



## Young minds honoured

### Awards recognize Canada's future

### Winners affecting positive change

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Keith Peiris is president of a web-development company that made \$500,000 last year.

He has an impressive client list that includes Rogers Television, McDonald's Canada and the NHL's Atlanta Thrashers.

He is also an 18-year-old high school student.

Peiris, who started Cyberteks Design when he was 11, was among 20 young Canadians under 20 honoured in Toronto this week by Youth in Motion, a not-for-profit organization, for their top-rate innovations, achievements and leadership.

The group includes aspiring entrepreneurs such as Peiris, as well as inventors and scientists and others who have already accomplished a lot in their young lives, from starting a film festival for youths to raising money for a children's school in Africa.

Although Peiris has employees who are older than him, the London native doesn't think he's exceptional.

"I am just a normal person who saw potential and worked toward it," he said.

Peiris said the journey to get to this point was tough at the start.

"I was not taken seriously because of my age," he said. "I lost a lot of contracts as a result."

But when he starting winning design awards a few years later, the company took off.

"Then it wasn't about a 13- or 14-year-old anymore."

For Naveen Hassan, 18, a William Lyon Mackenzie Collegiate Institute student, her passion is keeping Toronto schools safe.

"Especially in Toronto, we hear about issues surrounding safety and violence every day," said Hassan, who has introduced three safety-related programs at her high school.

Hassan's work also led to the creation of an anonymous hotline at her high school that was recognized by the Toronto District School Board.

"If we are scared to go to school because there is someone bullying us or someone doing something to

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make us feel unsafe, the learning experience, the growing experience, won't be as good," she said.

The youngest winner was 9-year-old Hannah Taylor of Winnipeg, whose passion lies in helping the homeless.

Hannah's first introduction to the plight of the homeless took place when she was 5. She was in her parents' car when they passed a homeless man standing beside a garbage can, eating.

"It changed the way the world felt to me."

Hannah went on to start the Ladybug Foundation, a non-profit registered charity that has helped raise more than \$500,000 to help the homeless.

"I had to do something because my heart felt so sad."

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