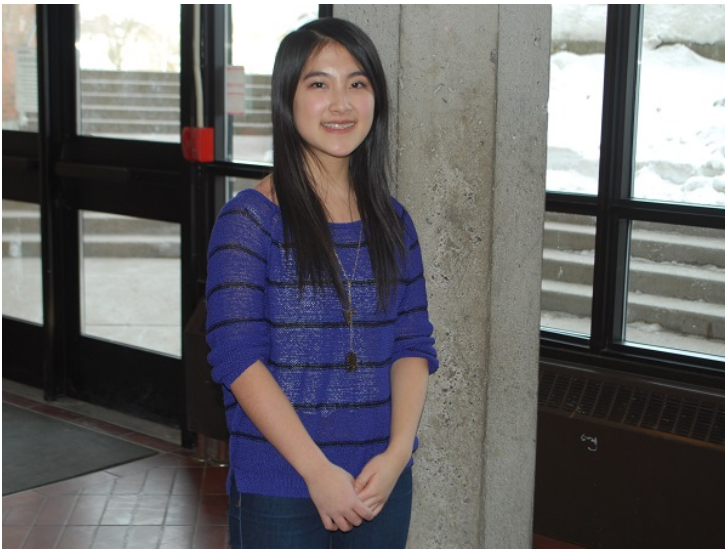


Early adversity helped local teen and scholar rise to the occasion?



By Brock Weir

When Sabrina Lin moved from Taiwan to Canada in Grade 4, life was tough and money was sparse.

Their first home here was a tiny basement apartment, admittedly not that great of an environment to grow up in. They moved seven times, Sabrina had to re-integrate herself into several different schools, neighbourhoods, and groups of friends, all the while learning English.

An exceptional student, Sabrina, now a Grade 12 student at Aurora High School, took to the new language well, and was soon a vital link for her family.

I did whatever I could to help out my family with cell phone bills, electricity bills, help around the house, and apply for official documents, she says. That definitely helped me grow, mature and have a more mature perspective on life.

Taking a page from these early life lessons, Sabrina has dedicated her high school life to improving the lives of the people around her.

For her efforts, Sabrina was named one of just two York Region scholars, and one of 14 across Ontario, to receive a \$5,000 scholarship from the Horatio Alger Association of Canada. Nearly 3,500 students from across Canada applied for the scholarship, which is available to Ontario students who have demonstrated integrity and perseverance in overcoming adversity, as well as strength of character, a good academic record, and a commitment to pursue higher education, and a desire to contribute to society.

It warms my heart to see so many young people who, even after having gone through very difficult periods in their lives, work with great determination to pursue their dreams, said former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, a member of the Horatio Alger Association, in a statement.

As a student with a 97.14 per cent average, an executive on the school's Relay for Life committee, a member of Aurora High School's Year Book Committee, Red and Gold volunteer committee, which links students with volunteer opportunities within the community, the school's Journalism Club, and a founding member of the Town of Aurora's Youth Engagement Committee, Sabrina certainly ticked all the boxes for the Horatio Alger Association.

?We see a lot of things that can be changed in the world and as someone living in Aurora, I am a teenager with not too many responsibilities,? she says. ?I feel I am privileged and it is my responsibility to contribute whatever I can to the community. I grew up without that much, so growing up in a more difficult background I know how lucky I am to be where I am today. I just do whatever I can with the free time I have to make a difference.?

But, where does she get the time?

?I never sleep!?! she jokes.

Taking on these committees within the school and the larger committee, including leadership responsibilities, gives Sabrina the opportunity to ?learn and grow?, she says, and this was a skill that put her in good stead adjusting to so many different elementary schools as a youngster.

Helping her parents persevere in their new lives in Canada served as an early lesson in the power of one individual to make a difference, and what the individual can do when they truly set their minds to something.

?Most kids aren't put in that position and I was able to rise to the occasion,? she says. ?Now, I feel like if I set my mind to something and I want to accomplish something, I have the strong belief I am able to do that. That is what my parents taught me and what my experience has taught me. Embrace every opportunity you get. There are so many opportunities out there, whether they are scholarships, jobs, or leadership positions. You just have to do your research, work hard and, most importantly, be willing to fail once in a while.

?I almost didn't apply for this scholarship because I honestly didn't think I had a chance of winning. I convinced myself to go for it anyways, and I guess you could say I am pretty glad I did! Always be willing to take chances because eventually one of them is going to pay off. Amongst the potential pool of ?no's will be a ?yes' ? and that yes will make everything worth it.?