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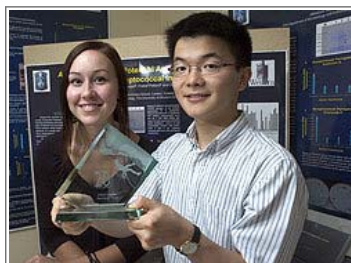


Young Londoners join list of teen trailblazers

TOP 20 UNDER 20

By ALEX WEBER, THE LONDON FREE PRESS

Last Updated: July 9, 2010 7:45am



London students Paige Lawson and Tony Kwon have been named by Youth In Motion to Canada's top 20 under 20 list. (MORRIS LAMONT, The London Free Press)

Most people spend their teenage years hanging out with friends, going to parties and occasionally studying for a test or exam.

Creating programs to assist mentally ill youth or finding a possible cure for deadly strep infections are usually projects tackled by adults.

But for two A.B. Lucas graduates, it's all in a day's work.

Paige Lawson, 19, and Tony Kwon, 17, were named two of Canada's Top 20 Under 20, a competition created by Youth in Motion to honour Canadian youth who've demonstrated a significant level of innovation, leadership and achievement before entering their 20s.

Lawson was chosen for a program she developed called DREAM, or Directed Resources for Education Alternatives and Mental Health. Having suffered from general anxiety and panic disorder in high school, Lawson created DREAM to help teens struggling with similar disorders.

"There's a lot of stigma out there surrounding mental illness," she said.

According to Lawson one in three people suffer from some form of mental illness, but it's not taught in high school curriculum.

Through DREAM Lawson runs workshops with high school students and provides students with resources to identify and support mental illness.

This summer she's helping develop a mental health plan for the Thames Valley District school board and plans to attend Mohawk College to study broadcasting this September.

Kwon, 17, was chosen for his work in the field of microbiology and immunology. When he was just 13 Kwon approached John McCormick, a scientist at the University of Western Ontario, about helping with research at the university's lab.

With McCormick's and a PhD student Katherine Kasper's help, Kwon was able to draw links between garlic and strep infections.

His research has shown that garlic can lessen the severity of the bacteria that causes strep infections, which are responsible for more than 500,000 deaths each year.

"Strep throat is usually no problem here in North America but in Third World countries they can cause secondary infections. It's important they're treated immediately," he said.

Antibiotics are often to expensive in the developing world, but if a household product like garlic can be used to treat strep infections, it could drastically decrease the number of deaths.

He plans to continue his research at UWO this summer. He hopes he can publish his findings in a scientific journal before heading to the University of Toronto in the fall.


Both students received a \$5,000 scholarship and attended a leadership summit in Toronto in June.

Both Lawson and Kwon said they were very excited to be chosen and are anxious to develop projects further.

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