

Students sought out opportunities to contribute to community despite uncertainty, closures

Despite uncertainty on whether their education would continue in person or virtually, local students continued to seek opportunities to contribute to their school communities and the world around them.

Those that went the extra mile were recently honoured by Magna's Neighbourhood Network with the 2022 Give Back Awards.

Established as grants to recognize students for their community contributions rather than their academic work, the money received by each student is to further their post-secondary work, wherever that path may lead.

Within schools, committees and clubs still exist; whether that was a virtual scenario or when they were able to return to school, a lot of the kids who were engaged in their student councils, on the various committees helped run the different programs and events within the school, says Neighbourhood Network manager Erin Cerenzia. Of course, Neighbourhood Network has run a whole bunch of volunteer opportunities as well and I think it is a mix [of recipients this year] who already have a long-standing connection with the charity or the organization they are supporting, so they were able to get back in and be part of that group of volunteers to return as restrictions were lightened.

It was really nice to see that the charities were able to welcome kids back to in-person volunteering and I think it is just their commitment that they have found ways, whether virtual or in person, to get involved and continue volunteering throughout the pandemic.

Last week, The Auroran introduced you to four of this year's honourees.

The series continues this week with another set of four outstanding students:

CLAIRE JOHNSON

Sir William Mulock Secondary School

Claire has dedicated many volunteer hours to her school and community. She is part of her school's Athletic Council, where she assisted with planning intramural sports, tournaments, school clothing sales, year-end banquets, and became involved with their annual Relay for Life event. Claire is very passionate about baseball. She volunteer coaches for multiple teams where she supports player development and acts as a role model for younger females in a male-dominated sport. In 2022, Claire was the only Ontario Women's Baseball player named to the National Prospects' team, signifying her as an up-and-coming baseball player in Canada. After graduation, Claire will be attending Sir Wilfrid Laurier University to pursue a Bachelor's degree in Health Sciences. She has tried out for the Men's Baseball Team at Laurier to continue her baseball journey and push for gender equity in sports. Claire's goal is to one day attend medical school and become a practicing physician, specializing in pediatrics.

EMILY PEELAR

King City Secondary School

Born and raised on a farm, Emily has learned the value of hard work and perseverance. Those core values, childhood roots, and experiences shaped her into the person she is today a very active school and community volunteer. Emily was President of her school's Empowered Student Partnership Team, Head Mentor of the Mentorship Program, and volunteered countless hours coaching the Curling Team. Within her community, Emily supports local charities such as Belinda's Place and Yellow Brick House by hosting awareness campaigns and fundraising events like Candy Cane Sales, Colour to Conquer Cancer, and Socks for Souls. Emily has continuously worked to make King City Secondary School and her community at large a better place.

JULIA SCOLAMIERO

Aurora High School

?Julia has a great interest in working with children, youth, and those with disabilities. She finds great joy in helping others in the community, school, and beyond. Some of her volunteer efforts include performing in a jazz band, shoveling snow for seniors, serving food to the homeless, and serving as a camp counselor. Julia is currently a Lifeguard and Swim Instructor for the Town of Aurora, where she has the privilege of teaching children of all ages and abilities the fundamental life skills for safety in water. Her volunteer and work experiences have shaped Julia into a resilient, hard-working, and compassionate individual. Julia will be heading off to university to study Health Sciences in hopes of pursuing a career in the healthcare field, specifically in mental health.?

ALLYSON SURGENOR

Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School

?In all Allyson does, the kindness, sense of purpose and collaborative nature of her leadership shines through. Allyson has volunteered as a leader or participant in Blue Door Shelter's Coldest Night of the Year, Change for Change, Light the Night, Terry Fox Run, Well-Being Team, and the Williams Peer Mentor Team. She has successfully fundraised for holiday drives, Blue Door, MS Society of Canada, and Yellow Brick House. Allyson was also involved in leading a project dedicated to raising awareness for Anti-Black Racism in her school and community. In her spare time, Allyson plays soccer, volleyball, rugby, and volunteers teaching swimming lessons. She enjoys going to the gym and spending time with friends, family, and her fur family - two pups named Milo and Bean.?

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