



Jessica Cheng, 15, an Acton youth volunteer shows Mrs. Fuzzy Bottoms to Jon Remacka, 12, of Acton, who was visiting the Acton Youth's Chance for Change held in Prospect Park last weekend. The event was organized by teen volunteers.

Photo by Calvin Dyke

# Acton youth thank adult supporters

*"They are always caring and they are always there"*

It's a phrase often repeated by youth when they are asked to describe the seven adults receiving a Youth Supporter Award at Acton Youth's Chance for Change event in Prospect Park last weekend.

The awards were part of the larger event organized by a group of local young people to celebrate and share the strengths of youth.

Kellen Wiersma is one of those receiving an award. The youth pastor for Crossing Community Church is recognized for his tremendous efforts to build a place that youth can call their own. Wiersma's church is in the process of converting the former Manny's Roadhouse into a church and a coffee shop

named Roxy's. The space will be made available for music concerts, lectures, dances, game nights, and youth events.

Robin Jupiter met Kellen Wiersma after joining the Roxy Youth Facebook group last fall and says the meeting has changed his life in ways difficult to describe.

"Kellen is definitely, definitely very inspirational!" he says. "He's a very kind, helpful, generous, strong-willed and determined dude. He always has an encouraging word, and you hardly ever catch him without a smile on his face."

Jen Ross is another adult supporter award winner.

"Mrs. Ross is amazing," says Bekky Gibson, one of the students on her improv team. "She's funny. She's pas-

sionate. She will always listen. She always brings out the best in people. She pushes you toward greatness."

The Acton High School drama and math teacher has been teaching for 20 years. When the busy teacher isn't directing the recent production of *Taming of the Shrew*, she's co-ordinating Grade 10 puppet shows or Grade 11 and 12 drama performances.

"I'd do it for free," she jokes, referring to her work with young people. "Watching them grow, who wouldn't want to do that!"

Her advice for other adults in their support of youth? "Never say no to an idea. You can reshape the idea so that is feasible and doable but never reject an idea. If a kid says I want to fly, I'd say, 'Okay, let's see what's up there.' They are capable of so many things."

Also nominated for an award is the Starlight Café, a business that has offered significant support to local youth by offering a venue for the coffee house music nights organized by the Mayor's Youth Action Committee (MYAC).

"The Starlight has been so supportive of the coffee houses that we hosted in the past," says MYAC vice-chair and Grade 10 student Katherine Watson. "They're always so willing to let us have our performances there and they even stay open after their normal hours so we can have a great time listening to the local talent. It's sending a positive message to youth and adults alike."

Starlight Café owner Chris Yeatman says supporting youth makes good business sense. "It's a great opportunity for me to get known in the community too," he says. As a father of a young child, he's motivated to see how performing builds self-esteem and confidence among youth.

"Coming in here and (performing their music) builds their self-confidence and only makes them better future citizens. It's only going to help their future, and ours as a community as well."

Katie Legere, a child and family counsellor and outreach worker joins the list of award winners. Legere works for Nelson Youth Centres where she co-ordinates a weekly outreach program  
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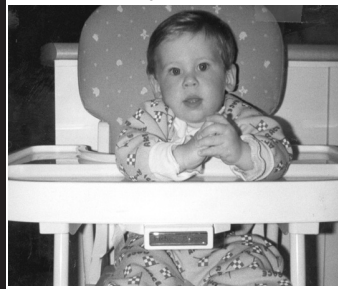
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