

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Student Philanthropists Awarded for Improving the World Around Them!

The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis is proud to announce the nationwide winners of the prestigious [Power of Children Award](https://www.childrensmuseum.org/about/power-children-awards)s. The honor recognizes and rewards students in grades 6–11 who are improving the lives of others through selfless commitment to service and the betterment of society.

Taking pages out of the headlines, young leaders are fighting to eradicate cultural intolerance, empower dyslexics, provide shoes to those without, and so much more. On Friday, Nov. 9, 2018, these remarkable young people will be honored during a special dinner and program at [The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis](https://www.childrensmuseum.org/) presented by the Deborah Joy Simon Charitable Trust. The award recipients will each receive a $2,000 grant from the Kroger Foundation to expand their philanthropic projects, and they may choose a partial university scholarship from Indiana University- Purdue University Indianapolis, the University of Indianapolis, or Butler University.

In alphabetical order by first name (and by grade at the time of nomination), the 2018 winners are:

**Abigail Diuble**

Grade 8 (2017–2018 school year)

Hometown: Manchester, Michigan

Project: WHIP (Warning Hearing-Impaired People)

Abigail Diuble knows how precious life is. In a flash, she nearly lost her mother and hearing-impaired sister Lilly during a tornado. Lilly, who does not wear hearing aids to bed, was difficult to awaken as the storm bore down. Lilly and her mom made it to the basement stairway just as the twister destroyed their home. When the crisis passed, Abigail began researching alarm systems that help hearing- and visually impaired people stay safe.

“It is my desire that all hearing- and visually impaired people—especially children—will stay safe in emergencies by having an alarm system like the one I am providing,” said Abigail. She has raised more than $50,000 for her nonprofit WHIP (Warning Hearing-Impaired People) and has distributed many dozens of systems in her community. The systems have a smoke and carbon monoxide alarm attached to a bed-shaking device. They also include NOAA weather radios that help awaken hearing-impaired people, as well as LED strobe lights for the visually impaired.

Abigail will use her Power of Children Award money to purchase more alarm systems for children in need.

**Caragan Olles**

Grade 10 (2017–2018 school year)

Hometown: De Pere, Wisconsin

Project: Bright Young Dyslexics

The phrase “it takes one to know one” certainly applies to Caragan Olles. In 3rd grade she was diagnosed with dyslexia (disorders that involve difficulties in learning to read). Caragan quickly discovered how misunderstood dyslexia can be. Several years ago, she set herself on a course to increase dyslexia awareness and education while also raising money to provide essential tutoring for other reading-challenged students in need.

Bright Young Dyslexics, Caragan’s nonprofit, has raised more than $90,000 to help offset the cost of specialized tutoring in Wisconsin—a state once known as a “black hole” for dyslexia. “We are the only organization offering funding for tutoring and assistive technology for Wisconsin dyslexic students regardless of race, religion, location, or finance,” said Caragan. Her organization conducts dyslexia simulation events, teacher in-service programs, and classroom and community education presentations.

Caragan plans to use her Power of Children Award money to expand Bright Young Dyslexics to other states and to support legislative efforts on behalf of others challenged with the disability.

**Ella Comerford-Barnett**

Grade 6 (2017–2018 school year)

Hometown: Indianapolis, Indiana

Project: Zero Waste Cafeteria Project

Tons of food are thrown away in school cafeterias, but not at Indianapolis Public School 91. Lunch trash has been reduced by 75% thanks to Zero Waste Cafeteria Project, a venture imagined and executed by Ella Comerford-Barnett.

It was not easy to convince the school administration, but Ella’s perseverance resulted in her school creating a special recycling and food rescue line at the end of each lunch period. She trained 550 students and 80 adults on how to recycle their lunches and identify the difference between recyclable materials and trash. “This project is important so that we can have a sustainable future. Our beloved earth that we call home is in peril. We are in peril,” said Ella. Zero Waste Cafeteria Project donates food resources to five food pantries that they can share with their clients.

Ella’s Power of Children Award money may go toward a new refrigerator for her school and a documentary she is producing to share information about her project beyond the school community so that it may be expanded into other businesses.

**Ella West**

Grade 11 (2017–2018 school year)

Hometown: Avon, Indiana

Project: Pretty Pockets for Breast Cancer Patients

A breast cancer diagnosis is difficult for anyone. Ella West wanted to ease some of the discomfort of mastectomy recovery when she created Pretty Pockets for Breast Cancer Patients. After consulting with a surgeon, Ella designed pockets made of soft fabric that are clipped to a patient’s clothing to hold the tubing and heavy bulbs placed under the arm for drainage. The pockets provide a barrier that prevents skin irritation and they provide additional support for the bulbs.

Ella has donated more than 1,000 pockets to six hospitals. “During this year I have worked with 35 volunteer seamstresses and presented the project to hundreds more people,” said Ella. “I would love for my project to grow in other states and comfort many more women.”

Ella plans to use her Power of Children Award money to create starter kits to educate more seamstresses and sewing groups. The kits would include fabric, patterns, and safety pins.

**Olivia Russo-Hood**

Grade 10 (2017–2018 school year)

Hometown: Deltona, Florida

Project: Save The Earth Projects—Leave a GOOD Footprint

Olivia Russo-Hood loves shoes. In fact, she may be obsessed with them, but not for herself. Olivia wants to cover the feet of children around the globe. It’s estimated that 100,000 children die annually from infections that begin with foot cuts. Olivia created an umbrella organization called S.T.E.P. (Save The Earth Projects) that encourages children and adults to participate in projects that improve the lives of others.

Olivia’s cornerstone project is called Leave a GOOD Footprint. She has collected more than 35,000 pairs of gently used shoes and raised thousands of dollars for charities in the United States and the United Kingdom. “My hope is to continue until every child has access to school, doesn’t have to hunt for food barefoot, has clean, safe drinking water and toilets, or can at least have a better quality of life,” said Olivia.

Olivia anticipates using her Power of Children Award money to expand Save the Earth Projects initiatives.

**Peyton Klein**

Grade 10 (2017–2018 school year)

Hometown: Pittsburg, Pennsylvania

Project: Global Minds Initiative

Peyton Klein believes that cultural intolerance, ignorance, and insensitivity must be replaced with cultural understanding and inclusion. When Peyton learned that the young student who wears a hijab and had sat behind her in class for months spoke English, Peyton was embarrassed. She thought the young woman didn’t understand the language. Peyton and Khwala became close friends and Peyton realized she needed to find a way for Khwala and other English-as-a-Second-Language students to feel comforted and supported, not bullied or misunderstood.

Peyton created a program within her high school called the Global Minds Initiative. She has raised more than $100,000 for the program that has spread into seven states, Canada, and China. In this for-youth, by-youth after-school program, native English speaking students and English-as-a-Second-Language students are paired together. They work on homework, practice conversational English, participate jointly in activities centered on diversity, human rights, and equality, and enjoy outings such as going to movies and restaurants.

“Most of my time is dedicated to Global Minds, whether it is grant writing, communicating with chapters, working with the board, or on special projects. It is something that fulfills both my heart and my brain,” said Peyton. She intends to use her Power of Children Award money to support existing and new chapters of Global Minds.

**Power of Children Symposium:** The 2018 honorees will inspire and educate many more young people about the power of philanthropy when they participate in the Power of Children Symposium the day after receiving their awards. The special event at The Children’s Museum creates an opportunity for young people in grades 5–10 to understand and design ways in which they can make a difference in their world. The symposium will be held on Saturday, Nov. 10, 2018 and is free to 50 registered participants. For more information or to register, please contact Debbie Young at [debbiey@childrensmuseum.org](mailto:debbiey@childrensmuseum.org) or at 317-334-4140.

**About The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis**

The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis is a nonprofit institution committed to creating extraordinary family learning experiences across the arts, sciences, and humanities that have the power to transform the lives of children and families. For more information about the tourist attraction and museum, please visit [www.childrensmuseum.org](http://www.childrensmuseum.org), follow us on Twitter @TCMIndy, Facebook.com/childrensmuseum and YouTube.com/IndyTCM.

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