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Flag project earns Oakville air cadet Ontario Junior Citizen of the Year award

Five other youths nominated through The Oakville Beaver

■ By Angela Blackburn
OAKVILLE BEAVER STAFF

Six Oakville youths were nominated — and one, Devin Castelloux, 14, was selected — as an Ontario Junior Citizen of the Year.

The youths, nominated through *The Oakville Beaver*, are among more than 100 youths, recognized annually by the Ontario Community Newspapers' Association (OCNA) and its Junior Citizen of the Year competition, for their outstanding contributions to their communities — as leaders of tomorrow.

Castilloux is among 12 selected from the nominees across the province as winners.

"We had 138 nominees. It's a very difficult choice to pair it down to 12 winners," said OCNA Junior Citizen Co-ordinator Nancy Burman.

"He's the boy with a flag," said Burman referring to Castelloux and his mission to forever remember Canadian veterans by having them sign a large Canadian flag.

"We are very happy for Devin and his work. The stories written about Devin would make any parent proud," said Castelloux's dad, Mike Castelloux who said his family will be attending the awards ceremony in Niagara Falls at the end of March.

"His project has caught the attention of many people. He is quiet about most of his interactions with veterans and goes to great lengths to honour them," said Mike Castelloux.

"He made a promise to his veterans to remember and never forget. His flag project is his, but he will tell you it will always belong to the veterans," said his dad.

Castilloux's flag project began when he was 11.

His Boy With a Flag project began with him collecting veterans' signatures on a large Canadian flag to be flown on the Peace Tower at Parliament Hill.

However, the gesture was considered defacing the flag so it could not be flown. Castelloux then collected signatures on a large white flag that would have the Canadian flag sewn to its corner, which resulted in more than a 1,000 signatures hanging in the Senate at the launch of Veterans' Week.

More than 800 Canadian men and women who fought in conflicts from World War I to



Devin Castelloux



Fiona Burgess



Emily Harris

the war in Afghanistan have signed the Thomas A. Blakelock High School student and 540 Gold Hawk Squadron cadet's flag.

Castilloux has met Prime Minister Stephen Harper, has been honoured by the government of Canada and connected with many veterans.

Castilloux has also embarked on a new project to assemble similar flags for each province and estimated it will take about 10 years to complete.

While Castelloux is described as a very likeable, presentable young man, he not only approached Legions across Canada of his own accord, but works as a kitchen assistant at the Bronte Legion.

A corporal in his cadet corps, Castelloux earned the Royal Canadian Legion Medal of Excellence in his first year, an honour usually bestowed on fourth-year cadets.

"Devin is definitely unique.

He is the first person to volunteer to help or hold a door open for someone. It is not unusual to see him pick up a piece of garbage and put it in the garbage. Ask him why and you might hear something about keeping Canada beautiful. Devin has little interest in fame for himself, but instead shows a mature perspective for doing the right thing that makes the world a better place for all of us to live in," wrote his teacher Janet Davis in his nomination.

Among the other local youths nominated through *The Oakville Beaver* — still others were nominated through *Oakville Today* — Fiona Burgess was selected as the winner there.

Burgess is said to lead by example. When she realized that people in Africa were in need she took the initiative and created Oakville Teenagers in Action (OTIA), which raised enough money to build a school in a village in Sierra Leone. She also went to Ghana and facilitated a Leadership Workshop for about 20 people, giving the people the skills they need to be able to create change within their own communities.

Other nominees include Emily Harris, 17, who was nominated by her teacher Richard Lachance.

Harris has been involved with student council at T. A. Blakelock for four years — president in her last year.

Harris was also a member of her school's Wellness Council and stage manager for the Sears Drama Festival in Grade 11, and was a photographer for her school's yearbook committee.

In Grade 12, she is a peer mentor for younger students, tutors French students and writes a column for the school newspaper.

"Emily tries to have a positive and helpful personality with students as well as teachers. She tries hard and is driven to succeed," wrote Lachance.

Among her many awards, Harris has received the Stage Manager Award, Contribution to Life Award, French Award, Leadership Award and Fashion Award.

Besides attending leadership conferences, and completing her French Immersion while travelling in France, Harris participates locally on the Taking Steps Against Breast Cancer school team, takes part in the annual Polar Bear dip, is a reg-

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