

Author Hopes to Inspire a Hero in Every Child

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Ask a kid today to name a hero. What you're likely to hear is a laundry list of television, movie and sports stars. Author T.A. Barron thinks it's a travesty that heroism today is tantamount to fame and fortune.

"What gets lost because of that is that people forget—especially our young people, our future. They don't get to know and really believe that they have heroes down on the inside of them," he recently told a chapel full of Hawken Middle Schoolers.

"Every single one of you can do something remarkable to change the world."

Barron, a Princeton graduate, Rhodes scholar and former president of a venture capital firm, is the author of over 20 books including "Heartlight," "The Ancient One," and "Tree Girl," the *New York Times* best-selling trilogy entitled "The Great Tree of Avalon," and a five-book Merlin epic. He recently bought his message of heroism to Hawken's Middle School for a visit where he encouraged the students to believe in the possibilities that lay within them.

Barron recounted his life's path and how he ultimately ended up as a writer living in Colorado with his wife and five kids. He talked of how he came to know Merlin the Wizard and how the character so deeply resonated with him that he began to imagine a Merlin before Camelot, before the wizardry, before the sword in the stone.

"He really understands the vulnerabilities and the weaknesses and the frailties of humanity," Barron said of Merlin.

"At the same time, he really believes in our ability to reach for the stars."

Barron is also the founder of the Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes, which is his salute each year to ten young people who he feels exhibit true heroic qualities.

Three Hawken students received the award earlier this school year. Sophomore Aaron Kohn and juniors Evin McMullen and Angela Primbas were honored—Kohn for his work with the San Bushmen tribe from the Kalahari Desert and McMullen and Primbas for their efforts to save the Ohio Brook Trout. Barron noted that in the seven-year history of the award, one school has never had as many winners in the same year as Hawken.

He used the stories of some of the young winners of his award to bring home his message. He said that the students would probably have times of confusion, of doubt and

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of fear, but it was all a part of the journey to find the greatness within.

"Just like Merlin you have something special inside," he said. "Call it magic. Call it courage. Call it a hero."