

KATHY SHAYNA SHOCKET
Gov. Jane Hull mingles with the 500
bowlers at the Fresh Start Women's
Foundation bowling party, B6.

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Teen environmentalist earns international honor

ASU student wins \$100,000 prize for fighting pollution

By **Steve Yozwiak**
The Arizona Republic

Kory Johnson is wise, and now rich, beyond her years.

Across the nation and for a decade, the one-time Central High School cheer squad co-captain has helped lead dozens of grass-roots protests against polluters.

At age 9, she watched her teenage sister die from what her family claimed was tainted well water in west Phoenix.

She's been arrested herself for protesting the importation of DDT-contaminated soil to Arizona.

She's helped stop hazardous-waste incinerators, helped prevent landfills in streambeds and founded her own national environmental group. She helped persuade McDonald's to

reduce the use of polystyrene packaging.

Today, Kory Johnson, now a 19-year-old freshman psychology student at Arizona State University, will receive \$100,000.

Johnson is the youngest recipient of the ninth annual Goldman Environmental Prize, the largest international prize given to grass-roots environmental activists.

"I'm so nervous," the usually unflappable Johnson said.

"This is just a really, really big award!"

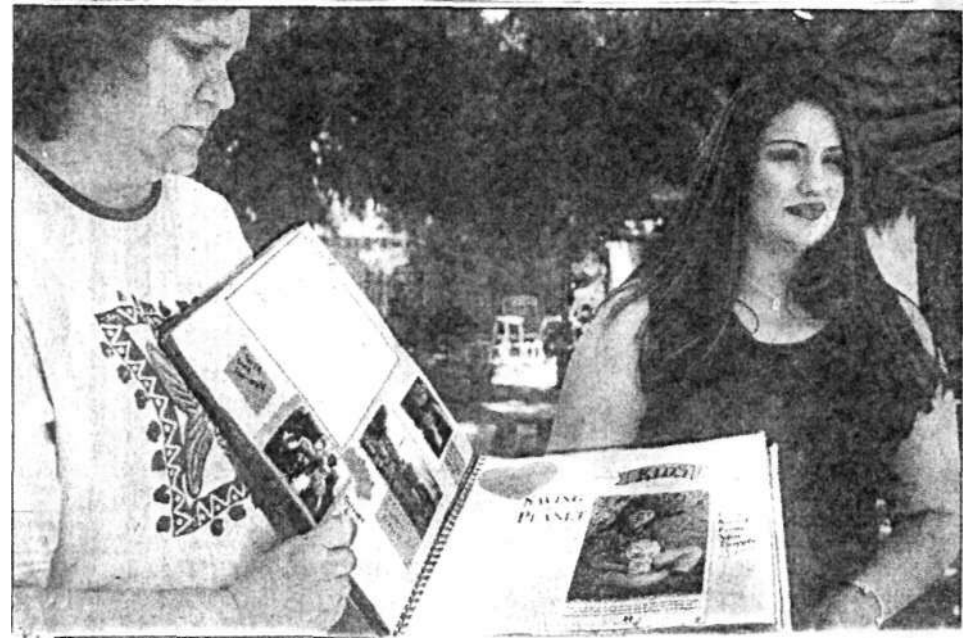
Johnson already has received dozens of awards over the past decade, including ones from former Phoenix Mayor Paul Johnson, the late John Denver and President Clinton.

Johnson said she plans to donate some of her award to environmental groups and to use the rest to continue her education.

Her mother, Teri Johnson, who encouraged her daughter's activism by bringing her along to numerous public protests and government hearings, was stunned by news of the award.

"My mouth just dropped," she said.

Kory is the first Arizonan and only the sixth U.S. citizen to win the Goldman award, which



James Garcia/The Arizona Republic

— Please see *TEEN*, Page B2 Activist Kory Johnson (right) and her mom, Teri, reflect on 10 years of environmental work.

— *TEEN*, from Page B1

is bestowed each year on six individuals worldwide. The prizes will be awarded today at a dinner hosted by Goldman in San Francisco.

Duane Silverstein, executive director of the Goldman Environmental Foundation, said the Goldman review board — which has included such prominent environmental experts as Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt — was impressed by Johnson's youth and long-term commitment to environmental causes.

"We felt it was extraordinary that

someone could make a national impact at just 9 years old," Silverstein said.

"Most 9-year-olds would be devastated by the loss of a sister. But Kory took the next step and founded a national organization (Children for a Safe Environment) and campaigned on issues that had direct, positive impacts."

One of Johnson's early victories occurred in 1991, when she helped stop the ENSCO hazardous-waste incinerators from being installed southwest of Phoenix in Mobile.

Johnson was treated to the spectacle of her family's house guests, participating in a public hearing about ENSCO, being paralyzed by

stun guns fired by Maricopa County sheriff's deputies. The incident so outraged Valley residents that thousands of protesters showed up at a subsequent ENSCO hearing at Phoenix Civic Plaza.

"It was remarkable for such a young person to have so much initiative, so much energy and so much success," Silverstein said.

The goal of the San Francisco-based Goldman group — founded by an heir to the Levi Strauss clothing firm and Goldman Insurance Services, an independent insurance brokerage — is to encourage extraordinary public service from ordinary people.

"This is going to be so very

inspirational for children throughout the world," he said of Johnson's award.

The award supports grass-roots activism in the face of opposition from big business and big government.

"We've had people win the Goldman prize whose annual income is less than \$500," Silverstein said.

Other winners of the award this year include:

- Berita Kuwar, a chieftain of the U'wa Tribe in the mountains of Colombia, who is leading what the Goldman group described as "a literal life-and-death struggle" against multinational oil companies.

- Anna Giordano, an Italian who has risked her life to stop Sicilian wildlife poachers.

- Hirosumi Yamashita, who has waged a 25-year battle to protect one of the world's richest wetlands in Japan.

- Atherton Martin, who stopped a mining operation that would have devastated more than 10 percent of his island in the Dominican Republic.

- Bobby Peck, a South African who has organized campaigns against illegal toxic dumps.

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