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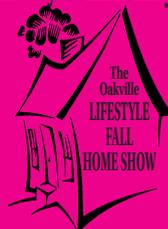
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The 2017 Peter Gilgan Leadership Award ceremony recognized five outstanding YMCA youth leaders. Each recipient will receive a bursary award of up to \$4,000 to assist with post-secondary education costs and to recognize their leadership contributions to the YMCA and Oakville community. From left are Evan Lubanszky, Ryan Natividad, Michael Vanstone, Caroline O'Brien and Nikita Cadranel.

| Riziero Vertolli/Metroland

Local youths receive leadership awards for their contributions

by Nathan Howes
Metroland Media

For these five YMCA of Oakville youths, giving back to the community is its own reward.

But, as a bonus, they received a financial reward for their efforts — the Peter Gilgan Leadership Award, which recognizes outstanding YMCA youth leaders who have made notable contributions to the Y and Oakville community.

Funded through the Peter Gilgan Foundation, five awards of up to \$4,000 were presented to youth staff to assist with their post-secondary education costs.

In its seventh year, the leadership awards were handed out Tuesday, Aug. 22 at the Peter Gilgan YMCA of Oakville.

Nikita Cadranel, Evan Lubanszky, Ryan Natividad, Caroline O'Brien and Michael Vanstone were this year's recipients.

"The YMCA is a really strong developer of youths and that's because we offer very ethical, first hiring experiences. We give them a chance to have a great start to their working career," said Kyle Barber, YMCA of Oakville president and CEO.

The Oakville Y received 17 award applications, which are getting "stronger and stronger" every year, making the selection process more difficult, Barber said.

"So many youths have so many different extracurricular activities. I'm amazed at the leadership capacities, the leadership (they demonstrate). There is just a different maturity," said Barber.

Evan Lubanszky

Lubanszky is a program co-ordinator at Valens Camp this summer, leading a large group

of youth and mentoring younger counsellors.

The 19-year-old felt an "immense amount of gratitude" after being selected as a recipient, he said, since he has put a lot of effort into his role at the Y.

"This award means more to me than just being a way to help further my education. I know the impact it's going to have on my family — the people who have been helping with my education my entire life," said Lubanszky.

From his previous experience as a volunteer leader for Scouts Canada came a desire for Lubanszky to help more youth, and in 2015, he took the next step as a camp counsellor with the YMCA of Oakville.

"People that I've valued as mentors... I know I would not be nearly as successful if it wasn't for them. That's the thing I want to express and pass on to as many children as I can," said Lubanszky.

Currently studying translational and molecular medicine in an undergrad program at the University of Ottawa, Lubanszky eventually wants to become an oncologist or a hematologist.

Ryan Natividad

After receiving a diploma in early childhood education in 2012, Natividad came to the YMCA looking for a position related to his study.

He became a teacher in the before-and-after school program, but has since taken on a supervisory role, supporting various child-care centres.

"I wasn't expecting it at all. I was very surprised to be presented with the award. The fact I was chosen as a recipient amongst ev-

see Experiences on p.3