

## 2009 TOP 20 UNDER 20 RECIPIENTS

**James Brooks**  
**London, ON**  
**Age: 12**

You are a young Canadian child who has just learned about the magnificent Great Apes of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and that they are endangered. At the same time, you learn that kids just like you are going hungry in the DRC. Now imagine educating other kids and working to solve these problems and helping related environmental and social problems. If you're James Brooks, this is your mission. To address the shortage of online ape conservation resources specifically for young people, James wrote, designed and maintains two websites: [www.apeaware.org](http://www.apeaware.org) and [www.1000classrooms.org](http://www.1000classrooms.org). Apeaware presents everything from scientific research to games and puzzles in a "kid-friendly" way. 1000classrooms engages Canadian students to raise funds used to buy eggs for students at the Kahuzi-Biega environmental school. Buying the eggs supports a poultry collective in the DRC run by the widows of park rangers who died protecting gorillas. With donations as small as \$3 per class, when James' initiative reaches 1000 classrooms, over 20,000 kids will know about the plight of the gorillas, the people, and the threatened rainforest of the DRC.

**Ariel Charney**  
**Montreal, QC**  
**Age: 17**

The Lieutenant Governor of Quebec's Youth Medal is given to a few students every year who show academic promise and demonstrate both self-sacrifice and tangible, surpassing commitment within their school or community. No wonder Ariel holds this proud distinction. She has conducted stem cell research at the McGill Genome Center and contributed to a now published research project at the Weizmann Institute in Israel on the role of uterine dendritic cells in pregnancy. Ariel's understanding of developmental disabilities goes far beyond the lab. She has seen firsthand the power of genetics plays. Ariel is the first International President of The Friendship Circle (FC), a non-profit across 7 countries that pairs teenagers with special needs children. With a new vision for FC, she launched a successful t-shirt campaign called "Imprint the World" to promote worldwide awareness of special needs and to help found the first FC Life Village in Canada. With more than 500 t-shirts sold and an FC shop selling sweatshirts and hats, the campaign is well on its way to transforming a community centre that serves 200 to a fully-fledged campus reaching 1000 families.

**Beth Ferreira**  
**Winnipeg, MB**  
**Age: 17**

At the age of 14, Beth acted on her interest in Arctic marine mammals and began volunteering at Fisheries and Oceans Canada. She noticed that tissue samples, used to determine contaminant exposure in ringed seals, were acquired from Inuit harvests. Surely there could be a way to gain information that allowed animals to live? This fundamental idea motivated her to begin developing less-invasive methods which used samples of seal claws and whiskers.

Since then, Beth has conducted hundreds of hours of research which the scientific community recognizes as graduate-level. Her work has won provincial, national, and international recognition, including a second place award in the animal sciences category at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair. An avid researcher and speaker, Beth loves to share her passion for the Arctic and to inspire others to make a difference for the environment as a whole. She hopes she can empower other youth to take action for causes they care about.

**Roxane Fortin Lecompte**  
**Québec City, Québec**  
**Age : 18**

A dynamic leader, Roxane is unafraid of challenges. She is the youngest staff member of Garneau Travail Inc., the only fully student-run enterprise in Québec with an annual \$50,000 budget. Based at Collège François-Xavier-Garneau, it supports the entrepreneurial ventures and career explorations of students aged 18-25 in three areas: web development, interior design and environmental micro-enterprise. In less than a year, Roxane became General Director, and now oversees 25 student managers and 120 employees. As a member of the Association des Clubs Entrepreneurs Étudiants, which has 400 members in 10 countries, her group participates in several entrepreneurial conferences annually and has won many prestigious prizes. They are proud to have significantly reduced Garneau Travail's carbon footprint.

In addition to full-time studies and the twenty hours a week spent in her role as General Director, Roxane mentors students who come from Mexico to spend a trimester at her college and ensures that their transition to school life in Québec City is smooth. As well, Roxane devotes considerable time to working with physically and mentally challenged individuals through Adaptavie, a non-profit which promotes adaptive recreational sports activities for age groups 10 through 45. In 2006 Roxane received the City of Québec's highest recognition for her outstanding volunteerism.

**Alison Hall**  
**Winnipeg, MB**  
**Age: 17**

Already active as a speaker against bullying, when cancer hit home with her mom's diagnosis in 2006, Alison heard another call to action. What started out as a simple idea is now an annual province-wide event called "The Challenge for Life," a fundraising event for CancerCare Manitoba. She hoped to engage people with the promise of changing their lives - to help reduce cancer risk by encouraging individuals to identify and set their own health and fitness goals. As Founder and Honorary Co-Chairperson with her 3 siblings, Alison learned how to be a media spokesperson and

how to engage civic and business leaders. She successfully launched a 20km walk whose main thrust was to gain six month “health commitments” from all participants. Spin-off events co-hosted by CancerCare drew local fitness specialists, life coaches, dieticians and other healthcare professionals from across Winnipeg. Spontaneously, a community of Challengers developed to support each other through the fitness events and to form an even deeper commitment to the Challenge.

Truly a grassroots effort, all costs for the event were covered by sponsorships, and Alison’s “Challenge for Life” cleared \$650,000. These funds have been designated for research and to ensure that Cancer Care Manitoba continues to make advances in leading edge facilities and technology.

**Caroline Jo**  
**Montréal, QC**  
**Age: 17**

After 20,000 votes from youth all over the world, Caroline represented Canadian youth in presenting the most popular proposal to the Environment Ministers at their G8+5 Meeting in Kobe, Japan on behalf of the International Climate Champions (ICC) program. Caroline’s winning Kobe Proposal stressed the importance of universal education on climate change, the implementation of an international cap-and-trade system, and the provision of technology and funding to those countries worst hit by the inevitable effects of climate change.

Upon returning from Japan, Caroline united with other Canadian ICCs to take on the task of raising awareness about climate change among Canadian youth. They founded a national youth-led project for students, “ICCommit Eco-week,” a period in which students would identify and stick to at least one eco-commitment. To foster the exchange of ideas, [www.iccommit.org](http://www.iccommit.org) was developed. Caroline spoke at all the participating schools in Montreal to promote the event, which reached over 13,000 youth across Canada. This eye-opening experience shows the power of youth to influence their peers positively and broadly, bringing an international voice to hometowns where change can really happen.

**Alyssa Larson**  
**Hanna, AB**  
**Age: 17**

Starting at age 13, Alyssa began her journey as an inventor. Her normally gentle gelding “Rocky” kicked her while she was attempting to give him an oral deworming medication. Upon learning that resistance to conventional medicating methods and subsequent injury to horse and handler are common, Alyssa looked for a solution. A National Gold Medal-winning science fair project was born, not to mention an inventor! Alyssa designed her “Equine MediWormer” to deliver oral medication easily and effectively, reducing the risk of injury, and ensuring that the entire dosage is received in one go. This innovative device allows the average horse owner to administer medication to animals that may respond poorly to conventional methods. After conferring with professionals - vets, lawyers, and industrial engineers – and running through many testing phases, Alyssa formed her own company. With patents pending in Canada and the USA, she is now preparing for investors.

**Alysha Li**  
**Vancouver, BC**  
**Age: 18**

As Vice President on the Vancouver District Students' Council, Alysha was inspired to unite the 18 Vancouver high schools in an initiative that would connect students with disabilities and their able-bodied peers, break stereotypes, and create heightened awareness. "Passport to Play" grew from the initial idea in 2007 through to the day of the event itself in May 2009.

Modeled on the Paralympics, "Passport to Play" aspired to give students with any disability the chance to express themselves outside of the classroom through adapted recreational sport activities. Alysha believes the project will build unity within the schools and for students with its emphasis on values of friendship, fair play, optimism, inspiration, and empowerment. Vancouver granted the initiative \$10,000 and pledges its continuing sponsorship; community groups that specialize in adapted sports activities, and student groups and their schools are vying to host the event in years to come. The vision with which Alysha and her co-coordinators ran is not only successful, it has influenced other youth to come together and break down stereotypes.

**Linda Liu**  
**Surrey, BC**  
**Age: 18**

While visiting cancer-stricken relatives in rural China, Linda witnessed the complications caused by the combination of increased environmental mutagens and a lack of affordable cancer medications. She committed herself to find a natural, inexpensive, and readily available anti-cancer compound. Linda identified the plant *Z. spinosa* as a perfect candidate because it contained phytochemicals that inhibit the growth of cancer cells and betulinic acid which had the ability to selectively kill human melanoma cells. The plant is unique because it is drought-tolerant and able to survive in the poor soils of China and other developing nations. No one had ever researched *Z. spinosa*'s anti-cancer properties. Her experiments demonstrated that for the first time in history, the extract of *Z. spinosa* displays dose-dependent anti-cancer activities on MeWo, MCF-7, and LS 180 cancer cells. As a result of Linda's project, she has founded an organization called "Planting Hope." This innovative organization is committed to sending *Z. spinosa* seeds to people in developing countries, and to educate the people about the plant and to ensure that they can flourish. Linda's work earned her the gold prize at Greater Vancouver Science Fair and the 2008 United Nations Youth Achievement Award for Humanitarian Service.

**Justin Lui**  
**Edmonton, AB**  
**Age: 19**

Similar in age but worlds apart in lifestyle, Justin encountered a homeless youth and the circumstances motivated him to work towards overcoming society's negative stigma of marginalized people. As he started to volunteer in the inner city he was able to put a story to these often discounted human beings. In order to amplify his efforts, he engaged other youth, helping them in turn to gain greater understanding of and compassion for the homeless individuals. As the Chairperson of Edmonton Youth Council, he proposed a citywide art contest that challenged youth 5 through 19 to investigate the greater meaning of homelessness and what could be done to help.

“Heart 2 Art” received an astounding 900 submissions, which were on display at various Edmonton venues. The artwork was then celebrated at the “Heart 2 Art” Gala which raised \$110,000 for Boyle Street Community Services. Justin firmly believes the money raised is not only a testament to the relentless efforts of his team but to the substantial generosity displayed by Edmontonians as well.

**Isdin Oke**  
**Guelph, ON**  
**Age: 18**

Isdin gives back to his community through involvements with the Red Cross, Heart and Stroke, Habitat for Humanity, and the Multicultural Society. Driven by curiosity about our world and the desire to solve everyday problems with scientific solutions, his success as a scientific researcher is not surprisingly flavoured by humanitarianism. Knowing that food shortages caused by annual droughts can devastate underdeveloped countries, Isdin sought out to design a way of preserving produce for use in times of need. He and a partner manipulated a chemical called 1-Methylcyclopropene and, using snapdragons to model aging, they were able to delay produce degradation. Isdin worked vigorously towards his goal with the guidance of his mentor, Dr. Paliyath from the University of Guelph. In the end, his passion and hard work paid off. Because of this project’s innovative and unique solution, and its strong humanitarian potential, Isdin and his partner received a Gold Medal at the Waterloo-Wellington Science and Engineering Fair and an award of merit at the Sanofi Aventis Biotalent Competition.

**John Park**  
**North York, ON**  
**Age: 17**

Hiking in the Arctic Circle. Swimming in subzero Arctic sea water. Seeing the devastating effects of climate change first-hand. These experiences in the summer of 2007 motivated John to start a student activist group called “Environmentally Concerned Students” (ECS) and their Blue Beaufort Campaign. Through community presentations, collecting thousands of signatures, and media campaigning, John is raising national awareness of the Beaufort Sea’s future. As this frontier opens to offshore industrial ventures in oil & gas, ECS is advocating immediate measures to conserve threatened species like bowhead whales, belugas, and polar bears. The ECS team is calling for a delay on industrialization in the Beaufort until oil spills in these dangerous, icy waters can be effectively managed. Right now, no proven method exists and the Arctic ecology faces increased risk beyond climate change.

John’s creative side comes through in his exhibited Arctic paintings. In one of his exhibitions, he has displayed his rendering of the Arctic’s fragile beauty alongside a Group of Seven painting at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection.

**Nadine Qureshi**  
**Victoria, British Columbia**  
**Age: 19**

Involved with myriad groups - Free the Children, World Partnership Walk, Journey of Hope, and the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, to name a few - Nadine has been nationally recognized for her

fundraising work and has been described by her colleagues as someone who is unstoppable. As a top ranked public speaker and having a deep respect for world faiths, Nadine has received a distinguishing award for building bridges within her school and community. But after three tireless years of planning, she initiated a special project: "Mission Against Malaria Society," (MAMS) a registered charity which aims to create awareness of and to prevent malaria in the heart of East Africa. Nadine focuses especially on women's rights and gender-specific obstacles in obtaining access to malaria treatment, hence her efforts target children in boarding schools, women and large families.

In August 2008, after raising \$8000 in three months, Nadine travelled to Tanzania where she hand-distributed mosquito netting to 600 families. While there, she established a connection with a boarding school and the International Rotary Club to ensure long-term sustainability of her initiative. With passion, with confidence, and most importantly, with certainty, it is Nadine's wholehearted belief that malaria can be eradicated.

### **Sebastian Roberts**

**Vancouver, BC**

**Age: 19**

In poverty-stricken ghettos and war-torn regions, children have little access to what UNESCO calls the right to recreation. Wanting to empower youth through sports and play, Sebastian founded Bavubuka All\*Sports on the belief that "one ball can change a child's life." Since 2006, Sebastian has made 3 trips to Uganda. He has collected donations of over 2000 pounds of sports equipment and clothing, fundraised for shipping, and organized sporting events and networks to distribute these items to youth in Uganda, Kenya and Algeria. When the Canadian dollar fell and the economic turmoil made fundraising virtually impossible, Sebastian carried on. He took on personal debt rather than fail in his commitments.

Sebastian has spearheaded a second project: the We Got Skillz – Global Voice movement. It is an innovative, secured multimedia environment which connects youth from all over the world and allows them to access and exchange information and their opinions about culture, school life and family life. The technology is the only "secured multimedia device" currently capable of streaming multiple TV definition video in real time. WGS is changing the belief that educational web-conferencing is only for rich kids in rich countries.

### **Carolina Romeo**

**Calgary, AB**

**Age: 16**

At age eight, Carolina and her family left Argentina under difficult circumstances for a new life in Canada. Time is the least of challenges for this remarkable young woman. Having mastered English, she quickly joined the honour roll. Before her 16th birthday, the University of Calgary awarded Carolina the prestigious Chancellor's Club Scholarship and she is now going into second year at the Schulich School of Engineering.

Driven to fill every moment of her life, Carolina competes in national-level field hockey and international-level ringette. She has gained distinction as the youngest-ever member of a UofC DINOS team playing with team mates that are two to ten years older than her. She is also the youngest female student-athlete in Canadian inter-university sport history. As Assistant Coach for

Calgary AA ringette teams, Carolina teaches her protégées the physical and mental skills that on-ice success demands, and consciously role models the importance of young women being active and healthy in every facet of their lives.

**Alex Shipillo**  
**Vancouver, BC**  
**Age: 19**

Two ideas that began with a basic website and limited resources have become two major national projects with impact: Youth Canada and the Microcredit Competition. Alex first started Youth Canada in 2006 when he found no central bank of information existed to point students to opportunities for personal growth. Even without marketing, he got 18,000 unique visitors in year one, but when he connected with the student-run non-profit Impact Entrepreneurship Group, a relaunched Youth Canada really took off. It now is the most comprehensive online resource for high school students in Canada. Youth Canada is a complete resource for youth, parents and schools, providing a searchable database of various activities and advice on topics like scholarships, post-secondary education, leadership, volunteering, and entrepreneurship. The Microcredit Competition teaches hands-on social entrepreneurship by providing small teams of high school students from across the country with a \$100 microloan and one week to generate as much revenue as possible for a charity of their choice. Since September 2006, Alex has reached over 100,000 individuals in 400 Canadian communities.

**Laura Stymiest**  
**Fredericton, NB**  
**Age: 19**

Laura co-founded Global Medical Brigades' first university club in Atlantic Canada. A student-lead organization that respects local culture, GMB provides communities in developing nations with sustainable solutions to improve their quality of life. Laura's Mount Allison University group comprises 35 student volunteers and 10 health professionals who, in February, embarked on a medical mission to rural communities in Honduras. As a team leader, Laura coordinated travel plans, recruited health professionals and translators, and collected the required medication. After securing \$35,000 worth of donated medication and supplies, the team treated 1520 children and adults medically, and provided dental treatment for another 200. Laura is currently working as a Canadian Coordinator for the Global Medical Brigades organization and as an intern for Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders.

Laura also realizes that needs exist in her own community. In 2007, she founded "We Propose Clothes," an annual clothing drive that distributes clothing to shelters, schools and community centres across the Maritimes. An avid guitarist and banjo player, a Biology Lab Teaching Assistant and Residence Monitor, she is first and foremost an honours student in Biology with a minor in International Studies.

**Lauren Wallace**  
**Hamilton, ON**  
**Age: 19**

8,000. Lauren thought about that number, feeling anger at her new and deepening understanding that 8000 people die every day of AIDS. What could she do to alleviate the situation, to lessen that number while increasing people's understanding? A big number takes a big idea. Beginning to overcome the HIV and AIDS epidemic would be like moving a mountain, so that's just what she did. Lauren founded "The Climb to End AIDS", journeying to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro to raise money for HIV and AIDS health clinics in Lesotho. The project took two years to plan, demanding a dedicated group, specific training, and much background work to prepare for the climb. In response, Lauren recruited team members and developed an intensive independent study course at the University of Guelph so the team would understand the region fully and be physically and mentally "on". Having stirred up interest in the climb and the cause through key media coverage, the team raised almost \$16,000, and everyone made the summit. Lauren has built on her work by turning "The Climb to End AIDS" into a continuing project to raise funds and awareness for HIV and AIDS globally.

**Michael Xu**  
**Kanata, ON**  
**Age: 17**

Will I be a business entrepreneur or a social entrepreneur when I grow up? Michael decided that all options were open game. In 2008 he founded "Vestige Gear Inc.," an online, registered corporation that is a channel for collaborative, youth-generated ideas and designs. In one year, Vestige brought two shoe models to market and sold over two hundred in ten countries. Vestige currently focuses on the hip-hop market and specializes in a new hip hop dance called "clown walk," popularized on YouTube. Its online community has grown and now includes over 5000 registered members. Michael feels that helping to raise over \$20,000 in three years for an all-girls school in Kenya is the most important thing he has done. The money has ensured Kenyan girls could receive a good education without financial hardship and that a well could be built to supply them with fresh water.

**Xingyu Zhou**  
**Saskatoon, SK**  
**Age: 16**

In 2007, Xingyu embarked upon a quest to discover the antioxidizing, antibacterial, and anticancer effects of the bark of four varieties native to Canada. This quest took her to Northern Saskatchewan to collect the barks from Jack Pine, Paper Birch, White Spruce and Trembling Aspen Trees. Xingyu's research confirmed that these barks, commonly used in the forest industry and left as waste, contain chemicals with strong antioxidizing and antibacterial properties. In addition, her bark extracts exhibit anticancer effects, thus providing a potential medicinal use for a product that would otherwise be discarded. Xingyu worked for 600 hours over two years to advance her project, which has been recognized in the Monsanto Commercialization Award, winning the category of "project with the most commercial potential," a silver medal in the Canada Wide Science Fair in 2007, and the top prize in the National Sanofi Aventi Biotalent Competition. A wonderful role model for budding female scientists, Xingyu speaks about her work and, through the SMARTS network, promotes youth engagement with scientific opportunities.

top 20 under twenty



20 ados avec brio

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