

The Conversation

Women of the Year: Readers' Choice Award 2012 Nominees (Vote NOW!)

We interrupt our coverage of heavy-hitting political powerhouses to bring you a list of the most impressive young women that you know—and that you nominated for our 2012 Readers' Choice Award. Narrowing down the entries to a Sweet 16 was hard—and humbling! Read on to see what we mean--and to vote for your favorite game-changers.

By **Sarah J. Robbins**

September 5, 2012

We interrupt our coverage of heavy-hitting political powerhouses to bring you a list of the most impressive young women that *you* know—and that you nominated for our 2012 Readers' Choice Award. Narrowing down the entries to a Sweet 16 was hard—and humbling! Read on to see what we

mean--and to vote for your favorite game-changers.

Now it's up to you to determine who wins a trip to the Women of the Year Awards this November. So vote, vote, vote—and spread the word. This round of voting closes at midnight on Wednesday, September 12. To see if your woman made the cut, check back with us this Thursday, when we'll post the Top 8 semi-finalists. And now, without further ado...



ALLYSON AHLSTROM, 17, SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA: Her Threads for Teens project has raised more than \$100,000 in donations and \$45,000 in cash, enabling more than 185 low-income and foster teen girls to shop in a boutique setting for free.



NOORJAHAN AKBAR, 21, CARLISLE, PENNSYLVANIA: She cofounded Young Women for Change to empower women in her native Afghanistan through projects that include the first-ever women-only Internet cafe in Kabul. The organization will soon conduct the first large-scale study of sexual harassment in the country.



TERESSA BALDWIN, 18, KOTZEBUE, ALASKA: After losing a family member and friends to suicide, she created the prevention program [Hope4Alaska](#), which has so far reached 6,000 students. Last year, the governor of Alaska appointed her to serve on a suicide prevention council.



MACKENZIE BEARUP, 19, ALPHARETTA, GEORGIA: She relied on reading to cope with a chronic pain condition and decided that books could help other kids too. She started Sheltering Books, which has now donated more than 135,000 books to homeless children throughout the United States.



BRITTANY BERGQUIST, 21, NORWELL, MASSACHUSETTS: She and her brother founded Cell Phones for Soldiers, a program that has given U.S. soldiers more than 150 million minutes of free talk time largely through the collection and recycling of 10 million used phones. In an

average week the organization fulfills 12,000 calling-card requests from servicemen and women at home and abroad.



MARY-BRENT BROWN, 17, COVINGTON, LOUISIANA: Through a network of youth-run lemonade stands and an annual charity fashion show, her Kids Wanna Help organization has raised more than \$100,000, donating the funds to organizations like the American Cancer Society, the Special Olympics, and the World Wildlife Fund.



BLAKELY COLVIN, 18, SOLVANG, CALIFORNIA: This cancer survivor started Cupcakes for Cancer, an organization that bakes and sells cupcakes to help sick kids. The initiative has raised \$80,000 to fund research, offset expenses for families affected by pediatric cancer, and grant seven children's wishes through the Make-A-Wish Foundation.



KATIE DAVIS, 23, BRENTWOOD, TENNESSEE / UGANDA: Her book *Kisses from Katie* details how a 2006 church trip to Uganda inspired her to move there, adopt 13 girls, and help create Amazima Ministries, which has matched 600 orphaned and vulnerable children with sponsors and feeds an additional 1,200 each week.



SASHA FISHER, 23, NEW YORK CITY / RWANDA: She cofounded Spark MicroGrants, which has raised more than \$80,000 to fund small community-building projects in 24 villages in Uganda and Rwanda.



__DANIELLE GRAM, 23, CARLSBAD, CALIFORNIA:__ She was just 16 when she cofounded Kids for Peace, which teaches nonviolence through in-school and after-school arts, service, environmental, and public-speaking projects. Through these programs and the annual Great Kindness Challenge, Kids for Peace has reached more than 35,000 kids in 69 countries.



NEHA GUPTA, 16, YARDLEY, PENNSYLVANIA: At age 9 she started Empower Orphans, which has raised more than \$700,000 in cash and in-kind donations to support 15,000 orphans and disadvantaged kids in both India and Pennsylvania through education projects, health care, and food and clothing donations.



__MANASVI KOUL, 19, WAXHAW, NORTH CAROLINA:__ Diagnosed with lymphoma at age 12, she created the LIVEbeyond Foundation to educate, motivate, and recruit bone marrow donors. In two years she has registered more than 750 potential lifesavers.



ANNA LIPSCOMB, 16, OVERLAND PARK, KANSAS: Inspired by a 2008 visit to a Haitian orphanage, this violinist returned home to record a CD,* *Anna From the Heart**, which has raised \$85,000 for The Global Orphan Project—funds that will build four orphanages in Haiti housing 40 kids.



JESSICA O. MATTHEWS, 24, NEW YORK CITY / BOSTON: She spearheaded the invention of the Soccket—a soccer ball that doubles as an eco-friendly generator, providing electricity to communities in need. The social enterprise she cofounded, Uncharted Play, has more than 10,000 Sockets confirmed for distribution across Mexico, El Salvador, and Benin, among others.



JEN RUBINO, 18, PARK RIDGE, ILLINOIS: While undergoing treatment for a connective tissue and bone disease, she started Cards for Hospitalized Kids to bring joy to other kids facing health challenges. With the help of more than 1,000 volunteers, including celebrities like Lauren Conrad and Aly Raisman, the organization has sent cards to more than 9,000 kids in 70 hospitals nationwide.



Photographer: Drew Nierenda's www.launchfilm.com

JORDYN SCHARA, 18, NORTH FREEDOM, WISCONSIN: She

helped found the organization P2D2 and heads up the Wisconsin chapter, which safely disposes of leftover pharmaceuticals so they can't contaminate the water supply. The national program now operates in 22 states; it's so far saved the environment from more than 900,000 pounds of potentially harmful waste.

OK, ladies: Whose incredible story inspires you most? VOTE NOW! You're going to want vote multiple times, so to vote again, click "return to poll" after you've cast your first vote!

Readers' Choice Award Sweet 16

Topics **charity**

readers choice award

real-life heroes

women of the year

women of the year 2012 woty

young women leaders

**young women social
entrepreneurs**

Glamour Daily

Today's biggest stories, from
pop culture to politics—
delivered straight to your
inbox.

