

Shahaed named 2017 John West Memorial Scholar



By Brock Weir

In his lifetime, former Aurora mayor John West was awarded for his leadership, and nearly four years after his death, his legacy continues to recognize the leaders of tomorrow.

One such leader is recent Aurora High School graduate Heba Shahaed, who was named the 2017 recipient of the John West Memorial Leaders of Tomorrow Scholarship.

With a value of \$1,000, the scholarships were established with a bequest from Mr. West, who died in December of 2013. To recognize students who have made a positive impact in the local community and have set a good example for other young people to follow.

This scholarship is just the latest award Heba has received for her leadership as she prepares to embark on her post-secondary career after receiving Magna's Give Back Award this past spring.

Heba recently graduated from Aurora High School and is attending McMaster University in the fall in the Life Sciences program, said Julie Stephenson, Youth Programmer for the Town of Aurora, last Tuesday as Heba was cheered on by friends and family.

Heba was the president of her high school's Health Occupation Students of America Association and the Empowering Student Partnerships, Vice President of Equity Council, president of Student Council, an executive on her school's Relay for Life team and Member of the Town of Aurora Youth Engagement Committee.

The testimonial continued from Gregory Peri, Acting Youth and Community Development Coordinator for the Town, before Mayor Geoff Dawe formally presented the scholarship.

Heba was the coordinator of her school's Peer Mentor program, which helped launch a student wellness campaign at her school using innovative design of exam anti-stress kits and activities meant to support mental health, said Mr. Peri. As she has demonstrated exemplary dedication to our community and volunteered almost 1,300 hours in community involvement throughout her high school career, Heba is a dedicated leader with a personal passion for programs and initiatives that develop community and promote inclusion.

Her involvement in the Aurora Oral History project, in partnership with the Aurora Historical Society focused on bridging the gap between seniors and youth with the sharing of personal history and the preservation of our town's heritage. We are honoured to present to you the 2017 John West Leaders of Tomorrow Scholarship Award.

Speaking to The Auroran as a recipient of the 2017 Give Back Awards, Heba told The Auroran that she dedicates herself to giving back to the community so that we can progress as a society.

I think it is my responsibility, she said, noting she is inspired to continue her work when she sees the impact her volunteerism has and continues to have. In school, I began to see how my help and volunteerism made an impact and helped make a difference in the lives of many people, so I decided to explore different options to get involved, whether it has been through the Aurora Historical Society or with the Pen Pal program at the Aurora Public Library. It is something that makes me feel really good, made others feel really good, so I decided to continue.

As noted, Heba will continue her studies at McMaster University with plans to become a medical doctor.

?I want to continue volunteering wherever I go,? she said. ?I want to give back, whether it is through volunteering at the hospital or spending time tutoring and helping out my peers, assisting teachers, with people living in the community ? anything I can do to help and be a leader in my community I would like to do.?