



*October 22, 2011*

## **Minister celebrates accomplishments of Great Kids**

### ***Young Albertans awarded for kindness and courage***

*Edmonton ...* Sixteen Alberta children and youth were recognized for their outstanding contributions to their families, schools and communities.

Human Services Minister Dave Hancock honoured the recipients during the 12<sup>th</sup> annual Great Kids Awards at the Fantasyland Hotel on October 22.

"I am pleased to present this prestigious award to such incredibly inspiring young leaders who have made a positive difference for others - each in their own special way," said Hancock. "Alberta's future is bright, thanks to the generosity, talents and community spirit of our children and youth."

Each year, the Alberta government recognizes young Albertans for activities such as volunteering, mentoring and fundraising. Award recipients were selected by a committee of community members and government staff.

More than 120 children and youth were nominated for the Great Kids Award. All young people in Alberta between the ages of five and 18 were eligible for nomination.

Great Kids received a trophy and a prize package that includes an evening at the Fantasyland Hotel with their families, a laptop computer from IBM and attractions passes from West Edmonton Mall. Every child or youth who was nominated received an award certificate from the Government of Alberta.

- 30 -

**Backgrounder:** 2011 Great Kids Award recipients.

**Media inquiries may be directed to:**

Greg Part

Human Services Communications

Cell: 780-222-8832

Office: 780-427-4801

To call toll-free within Alberta dial 310-0000.



October 22, 2011

## **2011 Great Kids Award recipients**

### **Emma Carlstad – Age 9 – Bear Canyon**

After losing her grandfather to Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), Emma championed the cause of raising awareness of the disease and raising funds to help combat it. Emma is involved with the annual Walk for ALS and ALS Ball Tournament. She has requested donation money instead of birthday gifts and teaches others about the disease whenever possible.

### **Zakary Damberger – Age 9 – Whitecourt**

After a fellow student was hit by a car, Zakary became concerned for the safety of others at his school. He started a petition to have a fence built between the school walking path and the nearby busy parking lot, writing letters to the Town of Whitecourt and the local newspaper. He even met with RCMP to discuss his concerns. The fence was approved and built soon after. Thanks to Zakary, his school is now a safer place.

### **McRae Dunbar – Age 9 – Edmonton**

McRae is an excellent student and athlete, with tremendous empathy. After a person she knew was diagnosed with breast cancer, McRae became determined to raise money so the woman could travel to Eastern Canada to spend time with family. McRae participated in the Run for the Cure, and after the race, she gave personalized thank you cards to every person who supported her. She also cut her long hair and donated it to a wig program.

### **Emily Parker-Ristau – Age 6 – Red Deer**

At the age of six, Emily has dedicated herself to helping families in need. She is the driving force behind *Emily's Recycle and Dream Foundation of Central Alberta*, which collects bottles and cans to raise money for a family in need from her community to go to Disneyland. By rallying people to be kinder and greener by recycling, Emily helped make a deserving family's dream come true.

### **Ayaka Boris – Age 11 – Medicine Hat**

Ayaka's family is originally from Japan, and she still has many relatives living there. After the country's recent devastating earthquakes, Ayaka wanted to help people who were affected. She began spending hours making origami paper cranes and selling them at school to raise money for the Red Cross. Ayaka's school and community were inspired by her efforts, purchasing her cranes and promoting her project to the media. Ayaka's leadership is an inspiration to her whole community.

### **Xavier Crosby – Age 12 – High Level**

Xavier is a leader in his school and community. He launched his school's first-ever newspaper, helps other students with disabilities through a mentoring program, is a member of his student council, and spent many hours designing and decorating the school float for the Santa Claus parade. Xavier is active in sports, and helps his neighbours and volunteers every year for Play Day in the Park.

**Kristofer Vanlonderzele – Age 12 – Edmonton**

Kristofer is an extremely friendly, positive and helpful young man who is called a “ray of sunshine” by his neighbours who nominated him for the Great Kids Award. Kristofer has flourished while living in a tight-knit community with his grandmother. He constantly offers a helping hand to his neighbours with any task and he keeps them entertained with his wonderful stories.

**Rebecca Zachoda – Age 12 – St. Michael**

Rebecca is an active and enthusiastic volunteer at her school. She helps out in the office at lunch and in the library during recess. Rebecca co-ordinated a Halloween party for her classmates that involved collecting food for the Food Bank and participated in the Valentine’s Day Hair Massacure to raise money for breast cancer research. Rebecca also volunteers in the community through the St. Michael Agricultural Society and performs at local dance festivals.

**Madison Bellig – Age 14 – Leduc**

Madison is an active member of the Leduc Boys and Girls Club and, over the years, she has had a tremendous effect on their staff and programs. At the age of 10, she was the youngest counsellor in training for their summer camp program. At 13, she was promoted to become a program staff member. Madison is an excellent role model and mentor with outstanding relationship building skills. Because of her maturity, combined with her positive attitude, Leduc Radio has given her a regular 90-minute spot where she shares inspirational stories for children and youth in her community.

**Dykota Letourneau – Age 13 – Pincher Creek**

Dykota is a natural leader in her community, through her volunteer work at the Pincher Creek and District Historical Society and her involvement with the Métis Nation youth group. She celebrates and shares her heritage by playing the fiddle, facilitating bannock and craft-making workshops, leading cultural presentations in schools and sharing information at community events. Dykota is also involved in many sports, including dog sledding.

**Sheldon Shaw – Age 15 – Edmonton**

Through the in-school Big Brothers Big Sisters program, Sheldon is an active and enthusiastic mentor for a young boy at his school. Sheldon’s kindness, sense of humour and love for excitement have rubbed off on his mentee. Sheldon’s young friend even wrote a letter of support for Sheldon to win the Great Kids Award, saying, “he is the nicest teen mentor... and I would like to be more like him.”

**Alexandra Woelfle – Age 14 – Calgary**

Alexandra has made many contributions to her community, including volunteering for Hull Child and Family Services, helping kids with disabilities at Camp Bonaventure in the summer, yearly involvement in the science fair and supporting the Calgary Humane Society. Her greatest accomplishment is her ongoing and selfless support of her twin brothers, who have multiple disabilities. Alexandra learned sign language and often acts as their interpreter, supports them through ongoing medical challenges and helps out as a baseball coach on their little league team.

**Alissa Armstrong – Age 17 – Sherwood Park**

Alissa is kind and compassionate to her family and community. She volunteered with seniors at a nursing home and used her skills from cosmetology class to paint the ladies’ nails and style their hair. Alissa also assisted with feeding and any other duties, with kindness and gentleness. Alissa proudly celebrates her Aboriginal culture, attending powwows and participating in a dancing and drumming group.

**Deanna Dostaler – Age 17 – Peace River**

Deanna co-ordinates a unique program in her school called Project PEACE – The Alternatives Program, which supports sexual minority students. Deanna encourages open-mindedness and acceptance for peers who experience bullying due to intolerance. She writes newspaper articles for her school, attends community events providing information regarding the Project PEACE and leads a peer support group. Deanna's courageous work toward changing attitudes has been recognized by school staff, law enforcement and the media.

**Dyllan Duperron – Age 16 – Valleyview**

Dyllan has a lot on the go – playing guitar in music festivals, competing in track and field events, volunteering with 4-H, playing in badminton tournaments and helping on the farm. In early 2011, he ran from the Jack Ady Cancer Centre in Lethbridge to the Grande Prairie Cancer Centre, over the course of eight weeks, to raise more than \$15,000 for the Alberta Cancer Foundation in honour of his great uncle who lost his battle with the disease.

**Dustin Rider – Age 17 – Mirror**

Dustin has had many unique adventures, including spending four days with the Royal Canadian Navy at the HMCS Oriole Tall Ship Adventure and battling fires with the Mirror Volunteer Fire Department. Dustin enjoys hockey and plays trumpet in the school band, despite having no use of his right arm due to Cerebral Palsy. Dustin is a member and volunteer with the War Amps Champs program and is a positive role model to fellow students. One day, Dustin hopes to travel overseas and do mission work in a developing nation.

- 30 -

**Media inquiries may be directed to:**

Greg Part  
Human Services Communications  
Cell: 780-222-8832  
Office: 780-427-4801

To call toll-free within Alberta dial 310-0000.