

Local talent and passion lauded at King Youth Recognition Awards

By Jake Courtepatte

The future of King Township shone bright at the Municipal Centre recently, where nine young individuals were recognized at the King Youth Recognition Awards. Presented by the Mayor's Youth Action Team, the fourth annual rendition of the awards was a result of numerous nominations from the community, looking to recognize young people who went above and beyond for their community among seven different categories. "Youth are so important to King Township," said King Mayor Steve Pellegrini. "I've always said, every dollar spent on our youth saved one hundred dollars. If you keep youth active, and engaged in the community, the benefits are huge. And King is a perfect example of keeping our youth active has made it quite a place to live." Recipients were as follows, presented by various members of the MYAT: **Elliott Barenthin, Arts:** "Not only is this recipient a mentor and a talented musician at his after-school band, but he also completed Grade 9 with the Royal Conservatory of Music. Having been playing the piano since he was 4 years old, this recipient was a part of the Junior Concert Band in Grades 9 and 10, the Senior Concert Band in Grades 11 and 12, the Junior and Senior Jazz Band, the Grade 9 Pop Band, and the Bluegrass Band. If he isn't playing the piano every Friday at Port Soirée, he is most likely volunteering at the Elgin Mills Retirement Home playing music for the residents." **Codie Harris, Athletic:** "This recipient curls at the provincial level in U18 Curling. Not only has this recipient qualified for Provincial level competition, he is also the skip for the King City Secondary School Boy's Curling Team, who were the York Region Champions this year, where they then moved on to the OFSAA Bonspiel in North Bay. Despite this award recipient's extremely busy training schedule, he volunteers his time with not only the King Curling Club coaching the "Little Rocks" curlers, but during PA Days teaching elementary school children how to curl, at his younger sister's Schomberg Novice and Tyke hockey games, and at school where he mentored Grade 9 students for a total of 100 hours. This recipient has also volunteered over 160 hours at the Township's summer camps. **Nourhan Almasri, Empowerment:** "Having only moved to Canada just three years ago, she has not only learned to speak English while earning excellent marks in her classes, she has also volunteered over 100 hours of community service. This recipient volunteered with Mats for Haiti in an effort to help people living in Haiti and other countries who have been impacted by natural disasters, war, or economic collapse. This recipient empowers those around her by volunteering at her Mosque. She also works for the York Region District School board where she helps newcomers ease their transition to Canada. Lastly, this award recipient supervises children at Refugee Welcoming Events so that parents can participate in important information sessions." **Robert Mazza, Community Involvement:** "Providing a fun and safe environment for campers, this award recipient has spent many hours volunteering at Township of King summer camps, where he assisted in running games, crafts and sports. In addition to assisting at camp, this recipient's passion for helping others continues at a local library where he acts as a STEM Coach, where he helps teach people science, technology, engineering, art and math. Here, he helps to maintain the recording studio including the green screen, the cameras, the 3D printers and the virtual reality system." **Jack Miller, Spirit:** "At his school, he is heavily involved in the Grade 9 mentorship programs, taking on the role of a head mentor, where he helps ease their transition into high school. In his Grade 10 year, he worked as an "Our School, Our Community" mentor as well, where he designed and presented a 75-minute workshop to Grade 9 students on a three-day camp retreat, concerning important topics such as mental health, caring communities and developing positive character traits. As this recipient now trains future mentors, he also does an outstanding job of working with children through his role as a summer camp counselor with the Township. **Emily Colautti, Youth:** "As the chair of the Mayor's Youth Action Team for 2 years, this recipient has taken action in planning, developing, promoting, and running, various youth led events. As a part of her role as chair of MYAT, this recipient investigates ways to raise money for charity, and researches local charities to make recommendations to other MYAT members. This individual always is willing to step-up and help her community. In addition to her volunteerism with MYAT, she has volunteered at the King Library as a reading buddy and plans to also volunteer at an animal shelter this summer." **Julia Benazzi, Aliya Schiavi, Isabella Hamilton, Outstanding Youth Certificates:** "The Outstanding Youth Certificates are awarded to those youth who exemplify a positive involvement within our community. These recipients have been positive role models for their peers, strong voices for youth, and have contributed by volunteering their time to better our community." The MYAT, first formed in 2015, was put into place as a voluntary group to not only recognize those youth who contribute to their community, but to promote growth in youth involvement as well. "We're striving for a designation called "youth-friendly," said Pellegrini. "We want to be designated as a youth-friendly community. It takes years to get there, and for four

years they've been working at it, we're getting real close.?