

# THE CONNECTION

## Local nominated for Jr. Citizen award



Laura Werbitsky.  
January 20, 2010

She's travelled to Sierra Leone to deliver donated sporting goods, she's cut her waist-length hair to raise money and help make wigs for cancer victims, she's a junior leader at Girl Guides and volunteers at the YMCA.

In short, she's a great kid.

Seventeen-year-old Collingwood resident Laura Werbitsky is one of 130 great kids nominated for an Ontario Junior Citizen of the Year Award, which recognizes outstanding young people who perform worthwhile community service, who contribute to their communities while living with limitations, have performed acts of heroism, or are "good kids" who are making life better for others and doing more than expected of someone their age.

"Laura is an outstanding individual... not a stereotypical teenager," said her nominator, Nilusha Premasinghe. "She is a leader, with an appreciation for the value of community service."

"She is engaged and forward thinking and awake to her community - she possesses core values, assets and a commitment to volunteerism that make her

a strong community leader," said Premasinghe, who also happens to be her boss, at the Collingwood Y where the teen works as a lifeguard/swimming instructor.

Laura has been volunteering with the YMCA's sports and swimming programs since 2005 and is also heavily involved with Girl Guides, both as a participant in the Pathfinders and a volunteer leader with the younger children. She has volunteered at the school library and was a special friend to a student with Down's Syndrome. She was also recognized by the Simcoe Muskoka Health Unit as key organizer of the Race Against Drugs Program.

Julie Tyndall, a Pathfinder Leader with Girl Guides of Canada, describes Laura as a teenager who is willing to try anything and never says no to an opportunity to help.

"So many of our programs run, and run smoothly, because of her capabilities."

"Laura does more for others than anyone I know, and still has time to excel at school, keep a part-time job, and keep involved with a large number of friends," said Tyndall.

"Laura is a joy to spend time with and is an inspiration who makes you want to be a better person."

Since 1981, the prestigious Ontario Junior Citizen of the Year Awards Program has recognized the best of Ontario's youth. Coordinated by the Ontario Community Newspapers Association with the support of its 300+ member newspapers and sponsors, the Junior Citizen Program is also wholeheartedly supported by the Office of the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario.

A committee of community newspaper publishers, editors, and sponsors will select the award recipients from all nominations received.

Up to 12 individuals will be recipients of an award. Recipients and their families are invited to attend an awards ceremony in Toronto in March 2010.

The Ontario Junior Citizen of the Year Awards Program strives not only to recognize the dozen or so outstanding young people who will be the recipients of awards, but to also give recognition to hundreds of others who represent the 'good kids' we all know. To achieve this, everyone nominated receives a Certificate of Recognition from their local community newspaper.

The 12 winners of the Ontario Junior Citizen Award will be announced online January 22 at [www.ocna.org/junior\\_citizen](http://www.ocna.org/junior_citizen).

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