

BY AMBER CYPHERS

YOUNG PEOPLE TO WATCH

GLIMPSE THE
FUTURE:
HERE'S OUR
COLLECTION
OF 21-AND-
UNDERS
WORTH
KEEPING
AN EYE ON

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE sifting through lists of impressively accomplished high-schoolers to put a dent in your self-image. But it's also a heartening experience. Face it, it's not easy to grow up in today's world. In the midst of all the stories of drugs and guns in schools, preteen murderers and a rising sense of hopelessness, it's good to know there are young people accomplishing great things.

Those profiled here are all exceptional. They've found their passion. They want to make the world a better place. They're born leaders. They've been challenged by extreme circumstances and triumphed. Some carry very adult-size burdens and scars, while some seem wonderfully untainted by life's struggles.

Every year we tell you about the adult achievers you should keep an eye on. It's time to find out what the younger generation is up to.

Zac York, 17

When Zac was 12, he was busy making plans to climb Mount Whitney with his father. Then he was diagnosed with brain cancer. Through five years, 17 surgeries, radiation therapy, hundreds of hours of physical therapy and numerous setbacks, Zac hasn't let go of the dream. Initially confined to a wheelchair and unable even to walk without assistance, he is training again—planning to finally climb Mount Whitney next July. Not content to celebrate his own recovery, Zac has enlisted sponsors, donors and trainers to turn his climb into a fund-raiser for pediatric brain tumor research. He recently was invited to the Governor's 2005 California Youth Leadership Forum for Students with Disabilities, and plans to produce a documentary to support his Mount Whitney project as part of his senior project. "I have a whole new outlook on life," he says. "Before, I was ignorant. Now I'm grateful."

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