

2006 Top 20 Under 20™ Award Recipients



Marie Abbott
Whitehorse, YK
Age: 16

At the age of 12, Marie Abbott became appalled when she learned about the horrific plight of child soldiers. Her interest soon developed into a passion for raising awareness and taking action on international development and children's rights issues.

Marie coordinated activities to raise \$6,000 to build a school in war torn Sierra Leone and \$3,000 to support a children's centre in Tanzania.

In addition, she is involved in Free the Children and Amnesty International and is a member of the Foster Parents Plan Youth Advisory Council.

Now 16, she has traveled to Norway, Italy, Mexico and Brazil to learn more about international development and to Tanzania as a grand prize winner of CIDA's *butterfly 208* contest.



Miles Aronson
Calgary, AB
Age: 18

Miles Aronson is a compassionate young man who not only had a vision but has proven that he also has the insight, drive and tenacity to see it to fruition.

Three years ago, Miles established Spread the Love whose mission is to inspire and recruit youth so that they may lead their own communities in providing hundreds of sandwiches to the homeless and hungry on a monthly basis. To date, his organization has provided over 13 000 meals.

Spread the Love is now poised for national expansion through the distribution of its comprehensive 'How to Manual.'

His effective idea has been featured in numerous newspaper and Web site articles. Miles also has been sponsored to attend and exhibit at several fairs and conferences.

Miles's commitment and results have not gone unnoticed. He has received a 2004/2005 Service Award and has been nominated to receive the Premier's Citizenship Award.



**Melanie Bell
Coleman, PE
Age: 18**

In 2003, Melanie Bell wrote, illustrated and self-published a 96 page bilingual poetry book, "Tears for the World". 100% of the proceeds from the sale of this book are donated to Farmers Helping Farmers, a PEI based organization that assists farmers in Africa through agricultural means.

As a result of the proceeds from Melanie's book, a farm family and their neighbours in Kenya no longer has to pay for drinking water because they now have a new water tank that catches the sporadic rainfall.

In 2005, Melanie also wrote, illustrated and self-published a second poetry book "Fire in the Sky", where a portion of the proceeds is donated to a local literacy organization.

Melanie has led projects in her 4-H club for the past two years. She has also helped coordinate a Special Olympics program for children with cognitive challenges in her area.



**Kayla Cornale
Burlington, ON
Age: 16**

Motivated to help her 9 year old cousin who has an autism spectrum disorder to learn to spell and read, Kayla Cornale invented "Sounds and Syllables™", a teaching system which applies the musical component of 'pitch' to the process of learning language.

Through extensive research, Kayla discovered that autistic children have an apparent talent for tone and pitch recognition.

As a result of her invention, she was one of 19 students invited to represent Canada at the 2005 and 2006 Intel International Science and Engineering Fairs which were held in Arizona and Indiana respectively.

In 2005 she was awarded the Intel Foundation Achievement Award and in 2006 she received a first place award in the Behavioural Science category.



Sarah Dubé
Halifax, NS
Age: 18

After a field trip to see "Teaching Peace in a Time of War", a documentary about Hetty Van Gorp's work on behalf of Peaceful Schools International in Serbia, Sarah Dube became motivated to form a group called 'Students for Teaching Peace' which is committed to promoting the understanding and respect of all beliefs and cultures, through advocacy, non-violent conflict resolution and education.

Through Students for Teaching Peace they were able to raise enough funds to send 32 youth from across Canada to Serbia to attend a "Youth 2 Youth" Peace Conference. Upon their return, they hosted a summer camp for 13 Serbian youth.

In 2005 she was recognized with the Lieutenant Governor's Award.



Josianne Gosselin-Dubois
Gatineau, QC
Age: 18

Josianne is dynamic, engaging and dedicated young lady. Social engagement is her thing!

At 13, she got involved with a group of young people to create a Youth Commission, to improve the life quality of youth in Gatineau (Quebec).

Today, she is the chair of the Youth Commission and continues to lead innovative projects and influence the municipal council on youth issues. As well, she has revived the Amnesty International at her school and she represented Canada at a Future World Leaders Summit in Washington.

She received a number of formal recognitions relating to her social engagement activities.

To complement such undertakings, Josianne is a talented, and rewarded, journalist: the career she aspires to.



Larissa Fulawka
Lac La Biche, AB
Age: 18

When you hear the words "Chess Club" a vision of a group of nerds comes to mind. This however is not the case in Lac La Biche.

Three years ago, Larissa Fulawka created a chess program for young students who struggled academically or had a difficult time interacting with their peers.

Larissa volunteers 3 noon hours a week playing with students who look forward to her coming as they have connected with her personally.

The success of the program has led to its expansion into other elementary schools. Larissa also speaks to area schools about the "moral intelligence virtue tolerance" and growing up as a child with Cerebral Palsy.

She is a founding member of Students Against Drinking and Driving chapter at her high school.



Naveen Hassan
Toronto, ON
Age: 17

Based on student concerns about school safety, Naveen Hassan initiated three safe school programs at her high school.

The first was Empowered Students Partnerships (ESP). This is a year long program that plans and implements events and activities addressing student safety concerns in the school and community.

Naveen also started Ontario Students Against Impaired Driving (OSAID) which raises awareness about the dangers of impaired and unsafe driving in her community.

"Party in the Right Spirit" is the third program that Naveen initiated. Through this program she works with Toronto Public Health on educating students and parents on strategies for safer partying.

As a result of her initiatives major changes have occurred at her school including the installation of a 'hotline' which is connected to the school's main system and allows students to anonymously leave tips related to safety concerns. The 'hotline' has been identified by the Toronto District School Board as a best practice and is being implemented in 100 schools.

In May 2006, Naveen also chaired the 2006 Canadian Youth Against Impaired Driving National Leadership Conference. Naveen was named "Amazing Young Activist" by the City of Toronto.



Joanna McNeil
Red Island, NS
Age: 18

As a resident of Cape Breton, Joanna McNeil has followed the progress of the Sydney Tar Ponds clean up with great interest - but never dreamed that she could play a role.

After learning the process of bioremediation, Joanna embarked to discover whether bioremedial processes could provide a feasible clean up alternative to incineration.

After months of field and lab work, Joanna made a shocking discovery - bioremediation was already taking place in the tar ponds. Joanna's findings did not go unnoticed, the Sydney Tar Ponds Agency (STPA) publicized Joanna's findings and she was featured in a children's science magazine.

Her research project placed first in the province at the Aventis Biotech Challenge and fourth across Canada.



Heather Muir
Walkerton, ON
Age: 19

Since the age of 4, Heather Muir has been a dedicated volunteer for the Canadian Blood Service (CBS).

Determined to create greater public awareness of the needs of Canada's blood supply system, Heather began telling her own story of needing blood. She soon became the Poster Child for the Canadian Blood Services.

Heather has logged over 8,000 hours and has created a student blood clinic which has been recognized by the Canadian Blood Service as having over 40% of eligible donors compared to the Canadian average of 4%.

For the past 11 years, Heather has been a motivational speaker speaking on "making a difference" and especially donating blood.

Heather now sits as Co-Chair of the Regional Liaison Committee for Central Ontario as well as sits on the National Liaison Committee. She is the only youth representative on both.

In 2001 Heather was awarded the CBS national award, "Honouring Our Lifeblood" for exceptional contribution to the blood program.



Sami Obaïd
Laval, QC
Age: 17

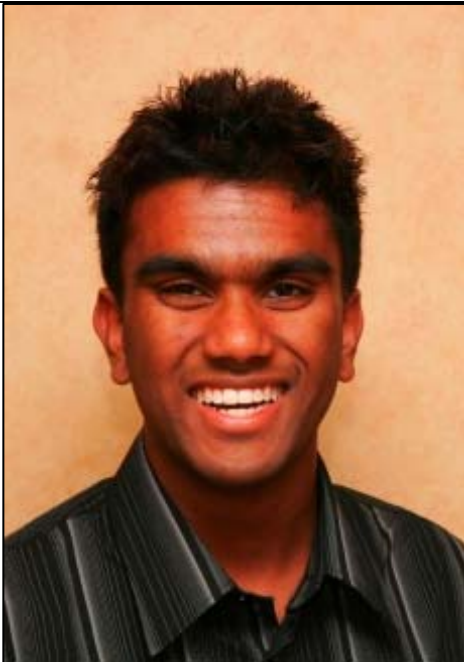
Sami Obaïd is a young scientist who is searching for a cure for neurodegenerative disorders like Parkinson disease.

For the past two years, he has been conducting laboratory experiments at the Montreal Neurological Institute, at McGill University, where two doctors are supervising his research.

Sami's promising research has earned him many national and international awards, along with three university scholarships in Quebec and Ontario.

Don't think that intellectual pursuits take up all his time: he is a black belt and Pan American Tae Kwon Do gold medalist, and top scorer in his elite league college soccer team. He also plays golf and tennis.

Sami's goal in life: Do something big for humanity!



Keith Peiris
London, ON
Age: 18

Keith Peiris believes that 'tragedy in life doesn't lie in not reaching your goal. The tragedy lies in having no goals to reach'.

With this in mind, at age 11 Keith Peiris started his own web development company, Cyberteks Design. What started out as a one-man operation has now grown to include 3 full time and 2 part-time employees.

Since its founding in 1999, Keith's company has attracted many high profile clients across North America. Some of his major customers include the Atlanta Thrashers, McDonalds Restaurants of Canada, Rogers Television, Amtelecom, Siskinds Sports Management and Siskind's Franchise Law to name a few.

His success has not gone unnoticed. Cyberteks was listed in the "Top 100 IT companies in Canada" by the National Post Business Magazine.

He has represented Canada as one of the 10 under 40 CEO's of Canada at the APEC Young Leaders and Entrepreneurs Forum and was a member of the Team Canada Trade Mission to China in 2001.

With the demands of his business he is still finds time for his studies and his school.



Douglas Price
London, ON
Age: 18

Leadership is the best way to describe Douglas Price.

Douglas created a two-act, 14 song musical theatrical production, "Socks" which was performed at his high school.

What made this that much more impressive was that Doug wrote the entire script and composed all the music and lyrics. He also led the 10 piece band while playing an electronic keyboard.

His show was awarded the Brickenden Award for top youth show in London.

He has been compared to Andrew Lloyd Weber though it hasn't been confirmed if Mr. Weber wrote his first show at the age of 17.

Douglas Price may well be a future Canadian icon.



Aaria Rahim
Coquitlam, BC
Age: 16

Aaria Rahim's focus has always been to improve or better the human condition and make a difference.

In 2004, Aaria founded "Teens Transforming the Community" (T3C) - a unique leadership force directed at local teenagers making a difference in the lives of local community members.

To date, T3C has organized or participated in events that have raised monies for countless causes in her community.

Aaria's compassion goes beyond the community of Coquitlam. She spearheaded a campaign called "Loonie for Life" which raised over \$5,000 for children in Africa who are suffering from AIDS.

She is also the President of Amnesty International at her school, and has used this club to reach other organisations through campaigns.



Natalie Raso
Hamilton, ON
Age: 16

Natalie Raso is a natural leader and her innovative scientific research has earned Natalie much recognition and accolades - nationally and internationally.

In 2005, Natalie conducted bone cancer research involving the use of a mutant herpes simplex virus. She was the top prize winner at the Canada-Wide Science Fair in 2005.

She was also awarded a gold and platinum medal at the Bay Area Science Fair for this research.

When Natalie is not making medical advances, she is organizing her school's first ever "Live Aid" concert in support of third world poverty.



Meghana Saincher
Edmonton, AB
Age: 19

In grade 11, Meghana Saincher noticed the city of Surrey had replaced many playgrounds made of wood with steel and plastic. This was due to the hazardous nature of the preservatives used on wood. Meghana set out to develop a non-toxic alternative.

She discovered that plant extracts could be used in place of the current toxic preservatives to decrease the decay of wood.

Meghana's innovative research has not gone unnoticed. She represented BC at the National Aventis Biotechnology Challenge and obtained a provisional patent for her research.

She recently received a grant from the Dr. Arthur Henry Endowment for Plant Pathology and is working towards publishing her work with Dr. Peter Blenis at the University of Alberta.

She also founded a Biotechnology Club at her high school to encourage interest in science among her peers.



Jordan Tannahill
Ottawa, ON
Age: 17

Inspired by the love of film and the need to assist the next generation of Canadian filmmakers, Jordan Tannahill put forward \$3,000 of his own money to start the Canadian National Youth Film Festival (CNYFF) which has become the largest film festival in Canada dedicated to screening youth films.

As CNYFF's founder and executive director, Jordan has grown the CNYFF to include screenings of over 60 films from 8 provinces and partnerships and sponsorships from the likes of the Toronto Film Festival, CanWest, CBC Television and the Federal Government.

Jordan has been extensively involved in the theatrical world as a writer, director, and performer. He has written almost two dozen plays in the past decade, with productions being mounted at such esteemed theatres as The National Arts Centre of Canada and Arts Court Theatre. His UrbN Mythology trilogy was awarded the prestigious Magnetic Words Playwriting Competition in 2005 and his one-man show at the 2006 Ottawa Fringe Festival, The Skywatcher, made him the youngest one-man performer in Canadian Fringe Festival history.

In 2005 Jordan was recognized with the Spirit of the Capital Award, a prestigious annual honour awarded by the City of Ottawa to a youth who has made the most profound impact in the region that given year.



Hannah Taylor
Winnipeg, MB
Age: 9

Since the age of 5, Hannah Taylor has opened her heart to people who are at the lowest point in their lives - all because she witnessed a man eating from a garbage can.

Before Hannah turns 10, she would have founded a national charitable organization known as the Ladybug Foundation, raised in excess of \$500,000 which supports 9 frontline homeless organizations, traveled from Victoria to Newfoundland speaking to tens of thousands of Canadians and influencing some of Canada's most powerful business executives, politicians and entertainers.

In 2005, Hannah was the youngest speaker ever to address the Empire Club, and is their youngest member to date.

Hannah has won many awards in connection to her work for Canada's homeless, for example: the Bruce M. Hicks Award; Me To We Award; Kids Who Care Award & National Homelessness Initiative Award from the Federal Government.

www.ladybugfoundation.ca



William Turk
Winnipeg, MB
Age: 18

William Turk's love of science and research combined with a sense of global responsibility has fueled his drive to one day develop a cure for HIV/AIDS.

William's interest in science and innovation began in grade 9 where his research into mammalian retina earned him a Gold medal from Genome Canada and recognition by McLean Magazine as one of 25 Young Canadians who are already changing the World.

In Grade 12, his research into role that HLA-G plays in HIV resistance in a group of Kenyan Sex Trade Workers earned William top prize at the National Aventis Biotech Challenge and was Canada's sole representative at the International BioGenius Challenge.

William was also the Chief Organizer of his school international AIDS conference which raised over \$5,000 for the Uganda Orphan Fund.



Jennifer Wang
Saskatoon, SK
Age: 17

Curiosity, Consistency and Collaboration are the there essential characteristics which has guided Jennifer Wang in her innovation.

Research by Jennifer revealed two fractions of wild sarsaparilla, a plant native to Saskatchewan, to have great potency to kill cancer cells without substantially affecting non-cancer cells.

Her research has garnered national and international attention and earned her a Gold medal, Health Sciences at Canada Wide Science Fair and the Young Canadian Manning Innovation award. Jennifer's groundbreaking research was recently published in the 'Anticancer Research'.

In addition to her love of math and science, Jennifer is also an accomplished musician and debater, having successfully competed at the national level. She is also dedicated to promoting awareness for human rights issues, co-leading a school club this past year that has raised over \$10 000 for various local and global causes.