



The Angel Foundation for Learning Awards \$14,500 in Bursaries to Students to Support their Post-Secondary Studies

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Toronto-June 17, 2021) – Six outstanding students are being recognized by The Angel Foundation for Learning this year for academic excellence, community service, and contributions to their local schools through AFLToronto’s annual award and bursary program.

“It is a privilege for us to be able to make a positive impact on the lives of these outstanding young people, and we are truly grateful for the support of our many donors and sponsors for recognizing the diverse needs in our school communities,” says AFL Executive Director, John Yan. “With the additional financial hardships that the ongoing pandemic has created for so many families, we are happy to provide some assistance to help these students achieve their post-secondary goals.”

Kairra Clemente (Francis Libermann CSS) and Kavishka Gomes (Neil McNeil CSS) are the winners of the **2021 Tom Leon Bursaries**. Each will be presented with their certificate and a \$5,000 bursary during a special, year-end TCDSB Webcast and YouTube livestream on Tuesday, June 22 at 9:15 am.

Since 2004, the **Tom Leon Charitable Foundation** has been awarding student bursaries to deserving students who require financial assistance in order to pursue studies at a post- secondary institution. The selection of the recipients is based on a variety of criteria including (but not limited to): contributions to the school and/or community that reflect Catholic values, financial need, volunteer work within the school or community, and personal challenges and obstacles.

Other Award and Bursary winners include:

- **Bacchelli Family Bursary** – Faith Omosefe Asemota, St. Joseph Morrow Park
- **Exceptional Student Bursary** – Shaleena Singh, Msgr Fraser College, Isabella
- **Mary Jane McKeen Bursary** – Paula Alcantara, James Cardinal McGuigan CSS
- **Murdocca Family Literacy Bursary** – Yvvana Duku, Msgr Fraser College, Isabella
- **TANDIA Bursary** – Cailean Valdez Cruzada, Notre Dame CSS

Please see attached Recipients Profile sheet for bios of each student.

About The Angel Foundation for Learning

Founded in 1987, the Angel Foundation for Learning is a charitable organization that serves the needs of more than 90,000 students and their families in the City of Toronto. Through the generosity and compassion of corporate sponsors and individual donors, we help children and families who are experiencing financial hardships. With a commitment to equity, AFL delivers programs that empower students to focus on their education and overcome challenges affecting their ability to achieve their best.

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Recipient’s Profiles

Tom Leon 2021 Bursary Winners

Kairra Clemente is graduating from Francis Libermann CHS this year. She says that her upbringing was rooted in Catholic values and principles, which inspired her involvement in her parish and the Filipino community, including helping as an altar server at Prince of Peace.

She embarked on a service trip to the Philippines to build houses for the poorest communities, helped to feed the homeless in Toronto and participated in the TCDSB's 2020 Roots of Equity Panel. Through work as a co-op student at a specialized social justice law firm, she encountered many who were marginalized and facing discrimination, which strengthened her resolve to help those who are underserved and underprivileged.

This desire is what drove her to pursue International Development Studies at the University of Toronto, and with an academic average of over 96%, became one of the 30 students accepted into the competitive specialized co-op program.

Kairra serves as a role model to her peers and younger students at the school, and is actively involved in academic clubs, social justice initiatives and faith-based endeavors. Her work with Camp Olympia has further helped her develop leadership skills, designing engaging activities and facilitating group discussions.

Working a part-time job as a hostess at a restaurant, while juggling her academic responsibilities in an effort to help her family after one parent sustained serious injuries in a car accident, leaving them unable to work, she has remained inclusive, accommodating, kind, generous, patient, warm and outgoing. She is a positive person and a gifted student who possesses an intrinsic academic devotion and commitment to excellence.

Kavishka Jude Gomes is graduating from Neil McNeil High School, where he was involved in many aspects of service through the "Young Spiritans" group, a student-led organization which raises awareness and funds for local and international communities in need. Kavishka was also a pivotal figure in leading a group of 25 student volunteers from Neil McNeil and Notre Dame who organized and facilitated retreats for elementary students to help ease the transition from elementary school to high school.

His leadership qualities also led him to participate in Camp Olympia, and as a Big Brother to mentor and support his younger peers through the transition from elementary to secondary school. He was a member of the Reach for the Top team as well as the Stop the Stigma team, and during the summer, he volunteered for the SMART START program, serving as a teaching assistant for classes of grade 8 students.

Kavishka also served his parish as a member of the youth choir, as an altar server and as a youth leader who helped organize a number of fundraisers, and meetings to help other youth with a variety of issues such as social pressure, anxiety and adversity.

With a disabled parent, and a mother who works three different jobs to make ends meet, Kavishka took on a part-time position as a secretary at his parish to help the family with basic necessities as well as trying to save money for his own education. Throughout it all, he has maintained an average of more than 90% and has accumulated more than 250 hours of community service.

Kavishka has been accepted into the University of Waterloo's Honours Planning Co-op Program for September.

Bacchelli Family Bursary

Faith Omosefe Asemota (St. Joseph Morrow Park) will be studying Social Sciences at the University of Toronto. Although she has been the main caregiver for her three younger siblings, she has maintained an average of 88% while also helping out in her school. Described as mature and respectful, Faith Omosefe has been involved with the Afro-Caribbean Club for 3 years, facilitating activities to promote Black culture. She was a school mentor for grade 9 students and organized presentations on mental and physical health. Outside of school she volunteered at a local food bank and a retirement home, quickly accumulating more than the required 40 hours of community service. Despite the challenges of arriving as a refugee when she was in grade 10, she has approached every challenge and opportunity with a positive attitude.

Exceptional Student Bursary

Shaleena Singh attended St. Patrick CSS prior to returning to school at Msgr Fraser College to earn the last few credits needed for graduation. Inspired by the strength of her father, who passed away during her final

year of school, she is pursuing a career in writing, starting with the Journalism or Advertising and Marketing Communications Management, as well as Communications – Professional Writing programs at Centennial College.

Mary Jane McKeen Trades Bursary

Paula Lourdes Alcantara completed the Arts & Culture Specialist High Skills Major program at James Cardinal McGuigan. Outside of her studies, she joined the YCAN Program at Baycrest Centre Community Centre, to help homeless individuals and those experiencing food insecurity in Toronto. She developed a network of community contacts and stakeholders, which led to opportunities for youth to support a local homeless shelter and drop-in soup kitchen. She plans to study Architectural Technology at George Brown.

Murdocca Family Literacy Bursary Winner

Yvvana Duku has completed her secondary school education at Msgr. Fraser College's Isabella Campus. Yvvana had become disengaged from school for a time, but her passion for writing and her resilience have led her to pursue post-secondary studies in literature at Carleton University. Her written works include "Struggle Love Must Go", "Being an Empath Amongst the Marginalized", "Oh Shakespeare, Did You Know" as well as poetry and blog posts focusing on social issues facing black girls. Her hope is to become a teacher whose lived experience will help to transform the classroom space so that young black boys and girls can feel inspired to learn and grow. She also wants to become an author and continue to give voice to the struggles that she has faced throughout her life.

TANDIA Bursary

Cailean Cruzada is finishing her studies with honours at Notre Dame CSS, she was also a member of the basketball team and hip hop dance crew. Outside of school, she was also in ReadPhilippines Toronto, a charity group that provides literacy support to underprivileged children and schools in the Philippines, and with Friends of Victoria University Library Book Sale, an organization that collects used books for resale and for donation to organizations that provide used books to countries in need. She has also been active in her parish as an altar server and helping with older members of the parish as well as mentoring youth. She plans to attend Ryerson University in pursuit of her Bachelor of Arts-Creative Industries.

School Awards

The Angel Foundation for Learning also presented three school awards to enhance literacy programs and materials, and purchase resources for school libraries. The three schools receiving \$500 each this year are **Our Lady of Peace, St. Benedict and St. Roch.**

To learn more about the awards and bursaries supported by The Angel Foundation for Learning, see: <https://angelfoundationforlearning.org/bursaries-awards/>