



Youth honoured for making an impact

Five people, one
business, one group
honoured by Rotary

CYNTHIA REASON
creason@insidetoronto.com

A passion for making a positive
impact on youth is the common
denominator tying together the

seven diverse recipients of this
year's Rotary Club of Toronto
West Youth Impact Awards.

Lucas Antoniazzi, Nisha
Baig, Dishan Ratnajoithi, Toyin
Crandell and Frank O'Dea were

celebrated as Rotary's 2016
individual award recipients,
while C.J. Graphics and Youth
Employment Services (YES)
were named as the business
>>> YOUNG, page 28

continued ...

Young community leaders recognized by Rotary

>>>from page 1

and community organization honorees at the 17th Annual Awards Gala last Friday at the Old Mill Inn in Etobicoke.

LUCAS ANTONIAZZI - Youth Award Recipient (Under 18)

A Grade 12 student at Ursula Franklin Academy, Antoniazzi, 17, began giving back at an early age – at 13, embarking on an “amazing” mission trip to Uganda with All Saints Kingsway Church.

“It made such a large impact on me, because it gave me a deeper understanding of how other people live,” he said of the 2012 trip, during which he helped build a home in Bbira, a village for children orphaned by AIDS or war. “It was amazing.”

Back here in Toronto, Antoniazzi is active in his school community at Ursula Franklin, where he has been a leader with PALS – a school club that helps Grade 8 students with their transition into high school – for the last four years.

Through PALS, he’s helped co-ordinate an open house for the families of Grade 8 students, assisted in running a lunch program for Grade 9 students, and acted as a coordinator for PALS’ annual three-night retreat for new students at Camp Tamarack.

NISHA BAIG - Youth Award Recipient (Under 18)

A Grade 11 student at James Cardinal McGuigan, Baig, 17, was recognized for her volunteer work with MicroSkills – a multi-cultural, non-profit, community-based organization committed to assisting the unemployed.

As president of MicroSkills’ Youth Reference Advisory Group, Baig said her focus has been on “educating teens about gender-based violence, stereotypes, prejudice, and violence against women and men.”

It was also through MicroSkills that Baig had the opportunity to volunteer with the International Day of the Girl, an event for which she was named outreach co-ordinator for the Federal Girls’ Group.

Baig called winning the Rotary Club of Toronto West’s Youth Impact Award a “blessing” and urged other young person her age to get involved in their communities.

“I think that often youth don’t see their own potential, but if they would push themselves a little bit more, they would,” said Baig, an aspiring lawyer. “Sometimes just reaching out can be enough to save a lot of people from a lot of things. So my advice is just try – try to have faith in yourself and try to see that you can make a difference.”

DISHAN RATNAJOTHI - Youth Award Recipient (Under 25)

A third-year business strategy and accounting student at York University’s



Staff photos/BENJAMIN PRIEBE

Clockwise from top, recipients of the Youth Awards, Toyin Crandell, left, Dishan Ratnajothi, Nisha Baig, Lucas Antoniazzi are recognized by president Brian Spencer of Rotary Toronto West, during the Rotary Toronto West Youth Impact Awards Gala – which took place at The Old Mill on Friday; Timothy Lang, left, and Sinead McCarthy of Youth Employment Services (YES) Toronto, and Jay Mandarino of C.J. Graphics are presented with a Community Organization Award, and a Business Award by Spencer while Frank O’Dea, recipient of the lifetime achievement award, chuckles as his name is called to come to the stage.

Schulich School of Business, Ratnajothi, 20, serves as Schulich director for the York Federation of Students, as vice-president of corporate relations for the Schulich Accounting Society, as senior board ambassador for CPA Ontario, and as a member of York’s Rotaract Club.

As if that weren’t enough to keep him busy, Ratnajothi also recently helped co-found Keep Toronto Warm, a start-up organization that seeks to combat homelessness by distributing “warmth packages” – consisting of a warm blanket, a warm beverage card

(\$5 Tim Hortons gift card), two pairs of socks – to homeless citizens across the Greater Toronto Area.

“It’s been great because we’ve been able to talk to different homeless citizens and it’s amazing how, with just one conversation and one warmth package, how much you can impact the course of their day,” he said. “Through the warmth packages that we give, it’s great to know that we’re helping to empower these homeless citizens.”

TOYIN CRANDELL - Individual Award Recipient

As executive director of The Love Movement 4:16, Crandell is a leader in educating and motivating youth to become community shapers and leaders through training in the arts.

Just last year alone, youth mentored under Crandell’s Love Movement 4:16 were able to successfully launch a series of projects – including books, albums, a clothing line, a visual arts line, and a flash mob featuring 100 youth from across the Americas in partnership with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada and the Pan Am Games.

C.J. GRAPHICS - Business Award Recipient

Jay Mandarino, CEO and president of C.J. Graphics, has also founded two not-for-profits – C.J. Skateboard Park and School, an Etobicoke-based registered charity dedicated to the development of children and youth, and JBM Auction Services, through which upwards of \$50 million has been raised for charities worldwide.

Mandarino, a recipient of both the Diamond Jubilee Medal from Queen Elizabeth II and the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship, is also on the board of directors for the Michael “Pinball” Clemons Foundation (MPCF) and the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO).

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SERVICES (YES) - Community Organization Award Recipient

Since its founding in 1968, YES has helped hundreds of thousands of youth find and maintain employment through its more than 3,000 partnerships with businesses.

With an emphasis on at-risk and disadvantaged youth sector, YES’s innovative employment training, counseling, job services, and job placement programs empower more than 10,000 youth to become self-sufficient contributing members of society each year.

FRANK O’DEA - Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient

From living on the streets of Toronto at 21, to becoming co-founder of Second Cup and receiving the Order of Canada – O’Dea’s life story is an inspiration.

After turning his life around with Second Cup – the largest chain of gourmet coffees and teas in the country – O’Dea went on to co-found Proshred Security, which he grew into an international organization with operations in Canada, Europe and the United States.

Along his road to success, O’Dea also took steps to give back to the community by co-founding a number of charitable organizations, including:

■ **Street Kids International**, an organization that helps homeless children in third world countries through education and self-reliance programs

■ **War Child (Canada)**, which provides assistance to children in war-affected countries

■ **Canadian Landmine Foundation**, an organization that raises funds and awareness for the dismantling of minefields around the world

O’Dea’s most recent project is the social enterprise Young Professionals In Training (YP-IT Data) – a youth employment enterprise that provides real-life, white-collar, life skills to youth ages 16 to 25.