

YOUTH: Three Stouffville residents up for provincial awards

Global, local causes sparked Jr. Citizen nominees to act

BY SANDRA BOLAN
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The civil war in Sri Lanka has sparked Kershanth Thevasundaram's spirit of volunteerism.

Which is why, in part, he has been nominated for a 2010 Ontario Junior Citizen of the Year award from the Ontario Community Newspapers Association.

Member papers from across Ontario, including The Sun-Tribune, are recognizing 105 nominees between the ages of six and 17 who have performed worthwhile community service, acts of heroism or are just good kids making life better for others.

Through the website, students are able to explore volunteer opportunities and businesses can post positions directly to them.

Two other Stouffville residents - Alexis Xenophontos and John Pehar - have also been nominated this year.

The names of the 12 recipients will be announced Friday. The awards program is sponsored by TD Canada Trust and Direct Energy.

Mr. Thevasundaram, 17, spends his free time volunteering in three main areas.

The first is in the healthcare sector, in particular, he founded the Red Cross Community

group in his region last summer.

Secondly, he spends his time working on international relief efforts. Mr. Thevasundaram organized a Free the Children holiday run and thirdly, he is involved in local youth empowerment.

"His planned community website is a great testament to his desire to get his peers involved in the community," wrote Dave Somasundaram, who nominated Mr. Thevasundaram for the award.

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Mr. Thevasundaram has raised \$10,000 for Feed the Children, which was used to build a new school in Sri Lanka - his home country.

Mr. Thevasundaram is also a part of his school's gifted program.

FRIEND OF OSPCA

When Ms. Xenophontos' family adopted their cat from a local shelter, it inspired the 12-year-old to dedicate her free time to abandoned and abused animals waiting for their forever homes.

Too young to volunteer at the OSPCA, Ms. Xenophontos launched a pet food drive and convinced Fabricland to donate material so she and her grandmother could sew blankets for the animals.

"Animals inspire Alexis to do more and make changes for the better," wrote Victoria Xenophontos, who nominated Ms. Xenophontos for the award.

During last year's ringworm outbreak at the OSPCA, Ms. Xenophontos contacted Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees' office and arranged a meeting with him to find out what she could do to help.

BUDDING POLITICIAN

Mr. Klees then asked Ms. Xenophontos for her input, being a representative of the youth.

She one day wants to be in government to help make bigger changes that will make the world a better place.

Ms. Xenophontos was also nominated in 2009.

Another young politician in the making is John Pehar, who lobbied his local councillor to help turn an unsafe two-way stop

intersection into a four-way stop.

"What impressed me so much about with both the determination and manner in which John took on his civic duty, was that he actually used the political process to fix a problem that the adults of the neighbourhood complained of, but did nothing about," wrote Darren Thomas Praznik in his nomination.

Mr. Pehar has also been involved in the Mayor's Youth Council, high school student council, Ontario Youth Parliament, Free the Children - We Day and the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum.

"John is not a follower who will go along with the crowd or just do or not do things because of what others might think. He is truly his own person," Mr. Praznik wrote.

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