

## Touched by Merlin's wand

**I**n the marvelous "Lost Years of Merlin" epic by Boulder children's author Tom Barron, the young wizard faces a daunting series of tests as he perfects the powers that will eventually enable him to shape a nation.

But Barron goes beyond hoping just to inspire young people to real-world heroism through his books. His new hope is to discover and nourish the flames of courage and creativity as they appear in the emerging generation. Hence, the Gloria Barron Young Heroes Prize, named for Barron's mother, will on Oct. 2 recognize its first set of recipients: 10 young Coloradans who have demonstrated courage, tenacity, generosity and high purpose — the stuff of true heroism — through community projects conducted in the past year.

We salute Barron for an idea with truly magical potential, as we also salute 10 young Coloradans for being well on the way to fulfilling that potential in their own lives:

■ **Michaella Gallina**, 13, Pueblo West, creator of an Exceptional Rodeo for children with disabilities;

■ **Mark Farnik**, 11, New Raymer, organizer of a jump rope skip-a-thon to raise funds for a local baby in need of a heart transplant;

■ **Adam Trent Bruggeman**, 16, Boulder, who incorporates breast cancer awareness in the magic shows he performs for metro-area schoolchil-

dren and teachers;

■ **Tenise McGhee**, 18, Colorado Springs, president of L.I.F.E. (Love is Finding Everyone), a local teen service group;

■ **Ashley Shuyler**, 16, Golden, creator of AfricAid, a non-profit dedicated to providing scholarships for girls in Tanzania;

■ **Estephania and Esperanza Chavez**, 13 and 14, Denver, who spearheaded Project Literacy, in which middle school students serve as reading tutors for neighborhood elementary youngsters;

■ **Julia Hansford**, 12, Boulder, who organized the "Showers to Go!" program to provide personal care kits for migrant workers;

■ **Michael Munds**, 13, Denver, a seasoned fund-raiser who organized a bowl-a-thon that raised \$9,000 for a young burn victim and now is working to raise funds for victims of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks; and

■ **Carter Dunham**, 16, Steamboat Springs, who worked with classmates and local government to protect 185 acres along the Yampa River.

"Children can come out of the darkness with just one special thing you do for them," wrote Michaella Gallina. "Just that one thing can change that person's life forever! It touched my heart to see them smile."

At a time when our nation needs inspiration, the Gloria Barron award winners provide it in full measure.