



## Profiles of 2005 Top 20 Under 20™ Award Winners

	<p> <b>Maren Beeston</b>  <b>Age: 17</b>  <b>Hanna, Alberta</b> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maren Beeston recognized there was a lack of music instruction, variety in instrument instruction and vocal teachers in the small town of Hanna Alberta - population of 3,000 and home of Nickelback!</li> <li>• She addressed this challenge by founding Summer Slam, a summer rock music school that focused on guitar, piano, drums and vocals. She successfully established and led a committee of youth to budget, fundraise and coordinate this project.</li> <li>• Summer Slam is in its third year of operation and is more than providing youth with accessible music instruction - it is about connecting young people with a similar passion who would otherwise not have had the chance to play in a group or meet each other.</li> <li>• Maren also co-founded the Hanna Paper Recycling project and works as a youth leadership coordinator for this project to recruit and maintain the youth workforce. This which is building positive business and voluntary sector relationships for youth in her community.</li> <li>• She is a founding member of the Hanna youth council, and has used a youth needs survey to improve local youth activities.</li> <li>• Maren has also been awarded the Canadian Merit Foundation Scholarship, National Award.</li> </ul>
	<p> <b>Edona Çaku</b>  <b>Age: 19</b>  <b>Toronto, Ontario</b> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edona Çaku immigrated to Toronto in 2000 and watched in horror as buildings in her hometown of Shkoder, Albania was being destroyed by a civil war - in particular the town's only public library. Edona vowed to replenish the shelves of the newly built library. She set a goal of sending 4000 books to Shkoder, Albania.</li> <li>• Edona's project was done in collaboration with Herbert H. Carnegie Future Aces Foundation. In 2004, Edona worked tirelessly and networked with many different non-governmental organizations, community groups and the federal government to realize her dream of filling the shelves of the library of her hometown. The Friends of the Toronto Reference Library, Highland Heights Junior Public School, and other community groups helped Edona achieve her donation goal of 4000 books.</li> <li>• Edona is currently a third year university student.</li> </ul>

She studies Medical Radiation Science at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto and The Michener Institute of Applied Health Sciences.

- Edona has also been awarded seven national scholarships including the Millennium Excellence Award, Canadian Merit Scholarship and Miller Thomson National Scholarship. She was recognized with the 2005 Youth New Pioneers Award, which honors the achievements of immigrants in Canada.



**Stephanie Dotto**  
**Age: 18**  
**Kirkland, Québec**

- After hearing a speaker at her school say that teens do not think they can make a difference in the lives of children around the world, Stephanie Dotto decided to try and make a difference in the lives of African children by providing shoes, medicines and educational opportunities.
- Through Stephanie leadership, over 1200 pairs of 'gently used' shoes were sent to children in Malawi Africa; over 700lbs of antibiotics, anti-malarials, vitamins were donated to a local hospital in Malawi; over \$35,000 was raised to help build a school and a nutrition center named "Stephanie's Kitchen" was added to a local hospital to teach mothers of malnourished babies how to add more nutrients to their cooking.
- Stephanie has taken to speaking to schools and at conferences in hopes of inspiring other teens to believe that they can make a difference. She was named "West Islander of the Year" by the Chronicle, a West Island Newspaper.



**Ryan Hreljac**  
**Age: 13**  
**Kemptville, Ontario**

- At the age of 6, Ryan Hreljac listened intently when his grade one teacher talked about the plight of people in Africa who had to walk many kilometers every day just to fetch water. Meanwhile, he was merely seven steps away from clean water. At that time, Ryan decided to raise \$70 to build a well for a village in Africa.
- Through the Ryan's Well Foundation, over 1 million dollars has been raised and has supported more than 142 water and sanitation projects in eight developing countries, seven of which are in Africa.
- Ryan's Well Foundation has leveraged both partnerships and pennies to provide safe, clean water to over 210,000 people. His goal is to bring clean water to over a billion people who do not have it.
- Ryan has received many accolades including the 2003 Order of Ontario - Ontario's highest honour.



**Wojciech Gryc**  
**Age: 18**  
**Thornhill, Ontario**

- When the War in Iraq began in March 2003, many politicians and organizations spoke about their feelings on the subject. However, there were a lack of youth representation and voice on this particular topic.
- In an effort to get young people to express their thoughts and opinions on the war in Iraq, Wojciech Gryc founded Five Minutes to Midnight (FMM) - a project with a mission to give youth a voice and media outlet that will allow them to become aware and get involved in political and international issues.
- Today, Five Minutes to Midnight is read by over a thousand subscribers and has volunteers on every continent and has published a book where the proceeds are donated to youth-based charities.
- In addition to spearheading Five Minutes to Midnight, Wojciech is also the Chair of Human Rights and a former Board of Director for the United Nations Association in Canada - Toronto Branch



**Daniel Hammer**  
**Age: 15**  
**Kelowna, British Columbia**

- At the age of 13, Daniel Hammer started his business, Digger Boy - a landscaping company servicing the Kelowna community.
- Recognizing that he was not able to drive his bobcat on the road due to his age, he designed and developed a cart that contained all the lawn care equipment that could be pulled behind his bike.
- Daniel was recognized as the Central Okanagan Youth Entrepreneur of the Year
- Daniel is working to franchise Digger Boy and that other youth can purchase.



**Joseph Lavoie**

**Age: 18**

**Queen Charlotte City, British Columbia**

- At the age of 10, Joseph Lavoie noticed the problem of excess trash in the small island city of Queen Charlotte. Despite the beauty of the island, the roadsides were often littered.
- He started to collect refundable containers. He collected so many that his local Co-op would not accept as many as he had. This gave Joseph the idea of starting Joe's Bottle Depot - a local business where island residents can return any number of refundable drink containers.
- Through his perseverance and commitment to landfill reduction, Joe successfully won a contract from Encorp Pacific to be bottle return centre for Haida Gwaii.
- Motivated initially by a desire to clean up the roadsides of Queen Charlotte City, Joe's Bottle Depot has grown to employ three part-time people and now keeps 1.15 million containers a year out of the landfill.

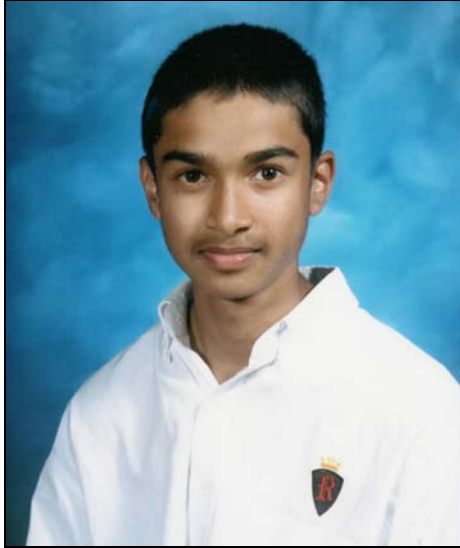


**Joshua Liu**

**Age: 16**

**Toronto, Ontario**

- Joshua Liu has always had a flaming passion for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). At an early age, he was given the opportunity to participate in various STEM competitions and programs. He soon learned that this was not case for many students.
- Alarmed by the lack of information that many schools had about STEM opportunities, Joshua founded SMARTS - the Student Mentorship Association Regarding Technology & Science. A student run initiative with the goal of exposing all students to STEM opportunities, which is vital in maintaining Canada's status as a world leader in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.
- SMARTS' main operation is a network of students and schools across Canada, allowing information on STEM opportunities to be shared across the nation - this network already has 15 high schools involved, and continues to grow. SMARTS also offers mentorship opportunities, a national directory of STEM opportunities and workshops to support first time science fair participants.
- What started out as a one man operation, SMARTS now operates within the Youth Science Foundation Canada and acts as one of their key youth programs. For more information, go to <http://www.smartsprogram.com>.



**Shamin Jr. Mohamed**

**Age: 16**

**Toronto, Ontario**

- Volunteerism has always come easy to Shamin Jr. Mohamed. For the past two years, Shamin Jr. has organized World Vision's 30 hour famine at his local high school which has raised close to \$10,000. He is currently planning the third annual for this event.
- His experience with the famine relief fundraiser and a born ability to lead has led to Shamin Jr. starting the Children's AIDS Health Program, a registered charity to engage fellow teens in helping the plight of kids with AIDS around the world.
- Shamin Jr. has a mature view of leadership - *"Being a leader doesn't always make you right - it simply gives you the opportunity to make decisions that will benefit the whole group"*
- In 2003, Shamin Jr. was awarded the DAREarts Leadership Award



**Cheryl Perera**

**Age: 19**

**Richmond Hill, Ontario**

- After seeing the images of suffering children around the world, especially the sexual exploitation of young children, Cheryl Perera grew angry and realized that she needed to do what she could to combat this growing problem.
- At age 17, Cheryl traveled to Sri Lanka for 3.5 months to conduct research on child exploitation. She interviewed child prostitutes, soldiers, and laborers and caught their images and stories on tape. She met with several government officials, including the Minister of Mass Communications and the Advisor to the President of Sri Lanka on Social Infrastructure, to discuss the plight of children, and youth taking action.
- Wanting to truly understand the lives of children in the child sex trade, she volunteered to act as a decoy in an undercover operation that yielded a successful arrest of a 40 year old pedophile. Her experience in Sri Lanka was life altering.
- In addition to her work in Sri Lanka, she is also a board member of CASE - Canadians Addressing Sexual Exploitation. She has spoken to over 20,000 individuals through countless speaking engagements, raised over \$10,000 for FTC programs and has logged over 6000 hours of community service.
- Cheryl is now the director of a youth-run initiative designed to mobilize the travel and tourism industry in Canada to take action against child sex tourism.
- In 2004, she was the recipient of the Cinram International Scholarship Award for exemplary

involvement in the community.





**Florind Polo**  
**Age: 16**  
**Toronto, Ontario**



- Florind Polo continued his commitment to volunteerism when he moved from Albania to Canada at the age of 11. In Albania he organized a student run initiative to raise awareness and speak out against violence of children and human right violations. Upon arriving in Canada, he linked this organization with student activists in Toronto.
- Florind has shown great commitment and leadership for this cause by investing \$2,000 of his own money to travel back to Albania to expand the program in Albania.
- Since his arrival to Canada, Florind founded a Free the Children chapter in Weston Ontario and is the Founding chair of the Amnesty International Committee. This committee regularly organizes fundraising events to support local area charities.
- Through Florind's leadership, he has raised money for the United Way and the Tsunami Relief Fund and is also one of the founders of the Children's Program in Africa for Education.
- In addition to Top 20 Under 20, Florind has received the 2003 Ontario Principals' Council Award for Student Leadership, the W.L. Gordon James 25 Year Club Scholarship as well as the Weston Lion's Club Award for 2004 & 2005.
- His career aspiration is to be a International Lawyer with the United Nations.



**Gabriel Rodrigue**  
**Age: 16**  
**Rimouski, Québec**

- At age 13, Gabriel launched his own company, Voltige multimédia, specialized in Internet marketing solutions. Today, he teams up with freelancers to offer comprehensive interactive communications services, including Web site creation, and promotional and corporate CD/DVD production, to local businesses. Voltige multimédia's clientele is not restricted to his hometown Rimouski. Clients are from everywhere – from Quebec to British Columbia and England.
- For a year now, our young innovator has been hosting a weekly chronicle on new technologies on a local radio station.
- In school, Gabriel attends a special program aiming at self improvement through volunteerism and apprenticeship of three languages. He volunteers on the election committee and is in charge of the composition of a student newsletter.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gabriel’s entrepreneurial acumen did not go unnoticed. At age 14, he won the local and regional chapters of the Concours québécois en entrepreneurship contest, and was one of the finalists at the national level.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Sarah Small</b>  <b>Age: 17</b>  <b>St. John’s, Newfoundland &amp; Labrador</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When Sarah Catherine Small entered the Aventis Biotech Fair in Spring of 2004 to prove that Music Geeks can also be Science Geeks, little did she know that she was on the verge of an innovative, all natural skin care product.</li> <li>• Sarah’s goal was to create a product that did would not only benefit people but Mother Nature as the same time. After four months of extensive lab research and with the help of a mentor from Memorial University, Sarah invented ‘Tea-rrific Skin’</li> <li>• ‘Tea-rrific Skin is a topical cream that uses extracts from used Green Tea bags. This product is 100% UV absorbent, non-mutagenic and anti-inflammatory.</li> <li>• Sarah’s invention has garnered her many accolades and awards including the Manning Innovation Award for Young Inventors, Winning Entry in the Regional Biotech Fair, the Louis Pasteur Award for best commercial application at the National Aventis Biotech Competition and a gold medal at the Provincial Science Fair.</li> <li>• In addition to being an entrepreneur and innovator, Sarah is also an accomplished musician having been recognized as a National Finalist in Piano at the Canadian Music Competition.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Stephanie Subject</b>  <b>Age: 18</b>  <b>Vancouver, British Columbia</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having witnessed various tragic events in the Killarney community including suicides, knifings and beatings, Stephanie Subject founded a prevention program to prevent youth drop out, violence and suicide, whereby respected senior high school students nurtured at-risk youth.</li> <li>• Youth in Action was formed in September of 2003 and despite difficult beginnings and mounting skepticism by school administrators, Stephanie’s leadership and perseverance led to the Killarney Community Centre hosting and funding the program.</li> <li>• In two years Youth in Action has helped over 40 at-risk youth in this small community.</li> <li>• Stephanie’s achievements have not gone unnoticed. She was also the 2004 recipient of the Canadian Merit Scholarship Foundation, National Scholar as well as the 2004 Canadian</li> </ul>

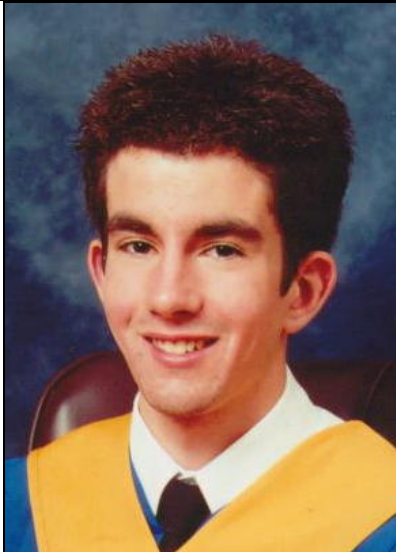
	<p>Millennium Excellence Award.</p>
	<p><b>Shazeen Suleman</b>  <b>Age: 18</b>  <b>Cambridge, Ontario</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shazeen's innovation was to bring young people together to teach music, any kind of music, to any child who expressed the desire to learn music but did not have the means to do so.</li> <li>• Through Shazeen's leadership, she founded the MusicBox Children's Charity, a not-for-profit, charitable organization in 2002. MusicBox registered as a Canadian charity in 2004.</li> <li>• Today, MusicBox Children's Charity has over 120 children enrolled and 50 volunteers in Toronto who teach, create the curriculum and help operate the program.</li> <li>• An entirely youth-run organization, MusicBox also strives to establish youth mentors for all participants, in the form of their music teachers. MusicBox has partnered with the Toronto District School Board and other local organizations to help bring this program to those who need it most.</li> <li>• Her passion is based on the belief that music can be something that can make children feel strong when they don't otherwise, and that music should never be made inaccessible.</li> <li>• Shazeen is currently entering her 4<sup>th</sup> year at the University of Toronto at Trinity College, pursuing an honours degree in Physiology and Human Biology</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Jasmine Tait</b>  <b>Age: 17</b>  <b>Nepean, Ontario</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jasmine is not only an innovator but a scientist and entrepreneur. The combination of these qualities led her to develop a pen system to assist people with Essential or Parkinsonian Tremor. Her ergonomic pen allowed those with hand disabilities to improve writing control.</li> <li>• In addition, Jasmine created a mobile hand wash system for hospitals which uses an anti-bacterial hood on the dispenser to prevent cross contamination which leads to nosocomial infections.</li> <li>• Her love for science led Jasmine to establish a school club called Science Safari which gives students an opportunity to visit diverse sites of scientific interest in the community such as research labs, medical clinics and university programs.</li> <li>• Jasmine's innovation and scientifically-advance projects have not gone unrecognized. Her awards and scholarships included the Pfizer Canada Award of Excellence and the Encana Platinum Award for best intermediate project at the Canada</li> </ul>

Wide Science Fair in Calgary in 2003.



**Chelsea Takalo**  
**Age: 19**  
**Toronto, Ontario**

- At the age of 14, Chelsea Takalo co-founded the South Etobicoke Youth Assembly (SEYA) - an organization with a mandate to promote youth advocacy and to give youth a direct conduit to their local politicians.
- SEYA's first organized event was 'Speak Out' which attracted over 200 local youth to speak with politicians about local issues of importance to them - such as - youth recreation facilities, affordable housing and racial profiling.
- Speak Out was a huge success. After this event, local city councilors secured an additional \$30,000 for five area youth programs.
- Today, SEYA includes over 100 active youth participants and facilitates on-going workshops in the area of anti-oppression training, employment skills and leadership development. They recently organized a leadership development retreat for 30 marginalized inner-city youth.
- Chelsea's achievements have not gone unnoticed. In addition to the Top 20 Under 20 award, she is also received the 2004 City of Toronto Dedication to Youth Advocacy Award and the 2003 Rotary Club Etobicoke Youth Impact.



**Michael Thibodeau**  
**Age: 17**  
**Middleton, Nova Scotia**

- In 2002, Michael Thibodeau started a program where the visually impaired are taught piano and theory free of charge. The program - Musicians for the Support of the Visually Impaired (MSVI) is tailored to suit the needs of the individuals that are being taught
- Because there were no books or articles on how to teach visually impaired music, Michael developed his own curriculum based on his understanding of music and the visually impaired. Instead of reading sheet music, students learn to determine chords and recognize melodic intervals by extensive ear training. After six weeks, the student is capable of playing back short pieces that they hear.
- Michael's teaching success is evident in the fact that one of his students has gone on to Acadia University where she is exceeding the standard average in her Bachelor of Music program.
- In 2004, Michael was awarded the International Leadership Network, Leaders of Tomorrow, Music Award



**James Valitchka**  
**Age: 10**  
**Ottawa, Ontario**

- James Valitchka was having problems in school as a result of bullying. He became heartbroken and sad because he did not have a dad. One day, he said to his mom, "It's okay because Superman did not have a Dad, he lived with an adopted family, Batman lived with his butler and Spiderman lived with his aunt. This became the topic of his first book 'Superheros Don't Have Dads' which, in 8 months, became a national best seller. James has since gone on to write and publish four books - all of outstanding content and quality.
- James is a Goodwill Ambassador for Literacy and started a program called "National Book Tour for Literacy" which focuses and includes inner city schools where he would read his book to other students and encourage them to read and write. James spends four month of the year traveling across the country promoting his message.



**David Wen**  
**Age: 17**  
**Surrey, British Columbia**

- David Wen is an entrepreneur, philanthropist and a humanitarian with strong sense of self and vision for the future. Ever since the age of 14, David has wanted to backpack through Japan. After reading a book "Rich Dad, Poor Dad" he discovered the means to do so.
- In 2003 he started IYA Enterprise International (If You're Away) a workforce of young adults available to do all the tasks you need done when you are away from home. This business quickly evolved to include other business ventures such as vending machines, selling candles, creating rice burgers and a contract with American Eagle School In Hsin-Chiu Taiwan to translate handbooks, kindergarten science labs and math workbooks for the school
- His business success afforded him the ability to take the trip that he has always dreamed about. However, he did not forget about his commitment to giving back. Upon arriving in Taiwan near the end of his trip, he spent time teaching English to local youth and provided aid at the hospital and to rural families.
- He also led a major fundraising effort in Surrey BC that raise over \$33,000 in only three days for the Southeast Asia Tsunami relief fund.
- David has been awarded First Prize at the Surrey Youth Recognition Awards and named finalist for the Surrey Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards.

