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**Local Resident Named State Finalist for
Cox Conserves Hero Award**
**Award money earmarked to move area off fossil fuels
in response to Refugio Oil Spill**

May 27, 2015, Santa Barbara, CA – Local resident Jordan benShea has moved into the final running for the California Cox Conserves Hero Award. With the award comes the opportunity to support a shift away from fossil fuels – an important message that is resonating strongly with Santa Barbara residents in the wake of a 100,000 gallon oil spill near Refugio State Beach last week.

This stage of the competition is determined by an online public vote, which takes just moments to participate in. Community members interested in casting their vote must do so before Sunday, May 31 by visiting the [Cox Conserves Heroes](http://CoxConservesHeroes.com) site. There they can also see a video detailing Jordan’s work in the Santa Barbara community.

Given by [Cox Communications](http://CoxCommunications.com) and [The Trust for Public Land](http://TheTrustforPublicLand.org), the conservation award honors volunteers who dedicate time to creating, preserving, or enhancing shared outdoor spaces. As one of three finalists for the statewide award, benShea stands to receive a substantial gift of up to \$10,000, which will be given to her environmental nonprofit of choice, the [Community Environmental Council](http://CommunityEnvironmentalCouncil.org) (CEC). If she wins, the funds will go to support CEC’s efforts to move the Santa Barbara region away from its dependency on fossil fuels and prevent future damage by the oil industry.

“As we’ve seen over the past week, protecting Santa Barbara requires exceptional citizens dedicated to protecting our unique ecosystem,” said Kathi King, Donor Relations Manager for CEC. “The best action people can take now is to prevent future oil spills by breaking up with the oil industry. That’s what this money would help us do.”

As winner of the Santa Barbara regional award, benShea has already secured a \$5,000 donation for CEC. At stake now in the statewide competition is an additional \$5,000 – which would bring the total donation to \$10,000. And in benShea’s eyes, there has never been a more critical moment for a transition to clean, renewable energy.

“This is not about me,” stated Jordan. “This is about protecting and preserving the gorgeous ecosystem that we’re fortunate enough to call home, and about using our



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heartbreak over the Refugio Oil Spill as a catalyst to seek out other options for energy.”

benShea’s nomination is not a surprise to those who know her. Her commitment to sustainability is evident in every aspect of her life. As a volunteer board member at Fairview Gardens, Santa Barbara Beekeepers Association, and CEC, she acts as a community ambassador, raising awareness and participation for environmentally focused programs. She makes conscious decisions each day to lower her impact on the environment. She drives on sunshine with an electric vehicle charged by her home’s solar panels, shops for local food, works to ban single use plastics, and raises bees. Just as important, she shares her stories throughout the community to encourage others to make sustainability a habit.

When benShea is not volunteering, she can often be found with her dog, Zoe, walking the beaches of Santa Barbara. Like so many in our community, she feels devastated by the disastrous effects the recent spill will have on the Gaviota coast.

“The message the oil spill sent to our community is clear,” said benShea. “It’s time to move toward clean, renewable energy, and supporting organizations like CEC is how we will get there.”

The Cox Conserves Hero winner will be chosen by an online public vote that ends this Sunday, May 31. To cast your vote, go to <http://coxconservesheroes.com/california/finalists.aspx>

About the Community Environmental Council

In the wake of the devastating 1969 oil spill off Santa Barbara’s shores, a group of local concerned citizens began talking about a different way of looking at environmental systems. During that time, Senator Gaylord Nelson visited Santa Barbara to view the damage from the oil spill. When he returned to Washington, D.C., he introduced a bill designating April 22 as a national day to celebrate the earth. Over the next few years, around the country the environmental movement was born – including the Community Environmental Council (CEC). In CEC’s first act as a newly incorporated non-profit, it hosted one of the first Earth Day celebrations in the U.S. in 1970.

Since that time, CEC has remained at the forefront of the environmental movement, leading the Santa Barbara region – and at times California and the nation – in creative solutions to some of the toughest environmental problems. For over 45 years, CEC has been working to move our region off of fossil fuels. Today CEC is also focused on the climate, encouraging global change through local action with five initiatives: Drive Less, Choose Electric, Go Solar, Ditch Plastic, and Eat Local.

For more information on CEC:

- Find CEC on the web at cecsb.org
- Like CEC on Facebook at facebook.com/cecsb
- Follow CEC on Twitter @CECSB and on Instagram @CEC_SB
- Call CEC at 805-963-0583