

National Society Of High School Scholars Celebrates Youth, Educators, And Career-Age Individuals Who Make The World A Better Place With Its New 'Be More' Fund

Ten International Competitors Are Each Awarded a \$10,000 Be More Grant

ATLANTA, Dec. 7, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- The National Society of High School Scholars (NSHSS) has announced the winners of its Be More Fund, created this year to acknowledge the positive, future-focused work that students, young professionals, and educators are doing, particularly during this unpredictable and challenging time. NSHSS has more than 1.7 million lifetime members from across the globe who are thought leaders and agents of change.

Through the program, individuals took part in a judged competition where they presented their start-up ventures; solution-driven products; innovative prototypes; and substantive nonprofits during a two-day virtual event. The Be More-a-Thon event employed a scoring rubric and sports bracket method to narrow the field from hundreds of initial applicants to 40 finalists. Ten winners were then selected to each receive a \$10,000 grant based on their professional presentation of a creative and viable plan to make the world a better, more equitable place.

"The talent we saw in this program was extraordinary. They weren't competing just to win a prize; they were competing so they could earn resources to fuel their passion projects and support world betterment," said NSHSS President and Co-Founder James Lewis. "Everyone involved in the competition, including our noted judges and mentors, recognized these high-achieving participants as the world's future leaders. We're honored to support their work."

The winning submissions included inventive solutions to pollution and climate change, world hunger, mental health problems, declining bee populations, pandemic research, and access to education. Judges looked for creativity and uniqueness, impact and sustainability, value and potential, and the WOW factor when evaluating the presentations.

The recipients of the 2020 Be More Grants were:

Sofia Gonzalez, Cicero, IL, Educator at J S Morton High School East

Project 214: Her Turn: *Helping to solve the problem of gender inequality in education*

This project is based on the belief that to educate a girl, particularly one in vulnerable circumstances, is to empower her for the future and for the betterment of society. Education is a fundamental right that a multitude of girls across the globe are being denied. Project 214's mission is to promote education, provide resources, and improve lives.

Jaecee Hall, Polk City, IA, University of Iowa Class of 2023

Royal Promise: *Fighting to eradicate pervasive malnutrition in Asikuma, Ghana*

Jaecee Hall plans to build a fully sustainable chicken farm in Asikuma, providing an ongoing supply of life-saving nutrients and ensuring a better life for the community. It will be a source of education about disease prevention and the practice of proper hygiene while caring for livestock.

Emily Huffstetler, Maryville, TN – Maryville (TN) College Freshman

Build for Bees: *Making homes to sustain underappreciated mason bees*

Build for Bees is a nonprofit that helps mitigate honeybee population declines. Mason bees pollinate 95% of the flowers they visit vs. just 5% from honeybees. Build for Bees leads workshops on using recycled materials to create a stable future for our peak pollinators.

Nasiyah Isra-UI, Chesterfield, VA - Incoming sophomore at Liberty University

Canary Academy Online (CAO): *bringing high quality educational resources to home schoolers*

CAO is a nonprofit that brings high quality education and learning to homeschoolers with limited access to much needed educational resources. By organizing databases, personalized resources and consulting, CAO helps parents and students be their best, at an affordable price.

Genevieve Jean-Pierre, Whites Creek, TN, Senior at MLK Martin Luther King Junior Magnet Pearl High School in Nashville, TN

The Future is Fungi: *Unlocking the key to produce biofuels – in a pink oyster mushroom*

Biofuels are an overlooked source of sustainable fuel, and this project tapped a certain pink oyster mushroom for its ability to convert cellulose into glucose that produces biofuels. Grant money will be used to cultivate more mushrooms and to partner with the TN transportation department to begin supplying ethanol to gas stations in the state.

Eshani Jha, San Jose, CA, Senior at Lynbrook High School

Aqua Universa LLC: *Reinventing water filtration for reduced contamination*

Today, over two billion people lack access to clean water and 80% of the world's wastewater is dumped back into the environment. Aqua Universa created a patented biochar filter system that rapidly removes contaminants at a low cost. It is partnering with leading companies and governments to create game-changing filtration applications.

Samantha Kopec, Clearwater, FL, Senior at Tarpon Springs Senior High School

Feeding the Fosters: *Helping foster parents focus on what matters most*

Licensed foster parents' hands are full, between creating emotional bonds, helping with homework, providing transportation, and more. With little time for making meals, this nonprofit helps foster parents feed their families. In just one year, their 1,500+ volunteers served 35+ foster families, cooking 250+ individual meals each night.

Harshawardhan Pande, Germantown, TN, Senior at Houston High School

I.N.E.S.: *Identifying Neutralizing Epitopes for a SARS- COV-2 vaccine*

I.N.E.S. is a computational approach to researching vaccines against the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Under the mentorship of two leading infectious diseases professors, Harshu developed a process called Reverse Vaccinology to predict a faster and safer way to prove vaccine efficacy.

Candace Printz, El Paso, TX: Educator at El Dorado High School

Green Hope Project: *Turning plastic waste into gold, fostering arts education along the way*

This nonprofit grew from a high school art/environmental project into a broader initiative that strives to effect positive change through arts curriculum materials, workshops, and events. It promotes community trash clean-up as a way to repurpose plastic waste into beautiful artwork. In doing so, it advances community education about pollution and environmental justice.

David Titeu, Melbourne, Australia – University of Melbourne, B.S. in Biomedicine 2017; Master of Management 2020

WeLink: *Enhancing community connectedness for people with mental health needs*

WeLink is a digital platform that connects people with mental health issues to "link workers" – social workers or counselors who assess their needs and refer them to community initiatives, like cooking classes and yoga. It is based on "social prescribing," which enhances community connectedness and helps patients save money on healthcare.

About National Society of High School Scholars (NSHSS):

NSHSS is the premier international honors and scholarship program co-founded by Claes Nobel, the senior member of the Nobel Prize family, and James Lewis. NSHSS offers a lifetime of benefits, pairing the highest performing students worldwide with college scholarships, events, connections, internships, and career opportunities that begin in high school and carry on through college and careers. For more information, visit <https://www.nshss.org/>.

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