created a safe space for a diverse group of teens from five public, private and parochial schools in San Francisco. The workshop culminated in a public showcase, which empowered participants to find their voice and sparked a conversation among audience members about what it means to be a teenager. Talia has developed a guide featuring students' poetry and curriculum ideas to inspire other Bay Area schools to launch similar programs.

The Diller Teen *Tikkun Olam* Awards is one of a number of projects funded by the Helen Diller Family Foundation to develop leadership in teens and enhance Jewish education. Bay Area philanthropist Helen Diller believes that charitable giving is a fundamental part of living a full and accountable life. Now in its 13th year of giving, the 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.

The Foundation continues to generously support this program and nominations for the 2014 Diller Teen Tikkun Olam Awards are open now. For more information, or to nominate a teen for next year's Diller Teen Tikkun Olam Awards, visit www.dillerteenawards.org or contact Jacque Seaman at (212) 561-7456 jacque.seaman@morris-king.com

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