

Abas and Kearney hailed as Leaders of Tomorrow



By Brock Weir

Late Aurora mayor John West wanted to leave a legacy to recognize and foster the leaders of tomorrow and this year's beneficiaries of that legacy exemplify that spirit.

Matthew Abas, a member of St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School's 2016 graduating class, and Abigail Kearney, a graduate of Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School, were formally recognized last week as this year's recipients of the John West Memorial 'Leaders of Tomorrow' Scholarship.

Celebrated at Town Hall by Mayor Geoff Dawe and Council members, as well as Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Leona Alleslev, the duo, both very involved in their school communities, were saluted for their hard work before spending the rest of this month getting ready for their college and university journeys.

Mr. Abas, who will be attending Seneca College this fall for Computer Networking and Technical Support, is no stranger to receiving kudos at Town Hall. Named this past May as one of Aurora's 2016 Community Recognition Award winners, he was also recognized by the Province at a Council meeting earlier this year for his tireless work within the St. Max community for accessibility concerns.

Matthew Abas has held various positions on his high school council for three years, attended multiple leadership conferences and has been a Best Buddy in his school's Best Buddy program for two years, said Nichole Campsall, Coordinator of Youth and Community Development with the Town of Aurora, before presenting the cheque. 'Best Buddies matches students with their peers who have intellectual and developmental disabilities to foster one to one friendship and develop leadership opportunities. Matthew is a motivated and supportive young person who has advocated for accessibility in local high schools and brought awareness to, and promoted, best practices of pool discharge water in the Town of Aurora.

Matthew is a 2016 Aurora Community Recognition Award winner and was one of 16 Ontario Students selected to attend the Minister of Education Student Advisory Council this summer.

Along with her St. Max colleague, Ms. Kearney, who will be attending Queen's University's Bachelor of Science Program, will also be familiar to regular readers of The Auroran, having been featured earlier this year, and in previous years, for her efforts within the Williams community to raise awareness of bone marrow donation and highlighting the school's creative flare.

?Abigail is the president of the Arts Council, the Music Council, and the Vice President of the Science Club, as well as an executive on the Athletic Council,? said Ms. Campsall. Abigail was also a peer mentor and volunteered for almost 200 hours in community involvement throughout her high school career. Abigail is a dedicated leader with a personal passion for initiatives involving bone marrow and leukemia fundraising. She has helped raise \$5,000 since 2014 for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society of Canada.?

The John West Memorial Leaders of Tomorrow Scholarship recognizes the achievement of senior students living in Aurora who are moving into post-secondary education. Each year, two scholarships are presented to students entering their first year as a full-time student at college, university, or the equivalent.