

2014 Outstanding Youth Service Award Winner- Khadija Kadu

Khadija is a Grade 12 student at C.W. Jefferys School with the Toronto District SchoolBoard. Khadija has excelled in school, earning an award for the highest academic performance in courses overall. She has also demonstrated unwavering commitment to the youth in her community and school by advocating for them and participating in various groups addressing the issues and needs of the Jane and Finch area she resides in.

Khadija recognizes the importance of an education and has played an integral role in bringing that message to her community. Khadija is a member of the Minister's Student Advisory Council of Education (MSAC). She engages in solution-oriented discussions with other students across the Province on different policies and strategies to address educational barriers. As a group they have identified priority issues and gaps facing Ontario's educational system. Khadija has also helped facilitate an after school program, Skills Training for Youth through Learning and Education (STYLES), to assist underprivileged youth aged 13 to 17 with their homework and strengthening their academic abilities. STYLES encouraged these youth to develop goals that are achievable by the end of the academic year. As a result the staff saw drastic improvements in the attendance, academic performance and self-esteem of these youth.

Khadija advocates relentlessly for youth with mental health concerns. In her role on MSAC, Khadija had a discussion with the Minister of Education, Liz Sandals, about students with mental health issues at her school, and how they are reluctant to obtain help due to stigmatization. Khadija asked that there be further training of teacher's and school staff to increase their knowledge and ability to identify and support students living with mental health issues. As part of her ongoing goal to address mental health at her school she facilitated the implementation of monthly workshops encouraging stress management and mental well being with sixty students.

Khadija is focused on engaging youth and encouraging them to advocate for themselves. At her school she joined the Speak Up Advisory Council (SUAC). They developed surveys for the students at C.W. Jefferys to determine how to increase student engagement. After their analysis they found many students felt that they needed a safe space to spend time with their friends and de-stress. The SUAC created a safe space room for the students which had board games, monthly speaker series and interactive and leadership games.

Khadija organized workshops to raise awareness about issues that are significant to youth in her community like bullying and prejudice. Khadija was frequently bullied herself in grade nine, she has used this negative experience to help motivate her to advocate for the students in her school feeling the same way. Khadija is involved in the Because I Am A Girl Speaker's Bureau. She attends monthly meetings to discuss various issues girls are facing internationally. The group generates fundraising ideas to help youth attend school. Khadija gives presentations at conferences to an audience, which includes teachers and various high-level government officials to raise awareness for girl's rights.

Khadija has been strongly involved in Pedal Pushers at her school. This is a youth bike-recycling program, which also assists youth in receiving training in bicycle mechanics and safety. This initiative led to marginalized youth having access to bikes, which allowed them to lead healthier and active lifestyles.

In addition to the above, Khadija has mentored a nine year old girl in the Big Sister mentorship program for over two years. She meets her with this girl on a weekly basis,

working together on leadership and teamwork activities to build confidence and provide guidance, as well as, participate in recreational activities.

Khadija has received numerous awards for her remarkable academic achievement in school. She received a scholarship from an organization called Sky's the Limit. Khadija also received an attribute award for respect.

It is due to Khadija's dedication and involvement with the school and local community that she is the winner of the 2014 Outstanding Youth Award.

Congratulations Khadija