

## Aurora student brings home crown in World Debating Championships



**By Brock Weir**

Aurora's Anna Croxon brought home top honours last week at the World Individual Debating and Public Speaking Championships.

The Grade 11 student at King's Country Day School (CDS) took on the world at the competition, which was held at Toronto's Branksome Hall.

Anna was one of three CDS students participating in the event and captured the overall World Champion Title, clinching the crown with her persuasive speech on voluntourism.

Anna presented the speech of her lifetime and was rewarded accordingly, says debate coach Kerstin Wyndham-West.

Anna tells The Auroran she didn't go into the competition thinking she would do as well as she did and taking top honours was definitely surprising.

I have a Goals List on my phone for myself of things I would like to accomplish and just placing within the Top 30 is something I would have considered an accomplishment, says Anna. Coming home knowing I had won the entire thing was very surreal and it definitely felt good because I've worked really hard at debating and public speaking since Grade 7. Knowing that the hard work has paid off and is being recognized is something really special.

The competition, she says, turned out to be one of the most amazing experiences of her life, one

which allowed her to meet people from around the world, individuals who are like-minded and passionate about what they believe.

Tackling the subject of voluntourism was something she says was slightly outside her comfort zone. When preparing for a Persuasive speech, Anna says she often focuses on making an emotional connection. This time, however, the subject presented what she describes as a 'risk.'

'It was especially impactful [at Branksome Hall] because a lot of the judges were teachers at the school, parents with children in private school, or judges from other private schools from all over the world,' she says. '[This subject] is something that hit very close to home because a lot of the people partake in these volunteer service trips and a lot of the feedback I got from parents and judges was

[they]

have been on one of these trips, or their children had, and, 'your speech allowed me to rethink my priorities in terms of those trips, and if I am actually helping people when I go over.'

'When researching, it was definitely a topic that touched me because in our quest to help other people, we're actually doing more harm, which is something I don't think many people are aware of.'

At the World levels, participants begin the competition in the preliminary round and contestants are advanced to the next level based on these scores. Typically, the Top 12 advance to the finals and this Top 12 is whittled down to just two individuals who rise to the top and then go head-to-head in the Grand Finals.

'It was nerve-racking making the Grand Finals, but it was a very special experience as well,' says Anna.

With her trophy in hand, and her Goals List still on her phone, Anna says she is hoping to be able to take on the world once again at next year's competition in Shanghai. In the meantime, she's focusing on Grade 12 and her post-secondary career, preparing her application packages for a number of American universities.

Should she have the chance to defend her title in Shanghai, she's brainstorming fresh topics with which to wow the judges.

'It is hard to come

up with a speech topic because you want it to be both unique and worldly, something that people might not have necessarily thought about, she says. I definitely have to do research; there are things that interest me, such as abuse of women online, and I also think that the topic of toxic masculinity and how that affects the feminism movement is something I would be interested in. I want to make sure I am doing something that will have an impact while also educating myself and building my knowledge bank.

If a school offers debating or public speaking, it is something that is really meaningful to pursue and I would encourage any student to partake in any time for public speaking, even if it isn't a designated club at your school because you will build skills and friendships that last forever. I don't think I would be the person I am today if I hadn't enjoyed public speaking and debating because it has shaped me so much.