

## Top 20 Under 20 leaders

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Youth in Motion celebrated the achievements of 20 young innovators from across the country at its sixth annual Top 20 Under 20 award event in Toronto, today, June 3.

Claudia Covalciuc, 19, of Halifax, Nova Scotia was among the youths who were honoured for their innovation, community contribution and personal excellence. Now a role model for Cape Breton youth, Claudia had to leave Canada at the age of 11, when her mother was forced to return to her native Romania. For the next five years she worked, unable to attend school. At age 16, she returned to Canada, making the difficult choice of leaving her mother.



"I faced many challenges alone," she said upon receiving the award, while noting she drew strength from within. "My path was to stay focused ... we all go through these moments."

Another winner, Sapna Shah's take on reaching goals was, "If you can dream it, you can do it!" The 17-year old Ontarian became a summer research student at McGill University a year ago. She designed a microencapsulated live yeast column bioreactor and tested its feasibility in removing urea during kidney failure. She says her research focus was inspired by her friend's ailing parent who was dying of kidney failure.

Nineteen-year-old Abid Virani of Guelph was recognized for his contributions to empowering youths. At the age of 17, he co-founded Student Research International to provide opportunities for students to make contributions to the global community. The organization has raised more than \$50,000 for various causes including HIV/AIDS, women's empowerment and education.

All the 20 winners were also rewarded \$500 each, while three— David Castelino (Mississauga), Yan Yu (Calgary), and Ivet Bell (Vancouver), received an additional \$2000 each in Innovation, Environmental, and Community Leadership awards, respectively.

Four-time Olympian and three-time gold medalist, national women's hockey team member Becky Kellar was presented the 2010 Top 20 Under 20 Honorary Award. She also made the keynote address, speaking about her trailblazing path to success.

To read about the winners, a number of who come from immigrant families, and their achievements, visit [top20under20.ca](http://top20under20.ca)