

THE FIELD REPORT

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HOTELS



Jaden is Just Fantastic

BY NORA WALSH

We love his music, but we REALLY love what he does for the planet.

A growing number of high-profile celebrities are using their fame to shine a light on critical environmental issues. Nineteen-year old actor, rapper and activist, Jaden Smith, is one of them.

Son of Hollywood heavyweights Will and Jada Pinkett Smith, Jaden grew up surfing in California where he was troubled by the sheer quantity of discarded water bottles littering the ground and plastic trash floating in the sea. At age 10, he began investigating plastic pollution and was shocked to learn the existence of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch in the Pacific Ocean. In response, he told his parents he wanted to reduce their carbon footprint. Taking his passion seriously, they connected him with longtime family friend and partner of Facet Creative, Drew Fitzgerald, who had been supporting sustainability efforts for years.

Through Jaden and Fitzgerald's interaction, the idea of creating an environmentally conscious water bottle company was born. In 2008, the pair enlisted a number of investors (including Will and Jada) to launch JUST Water, a company that sells spring

water in more-planet-friendly bottles. For years, the Smith's involvement was kept under wraps. "JUST is committed to creating and providing better options for the things we all need in modern life, starting with a bottle of water. To take a sincere passionate concern for our environment by a young boy and see this vision grow into what JUST has become is humbling," said JUST CEO, Ira Laufer. "It's crucial that a global business of today plays a leading role in reducing plastic and ultimately climate impact. We proudly share this goal with our team, our partners, our customers and together we're all helping make a difference on our planet.

JUST Water set out by developing a partnership with Glens Falls, New York, where Fitzgerald is from. A well was created to access spring water, which goes through a filtration system and is treated only once—as opposed to other companies that re-treat municipal water before they bottle it, generating unnecessary energy waste and water loss. JUST Water also voluntarily pays six times the city's municipal tax rate while only using three percent of its surplus water.

When the company first started, 52 percent of JUST Water bottles were made from renewable resources (materials that grow back) like paper instead of petroleum. Today, it's up to 82 percent having switched over to plant-based plastic derived from sugarcane to produce bottle tops, further cutting the company's carbon emissions. Plus, all materials are 100% recyclable.

Selling for less than \$2.00 a bottle, JUST Water can be purchased at all three 1 Hotels, as well as retailers and grocery stores across the country from mom-and-pop markets to Whole Foods and Amazon.

"Primarily we want to do something that is good for the world, that starts to move in a direction, even if it's just consciousness—even if it's just people start paying attention," Will Smith tells *New York* magazine. Jaden, who sits on the Environmental Media Association's board of directors, a nonprofit that works with pop-culture figures to promote environmental progress, is as passionate as ever about sustainability: "My ultimate goal is to move through the entire spectrum of consumer goods and eliminate plastic, one product at a time."

