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Lynn Taylor

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by Ilana Donna Arazie

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### America's Top Ten Youth Volunteers

When you give, you receive more.

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When I was in high school I was mainly concerned with bad 80's music and my overly teased hair, which is why I am so impressed the girls and boys named America's Top Ten Youth Volunteers.

I wish I had the opportunity to get out of my little world and discover the benefits of giving back. Because of the Internet and media, the youth of today are exposed to many more hardships in this world -- and some feel they can still make a difference.

I heard that the [Call for Entries](#) has started for this year's Prudential Spirit of Community Awards. If you're chosen to be one of America's Top Ten Youth Volunteers, you can receive personal awards of \$5,000, engraved gold medallions, crystal trophies, and \$5,000 grants from The Prudential Foundation for the charities of their choice.

Actress Susan Sarandon who is a big philanthropist paid tribute to these amazing volunteers ranging in age from 11-18. She said, "The Prudential Spirit of Community honorees have seen problems in their communities and around the world and have taken action. Their compassion to help others should give us all a lot of hope for the future."

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**Ilana Donna Arazie** is a video columnist and blogger looking for meaning and zen in New York City. [more...](#)



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Here are the young yet wise beyond years honorees and their inspiring stories:

- 1. Justin Churchman**, 18, of El Paso, Texas, raised more than \$48,000 and recruited more than 75 volunteers to build 18 houses in Juarez, Mexico, despite the rampant drug wars that have frightened away many other American volunteers.
- 2. Sarah Cronk**, 18, of Bettendorf, Iowa, co-founded a cheerleading squad at her high school that includes students with disabilities, and then formed a nonprofit corporation that encourages teens across the country to start similar squads at their schools.
- 3. Rocco Fiorentino**, 14, of Voorhees, N.J., became a dedicated advocate for children who are blind like him or visually impaired, striving over the past nine years to increase government funding for Braille services and educate others about the abilities of people with visual challenges.
- 4. Jeffrey Hanson**, 17, of Overland Park, Kan., generated more than \$225,000 for various local and national charities over the past five years by selling and donating original paintings and other artistic creations, despite having a genetic condition that causes severe loss of vision.
- 5. Cassandra Lin**, 13, of Westerly, R.I., launched a program that collects more than 36,000 gallons of waste cooking oil a year from 95 restaurants

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and thousands of households in nine towns in Rhode Island and Connecticut, and converts it into heating fuel for needy families.

**6. Aimee Matheson**, 18, of Clearfield, Utah, coordinated the building of a day-care and community center in Guatemala so that impoverished single mothers would have a safe and nurturing place for their children while they are at work.

**7. Tyler Page**, 14, of Brentwood, Calif., held a car wash hoping to rescue just one child from being sold into slavery in Ghana, but ended up sparking a kids' fund-raising enterprise that has involved hundreds of young people and has generated more than \$100,000 for a variety of children's causes.

**8. Rachel Wheeler**, 11, of Lighthouse Point, Fla., launched a fund-raising campaign that has raised more than \$162,000 to build a new 25-home village in Leogane, Haiti, near the epicenter of the earthquake that occurred in January 2010.

**9. Glennita Williams**, 14, of South Holland, Ill., who has collected snacks and personal care items worth more than \$14,000, including more than 600 pounds of Hostess Twinkies, for shipment to American troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan over the past four years.

**10. Rujul Zaparde**, 16, of Plainsboro, N.J., co-founded a nonprofit organization that has motivated more than 450 students at 23 schools to raise funds that have been used to dig over 30 water wells in rural India.

At a very young age, these girls and boys have discovered one true meaning of life: The more we give, the more we receive and the better our world will be.

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