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Thursday May 19, 2005, 12 to 2:00 p.m.
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Public Welcome

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Hospital links culture to program thanks to student

From page 1.

Since Ms Coutts, who is 17, created Breakout, she has noticed more integration among students with and without special needs. The special needs students at her school are now sitting with different students rather than staying clumped together.

Miss Coutts was one of only 20 young Canadians to receive a TD Canada Trust Scholarship for Community Leadership at a ceremony in Ottawa Tuesday. Selected from 3,700 applicants, this year's scholarship winners will receive full tuition, \$5,000 a year toward living expenses and an offer of summer employment for up to four years — for a total value of up to \$60,000 each.

Mohini Bhavsar, a Grade 12 student at Milliken Mills High School, also received the prestigious scholarship.

The 17-year-old Markham student was inspired to introduce a peer-tutoring program after enjoying Shad Valley, a national program in science, technology and entrepreneurship for gifted high school students operated by Shad International.

She attended the program at McMaster University in July 2004 where



MOHINI BHASAR: Milliken Mills High School student, who did co-op at hospital, hopes to study medicine.



KRISTEN COUTTS: Created program to integrate special needs students at St. Augustine school.

her group studied math, computers and entrepreneurship. The students were learning for the sake of learning, not just because they would be evaluated, she said.

When she returned to school, she immediately spotted the difference in the students at school.

"They lose the purpose of it (learn-

ing) and it ends up being about tests and evaluations. They lost motivation early in the game. I saw students losing enthusiasm," she said. "You lose the joy of learning, which I had experienced. I wanted them to experience it, too."

So, Ms Bhavsar created a by-students-for-students science tutoring program.

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Ms Bhavsar also helped bring culturally diverse recreation programs to patients at the Markham Stouffville Hospital. She worked at the hospital during a co-op placement and was often paired up with people of south Asian backgrounds, since she speaks English, French and Gujarati and can understand Punjabi.

But she saw few women participating in activities because of the cultural barrier. So she created a PowerPoint presentation to hospital staff suggesting ways to include more people, such as a Samosa day instead of a regular baking day. Staff are incorporating it into recreation programs.

Ms Bhavsar is also a big fan of rock climbing, which she says is a good teacher.

"It makes me find my inner strength. I think I won't be able to clutch onto the nearest foothold but I leap for it and I do. It's all about inner strength."

Ms Bhavsar wants to eventually study medicine and has not yet selected a university for next year but said McMaster University's bachelor of science program is first on her list.

Ms Coutts plans to begin a bachelor of arts program at York University next year.

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