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Oceana High School senior Naftali Moed receives prestigious Diller Teen Tikkun Olam Award

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On Aug. 29, in San Francisco's Golden Gate Club in the Presidio, Pacifican and Oceana High School senior Naftali Moed will join four other young California leaders at a luncheon where each will be honored with \$36,000 because of their respective innovative social action projects that are "tikkun olam" — a Hebrew phrase which means "repairing the world."

In its fifth year, the Diller Teen Tikkun Olam Award (www.jewishfed.org/community/page/meet-tikkun-olam-award-winners (<http://www.jewishfed.org/community/page/meet-tikkun-olam-award-winners>)) recognizes teens who are exceptional role models in their communities and beyond. The Helen Diller Family Foundation and The Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties announced the 2011 recipients on June 24.

"Naftali's passion for gardening and green space has resulted in a community-supported urban garden that unites Oceana High School as well as the greater community around engagement and education in sustainable agriculture and food justice," the awards committee said. "The end product was the creation of a hands-on learning experience and green oasis with current volunteer projects that include gardening, exploring renewable energy, understanding irrigation systems, landscape construction, and sustainable agriculture."

Moed started the Oceana High School Garden in March of his sophomore year. Back then in 2010 it was a vacant gravel lot behind the school's cafeteria. With the support of Oceana principal Caro Pemberton, Oceana English teacher Laurie Hughes and the Jefferson Union High School District,

Moed has since secured \$12,000 in grants and the volunteer-driven garden now grows all kinds of things including strawberries, kale, collards, blueberries, artichokes and onions.

"The cucumbers, tomatoes and potatoes are not producing quite yet," the 16-year-old said. "Because of our climate, one season of fog with light sun, we have been able to grow greens from spring all the way through fall — and in winter changing them out as time goes on. Everything is a bit off this year due to gophers and weird weather conditions."

Also in the garden is a pergola, which was built under the direction of Oceana Vice-Principal of Guidance Jonas Barbour. The purpose of the 10-foot tall, 25' by 30' pergola is to serve as an outdoor classroom/community meeting area for Oceana students, garden volunteers and Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy volunteers. It is in an unused portion of the garden area.

"That was built by students, faculty and members of the greater community," Moed said. "For many of the students it was their first time doing any sort of construction project."

When the garden first started, Moed said they were lucky to have five volunteers on scheduled workdays. Now on scheduled workdays, 10 to 20 people arrive ready and willing to do a wide variety of garden tasks.

In the summertime, the garden is tended by Moed, Hughes, Oceana Earth Science/Biology teacher Ryan Reidy and members of the maintenance and office staff of the high school. During the school year, students tend the garden and Pemberton has incorporated the garden into the school's curriculum through an environmental science class, a special education restaurant class and a cooking class.

Who will run the garden when Naftali graduates from Oceana in 2012?

"We — Caro, Laurie, Ryan and myself — are meeting to discuss that," Moed said. "We are working to train other students and I will help to maintain the garden by whatever means possible. But we would like to spread out the load so that it is not a small group or one person, but rather a larger effort."

Along with his Oceana-founded garden, Moed works year-round as a nursery intern for the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy.

"I have learned a tremendous amount about restoration, native plants and the ins and outs of a nursery and will continue to work there as long as I am able."

Moed is also serving on the leadership team for the Youth Space: Healthy San Mateo County Task Force, will be attending the Rooted in Community Conference again this year in Maine — through Pie Ranch the message of the conference is food justice and sustainable agriculture — and will work with the Pacifica Beach Coalition as time allows.

How will the community farmer, environmental steward and educator spend his \$36,000?

"While a vast majority of it will undoubtedly go towards college," Moed said, "I am not completely certain. I would like to put some back into the garden."

Without hesitation, Naftali explained how growing a garden affects not just him but so many.

"I have learned a lot and so have many of our volunteers," Moed said. "The physical transformation which has occurred at our gravel lot has been an amazing one and has left the site completely transformed. What was once an eye sore is now a place that many are drawn to and it is noticed by everyone who enters the school's cafeteria — not just students but individuals attending meetings or events. On a more physical level, students and staff are able to eat some of the lovely garden produce as well as the eggs from our new chickens." (Yep, the site now has chickens.)

If Natalie has an extra wish regarding his Diller Teen Tikkun Olam award it is this.

"I hope the award will generate lots of media attention, which in turn I hope will generate more interest or maybe even more funds for the Oceana High School Garden." (Visit <http://www.oceanagarden.org> (<http://www.oceanagarden.org>).

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