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Community impact, giving back important to local youth scholarship winners

By **Dennis Hanagan**
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Toronto Community Housing and Scadding Court Community Centre have announced the names of 10 Downtown high school students who will receive scholarships for post-secondary education.

The Investing in Our Diversity scholarship program, now in its ninth year, awards \$4,000 to youth leaders active in issues of diversity, equity and anti-racism, from marginalized communities. The winners receive an additional \$4,000 from the institution they attend, in their second year.

Amer Choudhury, Shamil Ishraq and Abdulkarim Muhaseen of Regent Park, Sara Yoseph of Cabbagetown, DeiJaumar D. Clarke and Dhayo Kansar of Parkdale, Latoya Maria Dell of Dundas and Spadina, Hodan A. Aden and Osamah M. All of College and Spadina, and Eddie E.W. Wong of Bloor and Dufferin were the 10 local scholarship winners.

Clarke is on the executive of the Afro-Canadian club at his school where they stress anti-racism.

He has participated as a church summer camp worker and has coached boys and girls basketball. He believes that "letting a week go by and knowing that you didn't do anything productive is a waste of time."

Dell started working in her community through the Alexandra Park Community Centre summer camp. She worked in the kitchen and took part in anti-racism training. In a 6-month program with SERVE Canada, she contributed to an educational toolkit and "zine" designed to educate the public about the gay/queer/trans communities.

Learning about the Caribbean gay community, she concluded she "needs to fight racism" that many her community experience, but also needs "to help educate [her] community about [their] own discriminatory practices."

This summer she will go to Ghana for a youth conference to work with African youth and establish employment programs in areas where youth unemployment rates exceed 90%.

Muhaseen tutored an elementary student one hour per week for six months in the Toronto Public Library's Leading to Reading program.

He also mentored students who were negotiating the transition from middle to high school. He also volunteers as a youth organizer and with Charlie's Freewheels, a program created to give youth hands-on bicycle maintenance skills.

Many people have inspired him but he says his Grade 8 basketball coach stands out. "Our coach insisted that we work hard at every practice. It's not always about winning. You must continue to work really hard. I have applied this to my academics and daily life."

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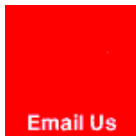
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