



Record Number of Applicants for AFL Awards and Bursaries

June 12, 2023--The Angel Foundation for Learning is pleased to announce the winners of the many student bursaries and school awards for 2023. With so many diverse and inspiring applications, it was definitely a challenge for the various review panels to come up with their recommendations.

“The incredible stories shared by this year’s applicants speak volumes to the determination and commitment of these young people to overcome life’s challenges and do whatever it takes to fulfill their aspirations for the future,” says AFL Executive Director John Yan. “Seeing all that these candidates have accomplished in such a short time leaves us all feeling confident that the future is in good hands as these young people continue on the path of giving back to their communities.”

This year’s winner of AFL Student Bursary for Indigenous Youth is Christopher Canning from St Joan of Arc Catholic Academy. This is only the second time that this bursary has been offered, funded jointly by the AFL and the TCDSB’s Equity, Diversity and Indigenous Education Department. The \$5,000 bursary will be presented in person at the National Indigenous Peoples Day Celebration on June 21st at the Catholic Education Centre, 80 Sheppard Avenue East.

Thanks to the continued generosity of Connie Leon and the Leon Family, four students will again receive the Tom Leon Student Bursary, valued at \$5,000 each: Karissa Cruz from Mary Ward, Tristan Robles from Neil McNeil, Kayla Siriban from Francis Libermann and Paulina Sieczka from Michael Power-St Joseph. These bursaries will be presented at the Toronto Catholic District School Board year-end Mass on June 22nd.

“Our thanks goes out to everyone who supports AFL’s award and bursary program which enables these outstanding individuals to pursue their post-secondary goals,” says Mr Yan.

Other Award and Bursary winners included:

- Bacchelli Family Bursary – Trinity Osamuyi, St Basil-the-Great
- Exceptional Student Bursary – Sara Galinato, Dante Alighieri
- Mary Jane McKeen Bursary – Jicoy Bascombe, St Martin
- Murdocca Family Literacy Bursary – Charlize Marshall, Mary Ward
- Tandia Bursary – Tharushi Nathasha Perera, Mary Ward
- AFL Music Bursary – Nicole Johnson, St Joseph Morrow Park
- AFL Visual Arts Bursary – Jimin Seo, St Joseph College
- Spirit of Inclusion Award – Joshua Tiglao, St Victor
- George Ermellini Literacy Award – St Roch Catholic School
- AFL Library Award in Honour of Kathy Harding – Nativity of our Lord Catholic School

See attached for more information about the bursary and award recipients.



Angel Foundation for Learning Award and Bursary Winners 2023

Christopher Canning, graduating from St Joan of Arc, has a deep and personal commitment to giving back to his community which he attributes in part to the experiences of his grandparents, who are residential school survivors, and his late mother who is a survivor of the Indian day school system. Completing the required 40 hours of community service even prior to starting grade 9, Christopher continued to help others by shovelling snow for neighbours and caring for their pets when they are away. He is pursuing a career as an automotive service technician.

Karissa Cruz from Mary Ward, is pursuing a Bachelor in Science with a double major in Human Biology and Women Studies at the University of Toronto. A leader in her school community, she was heavily involved in the school newspaper, with Camp Robin Hood to provide orientation and mentorship to grade 9 students as well as serving as co-president of the school's chapter of DECA, a career and technical student organization for business, marketing, finance, hospitality and entrepreneurship. Active in her local parish in the choir, as well as volunteering as a Catholic Confirmation Facilitator and Mass Lector she has accumulated over 200 community service hours.

Tristan Robles from Neil McNeil has offers of acceptance from the University of Toronto, as well as Toronto Metropolitan University. At school, he has served as co-president of the student council, a founding member of the student advisory team (Safe Schools Team), Big Brother coordinator and leader, member of the Neil McNeil concert and jazz band, cast member of the school production of "12 Angry Men," member of the senior rugby 7s and 15s team, a member of the outdoors club, and a competitor for TV/Video Production Skills Ontario Competition. At his parish, he volunteered with all three youth ministry groups (EDGE, Rite of Confirmation, Life Teen) as well as working as camp leader/counselor in the summers of 2020 and 2021 and served as a volunteer usher and lecturer and has accumulated over 80 hours of community service.

Kayla Siriban is graduating from Francis Libermann and is looking forward to entering Toronto Metropolitan University's Bachelor of Engineering - Mechatronics Engineering program. Receiving a number of academic awards, she was also co-president of the Debate Society, co-captain of the Robotics Team, and co-leader of the Young Spiritans, dedicated to Catholic Student Leadership, community service, and social justice. Their activities included food and clothing drives, an informational campaign to raise awareness about child sex trafficking, and SEC (sexual exploitation of children) alongside OneChild. and a number of chaplaincy related events, assisting with Masses. She served as photographer for the yearbook, a member of the Libermann Green Team, where she helped to graphically design posts to promote environmental sustainability and a member of the badminton team. She volunteered in TCDSB's Filipino International Language Program, an afterschool program in Taekwondo and worked with Focus on Youth as a camp counsellor.

Paulina Sieczka from Michael Power-St Joseph will be pursuing studies in science at York University. An exceptional student, she has devoted a lot of time and energy to numerous extracurricular activities including the Mental Health Committee and the Career Corner Club – a student resource club that educates students about specific industries, career options and post-secondary options and their requirements. As an executive member of the Mental Health Committee, she helped plan, manage and supervise events meant to benefit the student body by educating them on self-advocating and factors that

affect our mental health, and spends her free time to helping students understand their own struggles and helps them fill in the gaps. She also volunteered her time to assist and tutor students struggling in Mathematics, and as a youth group leader at her local parish.

Trinity Osamuyi, St Basil-the-Great has overcome many obstacles including the loss of a brother which has made a huge impact on her family. Helping her mother, she has worked at Wendy's, with TPS Youth in Policing Initiative, as well as a media team member in Focus on Youth TCDSB and as a camp counselor in Know Your Community Service Support Services. She also received a scholarship to attend a Medical Youth Summer Program at University of Toronto where she learned more about Molecular Biology & Genetics. Not surprisingly she is pursuing a career in nursing with a specific interest in becoming a travel nurse. Her high school involvement included the Nature club, Medical club, Tutoring, Drama club and Chess club, and in the community she has volunteered with Downsview Pumpkin Fest, Chalkfarm Community Centre, Salvation Army, Pilgrim Feast Tabernacle, Newcomer Youth Leadership Development Program, and Rexdale Youth Mentorship.

Sara Galinato, Dante Alighieri, is pursuing a career in film with a specific interest in psychological documentaries. She has been accepted into Sheridan College's Film and Television program. In schools she gravitated to courses in fine art, media arts and photography, applying her talents to creating school videos as well as endeavours such as competing at Skills Canada where she placed 2nd in the province and an anti-racism video contest. Despite being legally blind, she participated on her school's soccer and track teams and served as a voice for the school community at their Open House events and outreach activities.

Jicoy Bascombe, from St Martin will be studying to become a Motor Power Technician at Centennial College. At school she helped organize daily basketball, ping pong and volleyball games for peers, and was involved in the Restorative Conflict Mediation Circles and served as a mentor for younger students, helping them make positive choices in relationships as well as their post-secondary pathways. A co-op placement at Midtown Honda helped to build on technical and communication skills.

Charlize Marshall, Mary Ward is pursuing humanities at the University of Toronto. She is helping to support her family who is continuing to struggle due to a number of health issues. Last summer she was awarded a scholarship for the UofT Youth Summer Law program which was pivotal in her decision to pursue law as a career after completing undergraduate studies in English. In school she was the president of the Best Buddies chapter, the administration executive of the local DECA chapter and a longstanding volunteer with the AFL's Student Nutrition Program. She also helped with tutoring peers and wrote another of pieces for the school's digital magazine "Word in Colour".

Tharushi Nathasha Perera, Mary Ward is no stranger to overcoming challenges. With one parent reeling from a job loss brought on by the pandemic, and another in a serious car accident, she was forced to work full-time for a period of time to help support the family. Despite that, she remained actively involved in school life, helping to initiate the school's STEAM program, and acting as STEAM president for one of the only self-directed schools in Canada. While excelling in STEAM-related courses, and receiving a number of awards in various areas of study, she also spearheaded a STEAM-related course creation for current and future students, work on program development, social media outreach, aid in the development of the first STEAM Special High Skills Major in Canada. She completed a co-op placement at Scarborough General Hospital and volunteered at a nursing home for two years, helping to feed and transport residents. She participated in the University of Toronto's Medical Youth program. She started her own club, Helping Hands, where they find volunteer opportunities for students in their community or help them gain free experiences that would support their chosen career paths. She was also a member of the school's G.I.V.E club, flag football team, Free the Children, and cross country, while being one of ten OASIS Core leaders nominated by teachers to help integrate the Grade 9s into our school. She is heading to McMaster University where she will study Life Sciences.

Nicole Johnson, St Joseph Morrow Park, has been accepted into Humber College's Bachelor of Music program. A flute player for many years, she became interested in composing last year when she got her own keyboard. A few months later she performed her first 2 piano pieces, *Waiting for Spring* and *Ambition*, at her school's Spring Concert. Her ambition is to become one of the few queer, Black, or female Canadian concert band composers. She is currently the flute section leader for 14 students from Grades 10-12 and plays most flute solos. This school year she also started playing the piccolo and is a member of the school's choir. At OBA's Music Festival SJMP's Symphonic Band won gold rating and at the Atlantic Festival of Music, SJMP's Symphonic Band and Choir both won a gold rating where she won the Outstanding Soloist award.

Jimin Seo, St Joseph College is interested in 2D animation at Seneca College. Her passion for drawing as a form of communication with the world around her has been the driving force in her life from an early age. An international student from Korea, she has lived in multiple countries, and discovered a wide range of arts and traditions that she wanted to share with others. Her ultimate goal is to help those of East Asian heritage share their voices and lives through art with the community. She also enjoys conducting arts projects for the community, and while in high school was able to participate in multiple projects as a president of the St. Joseph College school art club which contributed to learning the importance of communication and teamwork. She notes some highlights including involvement with the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls project called "Red Dot" with acrylic and wood board to spread awareness of MAMIW, an animation project for Christmas Assembly with digital tools, mural painting in a religion classroom for a meditative atmosphere, and drawing caricatures of teachers for the yearbook and students for school event called J-walk. She also participated in the 2023 EDGE Youth art show exhibition for the environmental section and received an academic excellence award for a grade 10 art course

Joshua Tiglao, St Victor is the recipient of the Spirit of Inclusion Award which supports students who are deaf and hard of hearing with the cost of hearing aids and batteries. Joshua participated in the Deaf Youth Conference in Ottawa in 2022, and served as a role model for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students at the school, teaching them how to care and manage their hearing aids, and also supported his younger brother who has ASK. Joshua will attend Mary Ward Catholic Secondary School in the fall.