

March 13, 2005

Great Kids shine at annual awards ceremony

Edmonton... Nineteen outstanding Alberta children and youth have been honoured for making a difference at home and in their communities.

Premier Ralph Klein presented the sixth annual Great Kids Awards during a ceremony at the Fantasyland Hotel in Edmonton on March 13.

"I'm overwhelmed at the optimism and the drive these children possess. Their ability to overcome challenges and their compassion for others are inspiring," said Premier Klein. "Each one of these children deserves to be recognized for the difference they have made in the lives of others. They are true role models for us all."

Award recipients were selected from among 181 nominations, by a review panel made up of MLAs and community members. In honour of Alberta's Centennial, this year's awards make a total of 100 Great Kids honoured across Alberta.

"These Great Kids are truly an inspiration," said Children's Services Minister Heather Forsyth. "They prove that with passion and perseverance, we can all make a positive difference. It's an honour to recognize their outstanding achievements."

This year's Great Kids will receive a prize package including an IBM computer, a \$500 education bursary from TransCanada, accommodation at the Fantasyland Hotel and gift certificates for West Edmonton Mall. Corporate sponsors of the 2005 Great Kids Award are IBM, TransCanada, West Edmonton Mall and the Fantasyland Hotel.

To be eligible for a Great Kids Award, nominees must be residents of Alberta between the ages of five to 18, demonstrate considerable effort in school, contribute to their community through volunteer service and contribute to the quality of home life by willingly assuming responsibilities within their family.

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Backgrounder:

Please see the attached list of award recipients and summaries of their accomplishments.

Media enquiries may be directed to:

Desiree Magnus
Communications, Alberta Children's Services
Office: (780) 427-4801
Cell: (780) 977-4150

To call toll free within Alberta dial 310-0000

Backgrounder

2005 Great Kids Award Winners

Five- to eight-year-old category:

Brendan Bellingham - Age 6 - Calgary

Brendan was born premature, and as a result of being resuscitated at birth, he was diagnosed with cerebral palsy. Despite his earlier physical challenges, Brendan is now an extremely active young boy, who is always looking for ways to help others. His involvement with the Alberta Children's Hospital Foundation has helped raise over \$800,000.

Kathleen Griffin - Age 7 - Redwood Meadows

When tragedy struck, and this second grader's best friend was killed in a car accident, Kathleen became a source of great inspiration and wisdom for her classmates. During this difficult time, Kathleen kept her best friend's memory alive and reminded others that their classmate's spirit would always be with them. Her strength and compassion continue to touch the lives of those around her.

Joseph Kemper-Vela - Age 8 - Edmonton

At an afternoon picnic, Joseph's quick thinking and courage saved the life of his mother's friend. When he realized she was choking, Joseph remembered learning the Heimlich Maneuver at a school First Aid course, and he sprung into action. Joseph's actions paid off, as he was able to dislodge what the woman was choking on. This humble young hero thinks saving lives is all in a day's work.

Morgan Mombourquette - Age 8 - Whitecourt

Morgan's compassion, sharing and caring are recognized by many of her peers and teachers. Four years ago, Morgan befriended a special needs student at her school, and her genuine desire to make him comfortable in the classroom makes an incredible difference to his life. To all who witness this remarkable girl in action, Morgan demonstrates what the power of one person can do.

Nine- to 12-year-old category:

Dakota Beaver - Age 10 - Wabasca

Among a family of 12 children, Dakota is a "quietly assertive diplomat" who excels academically and is always eager to help. Others are drawn to him for his natural problem solving ability, and his patient and calm manner. Though at times faced with many disadvantages, Dakota's drive, kindness and intelligence always inspire others and will undoubtedly bring him success in the future

Serina Nooitgedagt - Age 11 - Lethbridge

Serina has overcome adversity and blossomed into a wonderful and caring daughter, sister and friend. She has made academic strides and shown growth in personal relationships. Serina is an inspiration to all who know her, and even more so, to those who have witnessed her positive transformation in the last four years.

Summer Satre - Age 11 - Edmonton

Summer is an enthusiastic go-getter, praised by her teachers and peers for her work ethic and cheerful smile. No one knows Summer's kindness better than her mother, who is blind. Summer's dedication and assistance are a blessing to her mom, and she has an amazing ability to put others' needs ahead of her own. Her maturity and level of responsibility far exceed her 11 years.

David Smith - Age 11 - Westlock

David has always been a kind and caring child: giving away his new pencils in kindergarten to those who didn't have any, helping his teammates in hockey and always encouraging his peers. In October, David's spirit of giving went into overdrive. When a young girl he knew developed cancer, David organized a community-wide fundraising campaign. By shaving his shoulder-length hockey hair, which he had been growing with pride for over a year, David raised significant funds for the Stollery Children's Hospital. David's efforts raised awareness of cancer and defined community spirit.

Christianna Wood Roddick - Age 10 - Calgary

Christianna's mother was the Executive Director of Aventa, an addiction treatment centre for women. In October of 2003, she passed away from cancer, at a time when she was spearheading a fundraising campaign to expand the Centre. Christianna has since taken over her mother's fundraising mission, selling bracelets at various women's shows. To-date, she has raised over \$35,000. Christianna's strong spirit has brought awareness and funds to a worthy cause, while creating a lifelong memory of her mother.

13- to 15-year-old category:

Gabriel Diggs - Age 14 - Calgary

When Gabriel's father was murdered, Gabe chose to make this unthinkable tragedy his strength. Gabe approaches life with a positive attitude and a willingness to learn. He has a fierce determination to do the right thing for himself and his family. He is also an excellent basketball player and provides leadership for his teammates both on and off the court.

Alyse Geiger - Age 13 - Edmonton

Watching her grandfather's determination and struggle with Parkinson's Disease inspired Alyse to act. Over the past two years, Alyse has single handedly raised money for the Parkinson's Society of Alberta, through garage sales, door-to-door canvassing, and letters of request to her community, family and school. Her dedication and commitment bring awareness to the fight against Parkinson's Disease and make her grandfather very proud.

Cassandra Just - Age 14 - Carmangay

When her great grandmother became a resident at a seniors' complex, Cassandra became a significant volunteer. Recreational therapists at the facility praise her compassion with the residents, especially those who suffer from Alzheimer's and dementia. Cassandra has always had a natural ability to work with people; from a very early age, she has been an advocate for those who are not able to speak so easily for themselves.

Angela Enokson - Age 14 - Edmonton

Angela is a cheerful young lady, attacking her daily struggles with determination and a smile. She had numerous health concerns at birth, and after spending the first four years of her life in the hospital, Angela

faced delays in her speech and movement. But Angela has made up for lost time. Her enthusiasm, optimism and perseverance are an inspiration.

Jared Potts - Age 14 - Millet

A talented dancer and artist, Jared is a generous spirit with amazing drive and attitude. Even after the death of both of his parents, Jared thrives academically, socially, and emotionally. Along the way, he continually reaches out to others, with love and understanding.

16- to 18-year-old category:

Fiona English - Age 16 - Calgary

Two years ago, Fiona moved to Calgary, from her reserve in Brocket, to dedicate herself to education. Since that time, her father passed away and she was in a terrible accident, which took the life of her friend. Although she has experienced extreme heartache, Fiona's wisdom, spirituality and maturity, fueled by her desire to break the cycles of abuse and alcoholism associated with her background, drive her to be an astonishing young woman.

Deryck Scott Reade - Age 17 - Lacombe

At the age of two, Deryck survived surgery for a brain tumor, and led a normal life until the tumor returned last year. His latest surgery has not slowed Deryck down. He has been spearheading fundraising campaigns, managing his football team, working part-time and volunteering extensively for the Brain Injury Foundation. Deryck continues to be an incredibly positive student, friend and son.

Jennifer Sara Ross - Age 17 - Camrose

As her brother writes: "since the age of four, Jen has provided our family, her school and community, with a quiet courage that defied her age." When she lost 97% of her liver function due to a virus, Jen was fortunate to receive a transplant. Today, she is an active 17-year-old, very aware of the impact an anonymous donor had on her life. She has been speaking publicly on the importance of organ donation since the age of six, and with the help of her family, Jen continues to be an enormous advocate for this very important cause.

Alaina Smith - Age 16 - Bonnyville

Alaina is a gifted athlete, dancer, tutor and student. Yet it was Alaina's vision of developing and implementing a conference for young women in High School to learn about and pursue non-traditional careers that has earned her the title of Great Kid. This ambitious endeavor was an unprecedented success.

Justin Yaassoub - Age 17 - Edmonton

For Justin, "character is how you live your life when nobody is looking." Justin is an active student, an athlete, an advocate for his school, an avid member of Cadets, a biathlete and a born leader. The praise he receives from his peers and teachers does not compare to that of his family, to whom he has been a significant help since his father broke his back a few years ago. Justin lives with purpose, caring and compassion.

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