

Aurora student will continue outreach after winning prestigious scholarship



By David Grossman

Rachel Duffy has spent a great deal of time not only thinking about those who need some form of assistance, but stepping right in and doing what she can to help.

One of Villanova College's energetic and vigorous students, Duffy is an individual who has many interests and endeavours. But time and time again, she makes the sacrifices to put others before herself. Quite intellectual and focused, she knows not to take things for granted.

'You have to face the challenges and difficulties in life, but it becomes a huge bonus to be the one who can be there to help those not as fortunate,' said Duffy. 'I want to be the one to help people make a change for the better.'

What is also quite obvious about this career-focused young woman, other than her constant radiating smile and a shining glow of optimism, is that Duffy has a passion for helping those who are destitute and disadvantaged.

Always enthusiastic, Duffy is not one for seeking out commendations but her charismatic character and determination to help, has inspired devotion in others. It's what she has also accomplished that has caught the attention of those who are about to help her educational career get even better.

As a result of her academic and extracurricular accomplishments at Villanova College in King, Duffy placed in the top one per cent of the Notre Dame class of 2021.

According to the Stamps Foundation, the merit scholarship, awarded to Duffy, 'attracts exceptional students who exemplify leadership, service, scholarship, innovation, and character.'

Believed to be the only Canadian recipient of the prestigious Stamps Scholarship at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, IN., Duffy has accepted an offer to study Engineering for the next four years with tuition, books and more included in the financial award 'one that will easily exceed six figures.'

The journey to Notre Dame, some eight hours southwest of her Canadian residence and where her brother is also a student, is something she didn't waste any time deliberating over. Duffy is astute and well aware that Notre Dame reminds its students of the value of achievements and to be sensitive to those oppressed, struggling, in poverty and affected by injustice

'I can hardly wait to study at Notre Dame,' said Duffy, who was also accepted at Duke and Cornell, the latter being where both her parents went to school. 'I feel more comfortable with the philosophy behind Notre Dame, the community, the campus life and the scholarship is a huge factor.'

Duffy can get a bit teary-eyed when thinking about her graduation from Villanova, a second home for her since she started classes at school back in Grade 5, because 'it has meant so much to me to learn, gain so much knowledge and really grow up here?.'

On the academic honour roll at Villanova for the past five years, Duffy still found time from her studies to be a sound contributor to

the school's range of activities. She played clarinet in the school concert band that frequently performed at festivals. From music to theatre, Duffy had a role in the school dramatic performance of Grease, and has been a team player in sports contributing to Villanova's field hockey and volleyball squads.

But there is also another spotlight on Duffy. She's on a mission to build on her thirst for education excellence and, in doing so, make a difference in the lives of others.

"I love people," she said. "Studying engineering gives me an opportunity to expand my knowledge in ways that, I really believe, encompasses many things - including understanding individuals and social issues."

Duffy has been fortunate to travel and benefitted from enrichment programs.

She hinted that it may well have been while listening to a lecture by a female engineer, while at Memorial University in St. John's, Nfld., that escalated her intrigue for a discipline that deals with the art of applying scientific knowledge to practical problems.

One summer, she was part of a group that helped build a school in Ecuador. While in Indiana touring Notre Dame, she remembers sitting in a dimly lit room of a homeless shelter talking about a range of personal issues with a woman who was disabled from several strokes.

Closer to home, Duffy has been involved in several community projects from making food at Villanova to then joining a Sandwich Patrol to feed the homeless in downtown Toronto. She has read books to youngsters in Toronto's low-income neighbourhoods, and salvaged old magazines, using them to improve reading and literacy

"Villanova has had a huge positive impact on me and I have learned that I need to do what I am best at - being a force for good," she said. "Personal success to me is assisting others, trying to make them happy and I find that to be very rewarding."