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Warming up to reality - A climate change blog

June 07, 2010

Young environmentalists finding solutions through science

Last Thursday I had the pleasure of attending Youth-in-Motion's annual Top 20 Under 20 awards held at Arcadian Court in downtown Toronto, where I got to meet amazing young individuals and their stories and quests to try to make our world a better place.

From cancer survivors that have ridden with Lance Armstrong, to young music execs, to budding entrepreneurs and inventors, this year's crop was astounding, having sat on the board of Youth-in-Motion as a youth member these past two years. I was particularly delighted and intrigued by a couple of the winners, and their passion to merge saving the environment with innovative scientific solutions.

This being a climate change blog, I thought that I would profile some of their work here, just to demonstrate the amazing things young scientists and environmentalists are doing to find creative and groundbreaking ways to make our lives more sustainable.

Here they are. For a full list and bios of this year's Top 20 Under 20, [click here](#).



Emma Graham
Ottawa, ON

Age at time of award: 16

Living as a child in a heavily polluted environment in China, Emma found breathing difficult and provoked her wish to create safe, effective chemical products. By grade 9, now living in Canada and volunteering in a pharmaceutical company lab, she discovered her love of organic chemistry and soon won a Youth Science Team Canada Award. Since 2009, Emma been developing a natural pesticide enhancer to minimize pesticide-resistance rates in insects, and thereby decrease the overall environmental impact of pesticides.

With several firsts in science competitions, Emma attended the 2010 Intel ISEF in California, winning a fourth place in the Environmental Management category.



Cody O'Neil
Kelowna, BC

Age at time of award: 17

With firsts at national and international science fairs, Cody's ability to make effective presentations has been invaluable as he sheds new light on climate change. Cody's research into this pressing issue takes an entirely new and to some, controversial, point of view: he examines the relationship between astronomy and climate change, a combination typically overlooked, if not ignored, by the scientific community. His theory of "Orbital Forcing" poses a relation between variations in the Earth's orbit and long-term climatic change. It also

attempts to correlate sunspot cycles to short-term climate change. Placing 1st overall at the 2009 Taiwan International Science Fair and the Australian National Youth Science Forum, Cody's work is gaining acceptance and recognition.



David Castelino
Mississauga, ON

Age at time of award: 19



Jasmeet Sidhu is the founder of the Peel Environmental Youth Alliance (PEYA), a network of students in the Peel Region working to implement environmental programs in all 220 Peel Region schools.

She is a past member of the Star's community editorial board, and is currently studying Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Toronto.

In 2008 she was named one of Canada's 100 Most Powerful Women by the Women's Executive Network, and was named this year by Glamour Magazine as one of the Top 10 College Women in America.

Jasmeet will be in Copenhagen in December as a member of the Canadian Youth Delegation and the Canadian Youth Climate Coalition, and will be blogging for the Star during the 2009 UN Climate Change Conference.

She previously blogged for the Star during the 2008 UN Climate Change Conference in Poland.

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A 2008 Manning Innovation Achievement Award winner, David has shown a passion for science, innovation and community involvement since childhood. In 2006, David designed an efficient, affordable alternative to silicon solar cells—a dye-sensitized organic solar cell that uses photosynthesis to create electrical energy at a higher rate of return. Sol-Tile is David's latest invention, a thin-film solar tile using solar paint made from organic dyes, which can easily fit existing roofing. This tile offers an inexpensive, sustainable source of

renewable energy for use around the world. The Patent and Trademark Office Society has awarded David with a patent citation for his breakthrough invention.



Yan Yu
Calgary, AB
Age at time of award: 19

Yan Yu has put environmental innovation on the map at Queen's University. As an intern with the Main Campus Resident's Council (MCRC) Sustainability Office, Yan brought vision and energy to an indifferent Council. Successfully advocating the creation of a "Sustainability Coordinator" position, Yan promptly assumed the role and transformed MCRC into one of the greenest student governing bodies in Canada. He formed one of the largest environmental groups on campus, the MCRC Green Team, to tackle environmental issues like running a successful weekly campus clean-up crew, reducing

cafeteria food wastage, installing indoor vegetable gardens, and establishing a worm-composting system in residence—the first of its kind in Canada. Here's one measure of their success: in the first four months of the cleanup crew's existence, recyclable waste collection increased by 57% over the whole of the previous year.

Posted by Jasmeet Sidhu at 02:39:49 PM

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