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Friend of Darwin award recognizes lifetime evolution educator, young grassroots activist

It's an age-old story—the master and the newcomer. The expert who has devoted decades to keeping students on the right path. And the new kid who throws himself into the battle for truth, beauty, and the sheer joy of challenging the status quo.

The master—and a winner of NCSE's 2012 Friend of Darwin award—is Judy Scotchmoor, Assistant Director for Education and Public Programs at the University of California Museum of Paleontology (UCMP). Scotchmoor is a legend among scientists, educators, and museum staff, having built UCMP's highly regarded evolution program from scratch over the last 18 years. Her work includes the wildly popular "Understanding Evolution" and "Understanding Science" web sites, which clock over a million visitors per month. Scotchmoor was also the motive force behind the 2000 National Conference on the Teaching of Evolution, which galvanized scientists and educators to take the growing attacks on evolution education seriously.



"It would be difficult to think of another person who has done more, and in such a sustained way, to promote and improve the teaching of evolution", says NCSE executive director Eugenie Scott. "Anyone concerned about evolution education knows and respects Judy."

The young activist making a big splash—the other winner of the 2012 Friend of Darwin award—is Louisiana's Zack Kopplin. As part of a high school class project in 2011, Kopplin decided to organize a repeal of the creationist-backed Louisiana Science Education Act (LSEA). And he nearly succeeded, spearheading a statewide petition campaign that gathered 68,000 signatures. Kopplin was unstoppable, holding rallies and news conferences, appearing on dozens of local and national radio and TV shows, convincing the city of New Orleans to officially endorse his effort, getting a state senator to sponsor and introduce a repeal bill, recruiting forty-three Nobel laureates to support the repeal, and more.



"Even when the repeal bill failed, instead of being discouraged, Zack immediately organized his supporters to oppose a bill that would have stripped the state board of education of its power over textbooks, opening the classroom to substandard materials that teach pseudoscience," says NCSE's Genie Scott. "Thanks to the public awareness he'd raised, the new bill was quickly defeated."

Says Zack: "In 2012 I plan to fight the LSEA and keep fighting every year until it is repealed. I will stand up against any other creationism bills that are sponsored in Louisiana and elsewhere."

Zack reminds us that one person—even a very young person—can make a difference.

MEDIA NOTE: For images of the Friend of Darwin award, Judy Scotchmoor, and Zack Kopplin, go to our press image [page](#). [4]

Videos: Judy Scotchmoor

["The Case for Thinking Evolutionarily Across the Life Sciences"](#) [5]

["The state of evolution education"](#) [6]

Videos and podcasts: Zack Kopplin

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CONTACT: Robert Luhn, Director of Communications, NCSE, 510-601-7203, luhn@ncse.com [10]

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