

## Teen Idol is a great opportunity for young performers, says 2016 winner



**By Brock Weir**

The past 11 months have been a time of growth for Melissa Suma.

Come Canada Day, it will be exactly one year since the Aurora teen wowed the judges with the power of her voice and her presence on stage, ultimately taking the crown in the 2016 Aurora Teen Idol competition.

Now that her time as Aurora's reigning singer draws to a close, she is encouraging other young singers looking for a good opportunity ? and a good challenge ? to step forward and unleash their talents.

The application deadline for the 2017 Aurora Teen Idol is fast approaching.

If you are between the ages of 12 and 17, a resident of Aurora, and looking for a big break, you have until June 9 to get your applications in.

Following the application deadline, auditions will take place on Wednesday, June 14, from 6 ? 8 p.m. with each contestant preparing one song to perform in front of a panel of three judges. From there, nine semi-finalists will be chosen to perform once more in front of the crowds at Aurora's Canada Day celebrations at Lambert Willson Park.

?It has provided so many great opportunities and it really helps you develop yourself as a person and a performer,? said Suma, just before going to talk about the Teen Idol program at a local school. ?The finals of the competition were a personal highlight because I really wanted to be confident and sing out there on the stage. It was also my first time singing jazz, so it was a really neat experience and I have been enjoying singing jazz ever since. In Teen Idol, you get to perform in front of a lot of great people and it has really helped me develop my confidence as a performer and singer and I think I have really grown as a person from the experience.?

The Winner of the 2017 Aurora Teen Idol will have the opportunity to perform at scores of Town events over the following 12 months, from Ribfest in August to the annual Community Recognition Awards held each May. In Melissa's case, she even had the opportunity to perform at a recent charity baseball tournament where York Regional Police took on Toronto's finest.

It has also led to many other opportunities for her as well, including a local production of Tosca, and bolstering her confidence to try out for a new CTV reality show.

?Teen Idol looked like a great opportunity in getting experience competing and performing, and to showcase my talents and build up a performance resume, and I hoped it would help me enter some other competitions as well,? she said. ?Since then, I have also been focusing more on writing my own music and I have been looking at a few new competitions to try, such as the new CTV show The Launch. It is across Canada and it starts in January. You apply through a video and get a chance to work on some original music with professionals during the process.

?It would be an amazing experience and it would be my first time ever on a TV show! It would be just a great opportunity to further develop myself as a performer and I would be really honoured to participate.?

For more information on Aurora Teen Idol and to download application forms, visit [www.aurora.ca/teenidol](http://www.aurora.ca/teenidol).