

Give Back Awards honour 20 local students



By Brock Weir

This Thursday, people will gather at Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School to have their cheeks swabbed for Sarah's Drive For Hope, an ongoing bone marrow registration drive spearheaded by students at the school.

Since its inception, it has been a particular passion project for Grade 12 student Haven Moulds, and her efforts were recognized by Neighbourhood Network and Magna International Thursday night, where she was named one of this year's recipients of the Give Back Awards.

The Awards, founded by Belinda Stronach, recognize graduating students who have made an 'extraordinary commitment' to their school and the wider community.

For Haven, a resident of Aurora, receiving the Give Back Award was unnecessary, but welcome recognition.

'It is really rewarding I am getting recognized for something I didn't need to get recognized for and meeting a lot of the people who have the same passion I do is really cool as well,' she says. 'That is one of the things I really love about volunteering: you get to meet people with the same passions.'

After she graduates, Haven is headed to the University of Ottawa, where she hopes to ramp up her efforts in expanding bone marrow drives in the nation's capital as well.

Trevor Wright, a student at Aurora High School, is just one individual who shares that passion, and the reluctance to be recognized. Trevor is particularly focused on combatting homelessness, organizing the Sandwich Run at Aurora High School (AHS) to provide lunches for those in need. He also co-chairs the 360 Experience Youth Leaders Edition, to raise funds for, and awareness of, youth homelessness.

'This [recognition] is completely unnecessary but, at the same time, when you put so much hard work into trying to make a difference, it is nice when a big company like Magna and all these very respectable adults take the time to show their appreciation and let you know that the work you have been doing is recognized and is making a difference in the community.'

'Volunteering for me is about recognizing your own blessings, taking the blessings you've had, and trying to give it to those who are less fortunate. Part of that comes from prioritizing the needs of society, but also just the act of giving back. It is about making the world a better place through the small actions we have.'

The greatest feeling, he says, is when people come up to him and share the impact these efforts 'large and small' have had on them.

This fall, Trevor will be attending the University of Western Ontario, studying liberal arts at Huron University College. As he prepares for his future, he says he has started to consider opportunities to continue his efforts in his new school environment, particularly in youth homelessness.

?No matter what community you're in, every teen deserves a place to sleep,? he says. ?I am also hoping to promote the Federal Election next fall. Regardless of who people vote for, democracy is really important to me. Now that we will be able to vote, I want my peers to actually go out and exercise that very lucky privilege we have.?