

## Students honoured for community contributions with 2022 Give Back Awards

Students across northern York Region were honoured at Magna International's Aurora Headquarters on Thursday night as recipients of the 2022 Give Back Awards.

Honouring Grade 12 students who have gone the extra mile as volunteers and community builders within their school walls and beyond, this year's recipients collectively contributed thousands of hours to non-profits, clubs, and other organizations.

"We just continue to be amazed by the quality of applications that come in," says Erin Cerenzia, Manager of Magna's Neighbourhood Network. "You would think with the past two years of being in COVID perhaps these high school students' volunteer commitments may not have been the level we've seen pre-pandemic, but I think it has actually been above and beyond. Collectively, I think the group has donated more than 5,000 hours of volunteer time in their community and what always surprises me, which is not new, is the variety of ways that kids are giving back. They are finding causes they are passionate about, whether it is sports, whether it is charity, whether they have a personal connection through life experience like travel or being a newcomer to Canada and just dedicated to giving back. It is truly inspiring."

In pre-COVID times, Give Back Award winners were honoured in a special ceremony inside the Magna HQ, but the ceremony was put on ice in 2020 and 2021. This year was a new spin on the old normal; instead of a sit-down ceremony inside the building, recipients and their families lined up in their vehicles and, when it was their turn, the recipients came out to collect their certificates and other gifts from the Neighbourhood Network team.

"We were just so thrilled to be able to do something in person and to see their faces, cheer them on as we presented their certificates, give them a celebration and some items to take home with them to really honour their contributions to the community."

Here, and in the weeks ahead, The Auroran will shine a spotlight on the individual honourees:

EILEEN DANAEE

ESC Renaissance

"Eileen is a creative and ambitious high school senior at ESC Renaissance. In Grade 8, Eileen founded the One Nation Club to raise awareness on the importance of Indigenous reconciliation. In high school, she was elected to the Executive Pastoral Committee, where she created a school-wide gratitude-giving platform, volunteered as Vice President of the Student Council, and was Co-President of the Model UN Club. Outside school, Eileen was a member of the RCMP's National Youth Advisory Committee where she co-founded a national organization, Canadian Youth for Youth Empowerment, dedicated to raising awareness on Canadian social issues impacting youth. Eileen loves volunteering because it allows her to be a small part of the solution to causes she is passionate about, such as the stigmatization of mental health and Indigenous reconciliation. It also gives her a strong sense of fulfillment and joy in her everyday life. Lastly, she volunteers simply because she loves meeting new, likeminded people."

DAVID BUCKLEY

St. Andrew's College

"When presented with an opportunity to get involved in the community, Give Back Award recipient David is quick to act. During his time at St. Andrew's College, he had the honour of serving as a School Prefect, Cadet Commanding Officer of the #142 SAC Highland Cadet Corps, Captain of Varsity Volleyball, Head of Community Service Council, Co-Head of SAC Model United Nations, and as a leading member of the SAC Dramatic Society. David has participated in the Model United Nations conferences across North America and received an Outstanding Delegate Award from Harvard University in 2021. The local charities he supports in our community include Jumpstart, Prostate Cancer Canada, and Yellow Brick House. Outside of David's volunteer

efforts, he is passionate about acting and music, and loves to spend his free time golfing, skiing and experiencing the wilderness.?

#### ARTIN KHIABANI

Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School

?Artin was born in Tehran, Iran and had a unique journey at an early age, living first in Malaysia, Thailand, and Singapore before finally reaching Canada. His travels helped him learn the importance of inclusion, which is what inspired him to connect with the many people and cultures around him. Upon entering high school, Artin wanted to be active in the community that has done so much for his family, so he joined many clubs and challenged himself to be a better person for those around him. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Artin established a virtual fundraising initiative called Change for Coffee for people experiencing homelessness, which raised enough money to create 275 care packages for less fortunate individuals. He also sent a large donation to Indigenous women and youth. Artin loves to cook and is an avid coffee enthusiast who aspires to be a Human Rights Lawyer for the United Nations.?

#### DANEIKA HAMMITH

Sacred Heart Catholic High School

?Daneika truly enjoys learning about those who live and learn differently, which is the driving force behind why she became Vice President of her school's Best Buddies chapter and a volunteer with the Learning Disabilities Association of York Region. Daneika can also be found at the local food bank stocking the pantry or helping other not-for-profit organizations with social media. Daneika's volunteer efforts have been put towards breaking barriers and creating inclusive environments. She loves to read, draw and paint and was the School Champion for two mathematic competitions. Daneika also had a great experience in her school's Advanced Placement Program where she worked with likeminded students who challenged and inspired her to keep working and put her brain to the test.?

For more on this year's Give Back Award recipients, see next week's edition of The Auroran.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter