

Leaders of Tomorrow recognized with John West Scholarship

They have found their feet as young community leaders and, as they prepare to leave home for their post-secondary education this fall, Aurora has recognized two graduates as Leaders of Tomorrow.

Christian Scolamiero, who recently graduated from Aurora High School, and Sanjanaa Arunagiri, a newly-minted grad from Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School, have been honoured by Council with the John West Leaders of Tomorrow Scholarship.

Created through a legacy left to the Town by the late mayor John West, the scholarship program honours graduates who have demonstrated leadership initiative within their school community and the community at large.

Throughout high school, Christian earned his Red Cross Swim Instructor ranking and received a national lifeguard award in 2019, said Courtney Patterson, Youth Programmer for the Town of Aurora. Christian's work and passion have led him to numerous volunteer opportunities and have provided a clear path for improving life for those in the Aurora community.

Christian's contributions have made a distinct and positive impact through the Aurora community, volunteering for various summer camps, working with individuals with diverse abilities, preparing and delivering food for the homeless population, and leading and facilitating activities as a youth mentor to participants in his community church each week.

Christian was also recognized for his most recent work as a member of the York Region Immunization Team, working in a non-clinical position supporting efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19.

I am sincerely honoured to be selected as the recipient of this scholarship, said Christian, who will begin the Bachelor of Commerce program at Dalhousie University in September. Thank you for your generosity that has enabled me to proceed onto my post-secondary path. As I complete my education at Dalhousie University, I am thankful in receiving this scholarship, which will positively influence my future.

Sanjanaa, who will study Life Sciences at McMaster University this Fall, was recognized as a positive presence in our community who has volunteered with municipal summer camp programs, the Town's Youth Engagement Committee, fundraisers for leukemia research, the Salvation Army, and Newmarket's Inn from the Cold, an organization that provides supports to the homeless.

Sanjanaa is a significant member of the Me to We group hosted by her school and was a key facilitator in obtaining and donating over 1,300 books to organizations in need, said Ms. Patterson. She also sold bracelets and participated in bake sales, with proceeds being sent to Kenya to support different communities. It is evident that Sanjanaa demonstrated excellent qualities to receive the John West Memorial Scholarship. The community support letters that were provided in her application not only touch on her volunteer efforts but also include how compassionate, kind and responsible of a role model she is.

In turn, Sanjanaa said she was excited to put the scholarship to good use.

I am beyond thrilled to be named as one of the recipients of the John West Memorial Scholarship, she said. This award is one that acknowledges volunteerism, leadership and making a positive impact on the community. I am honoured to be recognized for my efforts. I have been in awe of the inspiring individuals who have won this award in past years and I am overjoyed to be joining them. Being selected for this scholarship was such an unexpected but pleasant surprise, and I would like to thank the awards committee and our former mayor John West for this award.

In turn, Council members said it was an honour to not only present them virtually with their scholarships but learn of their achievements.

It is an honour to be honouring these two students, said Councillor Wendy Gaertner.

Added Mayor Tom Mrakas: "We're excited to see where their educational careers are going to take them and how they will represent Aurora. I know they are going to do the Town proud."

Councillor Sandra Humfryes said it was "wonderful" to hear of their high school achievements and looked forward to hearing their accomplishments in the future.

"The youth is our future so this is a wonderful celebration," she said. "It is just a real joy to see and quite an honour."

Added Councillor Michael Thompson: "I hope this sets them on a good start for their future."

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter