

PRESS RELEASE

'Dream big dreams!' U.S. President Barack Obama encourages winners of the 2015 Act Now Youth Awards at Friedrichstadt-Palast Berlin

Berlin, 2 November 2015



Photo: Harald Fuhr / Eventpress

Praise where praise is due! At the first ever Act Now Youth Awards ceremony at Friedrichstadt-Palast Berlin, Dr. Auma Obama and Europe's largest show theatre honoured dedicated young people for their voluntary work. 1,900 invited guests from media, sport, culture, politics, business and social organisations celebrated the nominees' impressive achievements. They also spoke out for humanity and integration, and above all against hatred and xenophobia.

U.S. President Barack Obama sent his personal greetings from Washington to Berlin: 'Robert F. Kennedy once said: "It is a revolutionary world we live in, and it is young people who must take the lead." Congratulations to the winners of the Act Now Youth Awards. Dream big dreams!' **German Chancellor Angela Merkel** also praised the prize-winners: 'Stay active. Keep at it, with confidence, strength and stamina. I wish you every success.'

The **Sustainability award** went to the youth enterprise *Namaste Nepal S-GmbH*, based at the Geschwister-Scholl high school in Freiberg, Saxony. *Namaste* provides assistance to the small Nepalese mountain village of Gati, where it carries out its activities in partnership with the local population. Following the recent earthquake, *Namaste* has so far collected € 264,000 for the reconstruction of the village. The youth enterprise is a highly successful social business in the tradition of Nobel Peace Prize winner Mohammed Yunus, said award presenter Nena. *Namaste* shows that sustainability can be 'profitable', not only in a capitalist sense, but especially for young people in Nepal

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Friedrichstadt-Palast Berlin
Europe's Show Palace

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In the East End Theatre District

Theatre Director/General Director:
Dr. Berndt Schmidt

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who have been fighting for survival and for their future following the devastating earthquake.

Young people who serve as outstanding role models were nominated for the **Innovation award**. The chosen winner was the initiative [U25] – *Jugendliche helfen Jugendlichen*, a project in which young people provide support to people of their own age who are at risk of suicide. Counselling is offered via a web platform. The approach of helping those at risk of suicide by offering a robust personal relationship, and using the internet as a communication tool, is an innovative one and clearly qualifies the nominees for the Innovation award, said Philipp Laude, Matthias Roll and Oğuz Yılmaz of YouTube trio Y-Titty. The project has now led to more [U25] groups being set up in other cities. 'It is almost a movement already. This project sets an impressive motivational example.'

Devrim Emre from Berlin received the **Inspiration award**, along with the specially created trophy by designer Jette Joop, on behalf of the Heroes group. 'Devrim has become a mighty hero in the prevention project *Against Oppression in the Name of Honour*, because he has displayed extraordinary commitment at many levels of the project, is always first in line during some quite dangerous missions, and is able to question himself too,' Scorpions frontman Klaus Meine lauded the 18-year-old. Devrim and the Heroes are standard-bearers for tolerance and human rights, and a perfect example to inspire other kids and young people – after all we still need lots of heroes, Meine affirmed.

The **Special award** went to 22-year-old Himn Brimo from Syria, who escaped to Germany after a bomb attack on his university in Aleppo. 'He is a truly special person among the many young people who get involved with helping refugees, immigrants and socially disadvantaged people. He has really earned this award,' declared presenter Ralf Moeller. Himn Brimo has set a shining example and demonstrated that a welcoming culture is not just a German concern, added Dr. Auma Obama. Following traumatic war experiences and with plenty to keep him occupied as he settles into a new culture, learns a language and studies architecture, in a single year the 22-year-old managed to devote 900 volunteer hours to helping children, young people and particularly refugees. Auma Obama: 'He has shown in a wonderful way how voluntary work can benefit you as a person.' 'Thanks to serving as a volunteer I have made new friends and found a new home in Germany,' the prize-winner stated.

For the **Hero award**, the jury was able to propose nominees or choose from the pool of submissions. Presented by football icon Jens Lehmann, the award went to the children's and youth initiative *Plant-for-the-Planet*, incepted in 2007 by then-nine-year-old Felix Finkbeiner from Pähl in Bavaria. While researching a school project on the climate crisis, he heard about Kenyan environmental activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai, whose movement has planted 30 million trees. Felix had a vision that children could plant one million trees in every country on earth. Plant-for-the-Planet became a worldwide movement in 2009 at the UNEP youth conference in South Korea, when several hundred children from 56 countries joined the project. Since then, it has developed into an international network of young world citizens who campaign for climate justice. 100,000 children in more than 100 countries are now active, and 14 billion trees have been planted to date.

Guests attending the awards ceremony included Oscar-winner Arthur Cohn, Sabine Christiansen, Dr. Hermann Bühlbecker, Nikeata Thompson, Axel Schulz, Dr. Florian

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