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Media Contact:

Cynthia Inacio

(212) 561-7476

Cynthia.Inacio@kingcompr.com

**15 TEEN LEADERS FROM COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE U.S. RECEIVE NATIONAL AWARD
AND \$36,000 EACH FOR CREATING SOCIAL CHANGE LOCALLY AND GLOBALLY**

The Helen Diller Family Foundation 11th Annual Awards Recognize Teens who Forge “Braille Trails” to Help the Visually Challenged, Bridge the STEM Gender Gap with a “Girls Science Interactive,” and Launch “Dunks for Diabetes,” “Kids Tales,” and other Creative and Impactful Programs that Encourage Kids to Discover their Voices through Meaningful Philanthropic Opportunities

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, June 13, 2017 — The Helen Diller Family Foundation, a supporting foundation of the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties, today announced the recipients of its annual Diller Teen *Tikkun Olam* Awards. Now in its 11th year, the national Awards recognize young entrepreneurs who are committed to establishing methods for social change that address the most urgent and pressing challenges in the communities around them. This year’s Awards recipients are working across the globe to address issues from health advocacy for those with disabilities and health education in developing countries, to destigmatizing illnesses such as diabetes and providing therapeutic resources for children and families with special needs. Each awardee will receive \$36,000 in support of their philanthropic vision or to further their education. Full descriptions of all 15 Award recipients and their projects can be found at: www.dillerteenawards.org.

The Diller Teen *Tikkun Olam* Awards began in the San Francisco Bay Area in 2007, as the vision of Bay Area philanthropist Helen Diller. The awards recognize Jewish teens demonstrating and exemplifying the spirit of *tikkun olam*, a central Jewish value meaning to repair the world. Since 2007, the program has awarded more than \$3 million to 99 teens in recognition of their vision, innovation, and demonstration of leadership.

“The Tikkun Olam Award recipients never cease to amaze and inspire us,” said Jackie Safier, Helen Diller’s daughter and President of the Helen Diller Family Foundation. “Every one of them has demonstrated tenacity and courage through leadership. Each embodies the mission of *tikkun olam*, to repair the world, in all facets of their work. These teens remind us that no matter the age, an individual can make a difference and impact the world in a positive way.”

Fostering a collaborative community among recipients and bolstering national recognition of these forward-thinking teens is a primary goal of the Diller Teen *Tikkun Olam* Awards. Past recipients continue to inspire their peers to follow in their *tikkun olam* footsteps and create meaningful relationships with new awardees through networking and mentorship activities. Many past recipients have also been recognized by some of the most prestigious institutions and leaders, including the United Nations Foundation, the Jefferson Awards, The White House, and former President Barack Obama.

The 2017 Diller Teen *Tikkun Olam* Award recipients were selected by committees of community leaders and educators located in cities around the country. Candidates completed detailed applications describing their projects, goals, inspirations and challenges, fundraising tactics, and ultimate accomplishments. Eligible

applicants were United States residents, between 13 and 19 years of age at the time of nomination, who self-identify as Jewish. A celebratory luncheon honoring the teens will be held in San Francisco on Monday, August 28, 2017.

The 2017 recipients encourage anyone interested in nominating a teen to begin the nomination/application process at www.dillerteenawards.org.

Meet the 15 national recipients of the 2017 Diller Teen *Tikkun Olam* Awards:

- ✓ **Julie Averbach, 18, Short Hills, NJ: Adventures From My World** – created a comic book that uses art therapy to support families of individuals with special needs by spotlighting the daily joys and challenges they face.
- ✓ **Evan Barnard, 18, Johns Creek, GA: Nature for All** – began an initiative that advocates for inclusive public spaces for the disabled worldwide while connecting the visually impaired with accessible outdoor opportunities.
- ✓ **Gabriella Cooperman, 16, Highland Park, IL: Cookies for Charity** – created an annual lemonade and cookie stand that raises funds to provide therapeutic horseback riding to children with special needs.
- ✓ **Katie Eder, 17, Shorewood, WI: Kids Tales** – developed an intensive creative writing workshop designed to give underprivileged kids an outlet to express themselves by composing and publishing their own short stories.
- ✓ **Taylor Gleeson, 19, Boulder, CO: Students United Against Gun Violence (SUAGV)** – launched an organization that is dedicated to giving youth a voice on gun violence through education, advocacy, and action initiatives run by and for teens.
- ✓ **Nathaniel Goodman, 18, San Diego, CA: Filmmaking For Good** – developed a filmmaking initiative that assists non-profits in sharing their message through promotional videos.
- ✓ **Benjamin Hoffner-Brodsky, 17, Davis, CA: Youth Leadership Davis** – leveraged his significant involvement with Youth Leadership Davis (YLD) to provide an outlet for informed, compassionate, and spiritual students to engage with their community.
- ✓ **Michael Ioffe, 17, Portland, OR: TILE (Talks about Leadership, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship)** – created a non-profit structured to bridge the resource gap for underserved students by offering them free monthly speaker series on innovation, leadership, and entrepreneurship.
- ✓ **Sydney Kamen, 19, Washington, DC: So Others Are Protected** – developed a global community of partners to raise awareness and eliminate health disparities in underdeveloped countries by providing basic resources, education, and leadership opportunities.
- ✓ **Sabina London, 19, Haworth, NJ: Girls Science Interactive** – founded a youth-led non-profit organization aimed at sparking interest in science for young girls by providing free STEM summer camps and afterschool programs in 14 different states.
- ✓ **Elias Rosenthal, 17, Santa Rosa, CA: Teens4Health.org and Teens4Biz.org** – organized twin projects that encourage health and fitness literacy, as well as financial literacy and leadership for teens.

- ✓ **Asa Schaeffer, 17, Santa Cruz, CA: Santa Cruz Challenger Baseball** – formed a Challenger Baseball league that gives children with physical or developmental disabilities the chance to benefit from team sports by pairing them with player buddies.
- ✓ **Oliver Stern, 16, Miami Beach, FL: Our Abilities** – established a program that educates students about disability awareness and provides free hearing assistance to low income children and their families.
- ✓ **Shira Strongin, 18, Corona del Mar, CA: Sick Chicks** – curated an anonymous blog that has expanded into an international support group that empowers young women with rare illnesses and disabilities and gives them a platform to express themselves while forming a community of their own.
- ✓ **Jordan Yaffe, 17, Lutherville, MD: Dunks for Diabetes (D4D)** – established an annual basketball tournament that brings together communities to promote awareness and raise funds nationwide for the American Diabetes Association (ADA).

**Complete descriptions are included below. Additional information on each of the recipients can be found at:*
<http://www.dillerteenawards.org/>

2017 DILLER TEEN TIKKUN OLAM AWARD RECIPIENTS AND THEIR PROJECTS:

Julie Averbach (Short Hills, NJ): Comic Book Becomes a Platform for Sibling Support

Julie Averbach turned a Girl Scout Gold Award-winning project into a global initiative when she created a comic book called [Adventures from My World \(AFMW\)](#), designed to showcase some of the unique challenges and joys that siblings of special needs individuals encounter daily. The comic book offers siblings support, promotes awareness and compassion, and serves as proof of concept for comic book therapy. Thus far, over 5,000 copies have been shared across the US and abroad. Julie is currently working to translate the first story of **AFMW** into Spanish and Portuguese in order to reach a wider audience. She hopes to continue exploring educational and therapeutic applications of comic books in collaboration with the Center for Emotional Intelligence at Yale, where she will be studying this fall as an undergraduate.

Evan Barnard (Johns Creek, GA): Avid Outdoorsman Cultivates Community For Visually Impaired To Enjoy Nature

After his experience repairing a vandalized braille nature trail, Evan Barnard decided to work with the visually impaired community to organize nature walks and build another trail. In an effort to encourage more people with visual impairments to utilize these trails, Evan researched other braille trail locations and found they existed in many states and other countries. He identified a need for a virtual directory that connects people who are blind or visually impaired with these trails and other accessible outdoor opportunities and created [Nature for All](#), an initiative which advocates for inclusive public spaces for the disabled worldwide. The website features 163 braille trails and sensory gardens in twenty-eight countries, including ninety-two trails in thirty-one U.S. states, plus information for schools, summer camps, sports and educational programs for the blind. The **Nature for All** website has been promoted to tens of thousands through international organizations and featured in the UN's SDSN Youth Solutions Report. Evan has been awarded numerous grants, and has presented at a TEDx about **Nature For All**. He also serves on EarthEcho International's Youth Advisory Council and as a National Youth Ambassador for the Mentor Foundation USA.

Gabriella Cooperman (Highland Park, IL): Fundraising for Therapeutic Horseback Riding

When Gabriella Cooperman saw how therapeutic horse riding was for her sister who has special needs, she came up with the idea that sparked [Cookies for Charity](#), a large-scale lemonade and cookie stand. 100% of the profits from **Cookies for Charity** go to a local non-profit therapeutic horseback riding center in Lake Forest, Illinois called the [Equestrian Connection](#). In eleven years, over \$130,000 have been raised, with sponsorship from twenty-one organizations. **Cookies for Charity** carves out a pathway for those who want to help repair the world but have no

idea where to start, while aiding in destigmatizing children with special needs. Gabriella plans to continue to grow ***Cookies for Charity*** and further her mission to make an impact on the world.

Katie Eder (Shorewood, WI): Finding a Voice Through Creative Writing

Katie Eder's commitment to sharing her passion for creative writing with other youth led her to teach a week-long creative writing workshop at a local community center. At the end of the week, a shy girl named Alana told Katie that her workshop had been the first time since her parents' divorce that she'd been able to express herself freely. That moment led Katie to found ***Kids Tales***. Designed to teach underprivileged kids creative writing skills, the organization has grown from eighteen students in one community to a global non-profit with hundreds of teens teaching more than 1,000 children across the globe, including in a refugee camp in Hungary. Each week-long ***Kids Tales*** workshop is teen-led and teaches groups of 8- to 12-year-old kids how to compose and publish their own short stories, which are later anthologized and sold on Amazon.com. A leader in social entrepreneurship, Katie has been recognized for her work with ***Kids Tales*** by organizations including: The Malala Fund, Ashoka Youth Venturer & Changemaker, Youth Service America's Everyday Young Hero, United Nations' Nexus Global Youth Summit, and the International Literacy Association's 30 Under 30 Award.

Taylor Gleeson (Boulder, CO): Educating and Empowering Teens to Speak Out Against Gun Violence

Taylor Gleeson grew up in post-Columbine Colorado. The night of the Aurora shooting, she had friends inside the theater. These experiences with the normalization of violence inspired her to launch ***Students United Against Gun Violence (SUAGV)***, an organization dedicated to giving youth a voice on gun violence. Through this project, Taylor engages students in education, advocacy, and action in order to enact grassroots change in their communities. Taylor began with a team of about fifteen national organizers and has since expanded to over forty college campuses in twenty-one states, in addition to several high school and middle school chapters. ***SUAGV*** was a partner in DC's 2016 Disarm Hate March and partners with the Concert Across America, as well as the film "Is That A Gun In Your Pocket?"

Nathaniel Goodman (San Diego, CA): Filmmaking to Positively Impact the Community

Teen filmmaker Nathaniel Goodman has found a way to use his talent to help non-profits share their message. Through his initiative ***Filmmaking For Good***, Nathaniel produces promotional videos and testimonials for non-profits. He has worked with organizations such as ReSurf, which is dedicated to mentorship through surfing while helping youth build media skills. With Nathaniel's help, ReSurf has grown from a team of five to 350 and from two high school programs to eleven. The documentaries he filmed on Resurf's trips to Mexico and Hawaii helped raise \$100,000 in just twenty-four hours. Nathaniel has also produced videos for the Jewish Teen Foundation and the JCC. In 2016, he addressed more than 600 philanthropists at the Jewish Funders Network Conference on the subject of community involvement and filmmaking.

Benjamin Hoffner-Brodsky (Davis, CA): Creating Model for Youth-Based Community Leadership

When Benjamin Hoffner-Brodsky was in tenth grade, a friend of his who was homeless committed suicide. In response to this loss, Ben leveraged his significant involvement with ***Youth Leadership Davis (YLD)*** to provide an outlet for informed, compassionate, and spiritual students to engage with their community. Since then, he has ensured a constant flow of trained interns help run and oversee the Interfaith Rotating Winter Shelter's (IRWS) operations, which manages more than 2,000 volunteers. Through the ***YLD*** program, high school students intern at non-sober shelters that provide the homeless with warm meals, a place to sleep, and other resources. Volunteers undergo rigorous training and a certification program. Ben is working on converting both ***YLD*** and IRWS into models so that other communities can start faith-based, volunteer-driven shelters.

Michael Ioffe (Portland, OR): Youth-Led Talks Inspire Future Leaders and Entrepreneurs

Michale Ioffe is the founder of ***TILE, (Talks about Innovation, Leadership and Entrepreneurship)*** a non-profit which offers free monthly conversations with innovators, leaders, and entrepreneurs for high school and college students, particularly from low-income backgrounds. ***TILE*** bridges the resource gap for underserved students, creating a more equitable and diverse future of innovators, leaders, and entrepreneurs. Through Michael's

program, tens of thousands of students have gained insights and connections that enable them to pursue their goals. Ninety percent of **TILE**'s chapters are minority-led and roughly twenty-five percent of the audience comes from a high-poverty background. In less than one year, **TILE** has grown to 128 locations in 23 countries—including Slovakia, Yemen, India, and Ethiopia—with over 400 student leaders and volunteers helping organize and operate events. **TILE** is now the world's largest conversation series.

Sydney Kamen (Washington, D.C.): Young Woman Develops Sustainable Sanitation Model to Cut Disease in Under-Served Countries in Half

Sydney Kamen grew up volunteering in soup kitchens. By age fifteen, she was running disaster response food drives and serving as a volunteer Emergency Medical Technician in several developing countries, including Haiti, Rwanda, Myanmar, and Nicaragua. Sydney created **So Others Are Protected (SOAP)**, a self-empowerment initiative that addresses issues surrounding sanitation and the spread of disease in the under-resourced world. The program coordinates with underserved communities to recycle soap from regional luxury hotels, promote sanitation and health education, emphasize community capacity building, and provide alternative livelihoods for at-risk women and girls. **SOAP** also trains and empowers young women to become peer educators and community health leaders. To-date, Sydney's program has worked with fourteen community partners and thirteen hotel partners, while producing and distributing over 50,000 bars of recycled soap. Sydney was awarded the President's Volunteer Service Award, the Prudential Spirit of Community Award, the Daily Points of Light Award, and the Robert Shepherd Leadership Award.

Sabina London (Haworth, NJ): Inspiring Girls to Embrace and Pursue STEM Learning

Sabina London was shocked to see how few other girls were in her high school Honors Chemistry class. Through her youth-led non-profit **STEM You Can!**, also known as **Girls Science Interactive**, Sabina turned one middle school and high school girls' science camp into over twenty free STEM summer programs across fourteen states. **STEM You Can!** has developed a curriculum for schools that includes topics like space exploration and global warming, complete with fun science experiments. **STEM You Can!** operates within a network of over 100 student volunteers and is expected to train 1,000 volunteers and impact 10,000 girls in over twenty states by 2020. In recognition of her success, Sabina has been named a National Child Awareness Ambassador, a Jefferson Awards Media Partner Winner for public service, and a Jefferson Awards GlobeChanger. Sabina has discussed **STEM You Can!** on *Good Morning America* and is currently looking to partner with Google in order to expand her curriculum to schools nationwide.

Elias Rosenthal (Santa Rosa, CA): Teen Educates and Empowers Youth to Live Healthy

When Elias Rosenthal watched UCSF's Dr. Robert Lustig's interview on *60 Minutes* entitled "Sugar: The Bitter Truth," he realized he was hooked on junk food. Elias also recognized he wasn't the only one. Inspired by Benjamin Franklin's leadership advice "Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn," Elias organized twin projects: **Teens4Health.org** and **Teens4Biz.org**. **Teen4Health.org** encourages health and fitness literacy while **Teens4Biz.org** promotes financial literacy, public speaking skills, leadership, and college and career guidance for teens. Elias' growing organizations have over 6,000 social media followers and offers donations to Save a Child's Heart in Israel, as well as youth health education projects at Friendship House, California's largest Native American center.

Asa Schaeffer (Santa Cruz, CA): Baseball Helps Teens Buddy Up with Challenged Youth

Asa Schaeffer recognizes that every child can benefit from team sports, but many children with special needs are never afforded the chance. To address this issue in his community, he organized a Challenger Baseball league, where players who have physical or developmental disabilities are paired with Little League players, aka "buddies." Asa acts as an ambassador for the program, taking on the role of coordinator, liaison, and promoter. In six years, the **Santa Cruz Challenger Baseball** league has had approximately 65 players, 250 "buddies," and 100 coaches and community member volunteers. The program is supported by the Santa Cruz Little League, the local high schools, and has raised \$5,900. Asa is currently working to make sure this program continues next season and beyond after he goes away to college.

Oliver Stern (Miami Beach, FL): Advocating for Hearing Impaired Children

Oliver Stern was born deaf, but after receiving cochlear implants and undergoing 20 surgeries, he was able to recover his hearing. As he grew up, Oliver realized other children with disabilities were not as fortunate. In response, he launched his project ***Our Abilities***, which has educated over 900 students at North Beach Elementary about issues concerning disability advocacy. ***Our Abilities*** is a two-part program, the first of which includes an educational initiative called “One World Many Abilities,” which coordinates with the school’s teachers and principal to bring in guest speakers and raise awareness. The second component of the project is “Oliver’s Hearing Aid Bank,” which provides equipment and services to the hearing impaired. Thus far, \$60,000 have been raised and over 60 children have been helped. In addition, Oliver was appointed by a Miami Beach commissioner to serve on the Miami Beach Disability Access Committee.

Shira Strongin (Corona del Mar, CA): Blog Becomes a Tool of Empowerment for Young Women

Shira Strongin knows firsthand how lonely it can be to suffer from rare diseases. Though her health has limited her access to public school and other teen experiences, it has not lessened her impact on her community. To reach other kids like herself, Shira founded ***Sick Chicks***, a community about coping with illness and disability that unites thousands of young women around the world. Shira is a former Feminist Ambassador for Feminist Apparel and has developed a Spotlight Program through her blog to help women become published writers. She plans to launch a College Scholarship for ***Sick Chicks***’ members and is currently initiating an Ambassador program that will empower women from around the country to learn about fundraising, community building, and the legislative advocacy process, while receiving leadership training.

Jordan Yaffe (Lutherville, MD): Raising Diabetes Awareness Through Youth Basketball Tournament

Jordan Yaffe had a close relationship with his neighbor Dr. Fred Brancati, an influential diabetes researcher. To honor Dr. Brancati’s lifelong commitment to finding a cure for diabetes, Jordan developed ***Dunks for Diabetes (D4D)***, an annual basketball tournament that raises funds nationwide for the American Diabetes Association (ADA). Through this tournament, Jordan brings communities together, promotes awareness of diabetes, and raises funds for research. ***D4D*** has raised a total of \$29,207 dollars and engaged more than 1,000 players and 100 volunteers over the last ten tournaments. Jordan plans to expand ***D4D*** nationally, offering multiple fundraising tournaments per year.