

Give Back Award winners put ?boots on the ground? to make difference in community

Finding volunteer opportunities during the global pandemic when so many organizations shifted to the virtual realm was a difficult task, but the 20 York Region students recently honoured by Magna's Neighbourhood Network with 2022 Give Back Awards ?put boots on the ground? to keep the momentum going.

From serving on student Councils to planting trees, the students ? who were honoured for their community contributions rather than their academic achievements ? made it happen and, this spring, it paid dividends as Neighbourhood Network's resulting bursaries will support their post-secondary endeavours.

?I think it is a testament to these amazing Give Back Award winners that they found a way no matter what the circumstances,? says Neighbourhood Network manager Erin Cerenzia. ?There were a lot of boots on the ground responding to situations, fundraisers for increased need around the Christmas time because of situations caused by the pandemic?we really haven't had that kind of immediate response and seeing it in action.?

Over the past two weeks, The Auroran has shone a light on eight of 2022's recipients.

The series continues this week.

Katelin MartinKing City Secondary School

?As a dedicated student and avid volunteer, Katelin works with others to create the positive change she wants to see in her community. Katelin volunteered as the President of her school's Music Council, where she organized fundraisers to provide instruments to schools in need. She was also a member of the Empowering Student Partnerships Team, which executed school-wide campaigns such as Colour to Conquer Cancer, Socks4Souls, and the Stomp Out the Stigma Mental Health campaign to raise funds and awareness for important issues and local charities like Belinda's Place and Yellow Brick House. Outside of volunteering, Katelin enjoys reading, learning American Sign Language, and trying out new coffee recipes from Pinterest. In the future, Katelin hopes to work in healthcare where she can create an inclusive medical environment and provide excellent and compassionate patient care to her neighbours in need.?

Keesha RajkumarSutton District High School

?Keesha is an Honour Roll student who has been recognized for her academic achievements with multiple awards, including the Art, Citizenship and Perseverance Award, Good Citizen Award, Proficiency Award, and the Tamil Award. In her free time, she loves to travel, which has shaped Keesha into the person she is today by allowing her to see the world from a different perspective. Keesha brings this attitude to her community involvement work. She volunteers with children at the Georgina Public Library's Lego Club and Robotics Club. She has also volunteered during Fan Fest, International Women's Day, Movie Night, and Multicultural Storytime events. Keesha will attend Ryerson University in the fall, where she will study Child and Youth Care with the dream of becoming an elementary school teacher.?

Caitlin BartonSir William Mulock Secondary School

?Caitlin is a hardworking, respectful, and caring individual who loves spending time with family and friends. Caitlin has spent hundreds of hours volunteering at Doane House Hospice and Margaret Bahen Hospice. She is also Treasurer of her high school's Student Council and has been very involved with events such as Relay for Life, semi-formals, municipal campaigns, and sporting events. During the pandemic, Caitlin created an online program for hospice clients called ?Sit and Dance,' where she motivated people to get moving. Her involvement and commitment to volunteering has had a large impact on others in the community. She is passionate about dance, reading, and volunteering, and looks forward to her future, where she plans on studying Science and

Zoology.?

Mira Kindo-YeungNewmarket High School

?In her own words, Mira is ?obsessed' with two things: getting good grades and working in a Health Science-related field. She has been on the Principal's Honour Roll throughout high school, proving how seriously she takes her studies. Mira's grades are important, as she aspires to work with children, hopefully as a pediatric surgeon. Her volunteer work includes making lunches for elementary school children, providing event support for the King Soup Festival, teaching children to play musical instruments and learn technology, and she has spent many summers as a camp counsellor. Mira has also volunteered with seniors through CHATS, the Alzheimer's Society of York Region, and, during the winter months, she shovels snow for her senior neighbours. When Mira's not busy holding down a part-time job, playing in a band, getting good grades at school, or volunteering, you can find her rock climbing.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter