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2016

Michael A. Strembitsky

AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

Honouring Student Excellence

Michael A. Strembitsky Award of Excellence

Honouring Student Excellence

On June 21, the Edmonton Public Schools Board of Trustees had the honour of recognizing 17 outstanding nominees for the Michael A. Strembitsky Award of Excellence.

A gold (\$2,000), silver (\$1,500) and bronze (\$1,000) medal and cash award are presented to three students who are completing their schooling and who best exemplify:

- excellence in personal, social and academic endeavours
- keen interest in a broad selection of subjects and activities
- willingness to seek meaningful change
- initiative, courage, confidence and a commitment to excellence
- co-operation with other students, staff and community members
- potential to provide leadership throughout life
- responsible participation in society

Michael A. Strembitsky Award Nominees

Kassandra Gower
amiskwaciy

Jennifer Galm
J. Percy Page

Stephanie Li
Old Scona

Sofia Callaghan
Vimy Ridge

Sarah Hendricks
Braemar

Rafay Sharif
Jasper Place

Emaan Elladen
Queen Elizabeth

Judy Tran
W.P. Wagner

Janessa Layton
Eastglen

Anna Goplen
Lillian Osborne

Marlene Rong
Ross Sheppard

Brea Kessler
Edmonton Christian

Joshua Lau
M.E. LaZerte

Darshina Dhunnoo
Strathcona

Alison Caulfield
Harry Ainlay

Nathan Hepas
Millwoods Christian

Olivia deBourcier
Victoria

GOLD Medal



Darshina
Dhunnoo
Strathcona

To say Darshina is an exemplary student, leader and community member is only a small snapshot of her long list of accomplishments. Darshina is a full Advanced Placement student who achieved Honours with Distinction. She is also a leader in many of the school's programs, initiatives, activities and clubs. She was on the Scona Serves Club executive from 2014-2016, where she helped organize fundraisers and served as their social media manager to increase club participation and engagement. One of her proudest accomplishments during her tenure with the club was helping her school raise more than \$449,000 through Scona's Bike2Box Campaign, which provided more than 374 disaster relief kits and tents to nearly 4,000 natural disaster and war victims around the world.

Darshina was also one of two students selected to plan and execute the school's 2015 Remembrance Day program. She also participates as a Math 30-3 peer tutor two to three times per month. She received a service award from the school for completing more than 75 hours of service, sat on the Grad Committee and is a Loran Scholarship nominee.

Principal Hans Van Ginhoven says, "Darshina is one of the most effective, high-impact leaders I have met. She transforms all that she learns in the classroom into successful enterprises. Through her community, she spends a huge portion of her time working with others or organizing initiatives to change the way things are in terms of social and environmental issues."

Her impressive accomplishments extend outside of the school and into the community. In fact, Darshina has made a difference in other parts of the world. In 2010, Darshina initiated a "book raiser" at her school to collect children's books for the Red Cross Children's Hospital in Capetown, South Africa. Darshina and her family personally delivered the books to the hospital to replenish their mobile library. She held a garage sale to raise money for a girl's orphanage in Mauritius, and on another occasion, Darshina organized a drive to collect new and gently used clothes to donate to Mother Theresa's orphanage in Goa, India.

Darshina has contributed countless hours to the SSRG Vedic Cultural Society, where she is a Sunday School Youth Leader, organizes summer camps, volunteers at events and fundraisers and serves food monthly at Boyle Street Community Services. She also volunteered with Big Brothers Big Sisters as a homework helper and mentor and activity leader in after-school care, and at Fort Edmonton Park as summer daycamp junior instructor.

Darshina has received early acceptance to the University of Alberta Nursing program.

SILVER Medal



Joshua Lau
M.E. LaZerte

Joshua strives for excellence in all he does academically, within his school community and through his work with organizations across Edmonton. He is an International Baccalaureate Diploma student achieving honours or honours with distinction in all courses.

Within the M.E. LaZerte School community, Joshua has been part of the Students' Union for all three years of high school. He helped organize three events that raised more than \$23,000 for the Glenrose Hospital Foundation to go towards the CAREN Therapy Program, which focuses on therapy for post-traumatic stress disorder. He also organized more than 70 students to participate in the Run for the Cure, volunteers for the school's Green Team environmental club, has been part of the swim team for two years, and tutors his peers in Math and Science. In addition, Joshua is a part of the District's LEGACY Course, which is an opportunity for students to interact with Edmonton Public Schools to provide feedback, engage in policy development and help educate other students about governance. In fact, Joshua was M.E. LaZerte's nominee for Edmonton Public Schools' 2015 student trustee election.

"Joshua is an outstanding leader who embodies the spirit of the Michael A. Strembitsky Award of Excellence. His commitment to supporting the community and his dedication to every endeavour he begins is extraordinary," says Principal Kim Backs.

His community contributions are vast and impressive. He volunteered for several local organizations, including the Edmonton Chinese Bilingual Association, the Somali Cultural Organization and GEOMEER. Joshua contributed more than 200 hours of his time to Big Brothers Big Sisters, where he developed a volunteer database that is now used at all 11 of the organization's locations throughout the city. He is a member of the Valley Zoo Junior Development Board, which organizes fundraising events and engages city youth about the zoo's sustainable development. Joshua was also a member of the Kid's Help Phone National Youth Advisory Committee, where he worked with 20 other youth from across Canada to develop a volunteer course for leadership students.

BRONZE Medal



Stephanie Li
Old Scona

“Stephanie is a globally-minded citizen and an outstanding role model. I have been in awe of what she’s accomplished and the impact she’s made in her young life. She is a well-rounded, strong leader that resulted from her hard work, incredible work ethic and outstanding communication skills,” says Principal Dr. Lou Yaniv.

Throughout her high school years, Stephanie has achieved honours with distinction and currently has a 95 per cent average overall. She is one of 31 Loran Scholarship recipients across the country, and will receive \$100,000 over four years during her undergraduate studies. She is the only student from Edmonton to receive this prestigious honour this year.

Stephanie also plays six different instruments, has completed Grade 10 through the Royal Conservatory of Music, is a member of the school band and a small music ensemble, and has won several awards over the last three years at the Kiwanis Music Festival.

She’s been an instrumental leader within her school community. This year, Stephanie was the President for three large student organizations: Student’s Union, the Gay Straight Alliance and the World Issues Club. She cares deeply about social activism and has worked tirelessly over the last three years to engage students to speak up about important issues around race, gender and economic inequality. Stephanie also helped establish the Student Engagement Team, where she established a mentorship program that pairs Grade 12 students with new Grade 10 students. She also competes on the school’s badminton and swim teams.

Her work with Big Brothers Big Sisters has had an important impact on youth in our city. She’s also volunteered with several other community groups, including Brain Care Youth Club and Hope at Home.

Stephanie’s passion lies in the sciences. Last year, during the summer of Grade 11, she was selected for a summer research program through the University of Alberta’s Department of Oncology, where she researched a method of treating brain cancer using viruses. She won an award for her work with Canadian Blood Services, where she worked with researchers to investigate how to freeze cord blood cells. Stephanie has also been part of OSA’s Science Olympic Team for two years, and she competed in the Interdisciplinary Science Competition.

Stephanie will be pursuing an undergraduate degree in sciences and arts to keep her options open so she can get a degree in medicine or get involved with health politics through national policymaking or international affairs.