Taking a passion for hockey to the next level

Like many young people in the province and across the country, Joshua Sio is a big fan of hockey. The student from Our Lady of Mount Carmel Secondary School in Mississauga spends most Saturday nights in front of a television set watching Hockey Night in Canada.

The 17-year-old is a big fan of the broadcasters.

“Ron MacLean, Elliotte Friedman, Kelly Hrudey, Don Cherry and everybody else,” said Joshua, enthusiastically.

He has also tried his hand at calling the action. Along with a teacher at his high school, they filmed a video of themselves calling a hockey game.

When Joshua expressed an interest in expanding his knowledge and involvement in hockey, he was connected with the Brampton Beast. The team plays in the East Coast Hockey League and is an affiliate of the Montreal Canadiens.

He recently met with team representatives, including Corporate Account Executive Shahbaz Dhillon, and Volunteer Coordinator & Community Relations Executive Maygan Coulombe about potential game day volunteer opportunities.

“The Student Links coordinator reached out and shared how Joshua wanted to learn more about hockey, and we had a meeting to talk about the different opportunities.”

Joshua is tasked with recording team statistics with four off-ice officials under Senior Account Executive Michael Pupo. Specifically, he jots down the number of shots taken by both hockey clubs during a game.

“I write down the players' numbers and work with my partner, John.”

Volunteers worked with Joshua initially to help with strategies to keep track of the players on the ice. After a while, he was able to record the statistics with ease.

Joshua's father, Robert, sees the Student Links initiative as very beneficial to young people who want to take their interests further, including his son.

“Joshua has become more confident in talking about hockey. Before, he was only watching it on television. Now, he has the opportunity to be there in person and to be a part of the game.”

Joshua wants to learn more about the role of a broadcaster, a request the Brampton Beast organization is more than happy to grant.

“He's a huge Don Cherry fan,” explained Dhillon. “We're still working on getting Joshua in the booth.”

Joshua has already been introduced to Chris Ballard, the Beast's broadcaster, and arrangements are being made to have Joshua join Chris in the broadcast booth to experience calling a game firsthand.

Ron Laroche, Community Living Ontario
Krishan Pathak is passionate about many things in his busy life. He loves cars, sports – especially basketball, playing video games, dancing and music.

When the energetic student from St. Augustine Secondary School in Brampton connected with his Student Links coordinator, the challenge was not finding a mentor to match just one of his interests, but someone who could share them all.

Krishan has a large collection of model cars, so the first place they explored was a hobby shop in Mississauga called Great Hobbies. There, Krishan met with the manager of the store, who took him on a tour of the store, outlining all the different sections.

While Krishan enjoyed this experience immensely, he was still looking for that right fit in a mentor.

Sam Juneja, a sales director with a flooring wholesale company, was looking to contribute to his community. He discovered the Student Links program online and reached out. As a student of the Shiamak Dance Company, Sam shared Krishan’s love of Bollywood-style music and dance.

Sam offered to connect Krishan with a youth group and bring him to class. “He takes me to the dance studio Mondays and Thursday nights,” said Krishan, “I really enjoy it.”

In December, Krishan performed on stage at the Living Arts Centre in Mississauga with his dance group in a three hour dance and music show. Performing in front of hundreds of people, Krishan was part of three dances.

“I enjoyed it a lot,” said Krishan.

His mother, Anjana Pathak, attended the performance, along with Krishan’s father, and she was happy at the opportunity the experience gave her son. “He performed on stage and this helped his confidence,” she said. “It’s not easy to perform on stage.”

Sam’s mentorship of Krishan goes beyond the dance floor; he is an important influence in many aspects of Krishan’s life, from taking him to car dealerships to learn more about cars, to helping him learn to mix music and being there as a friend and confidant.

“I’ll just sit and chat with him about his school, his friends, what he likes to do, what his day is like,” said Sam.

“He’ll take me to the car dealerships,” said Krishan, “we talk about music, cars and school stuff. It’s been wonderful.”

Once he graduates from high school, Krishan hopes to go to college or maybe work. Sam has no doubts that Krishan will succeed.

“He’s a bright kid,” he said. “He’s interested in doing things. He wants to have fun, he wants to be successful, he likes to try out new things and he’s passionate about the things that drive him, whether it be basketball, cars or dance. I see him doing well.”

Evelyn Senyi, Community Living Ontario
On the **right track**

Sean Korol is an active and enthusiastic 16-year-old student from Weston Collegiate in Toronto who has a passion for trains and classic cars.

“Ever since I was knee-high I loved trains and cars,” said Sean.

So, when he and a Student Links Coordinator were looking at different opportunities, Sean knew it would have to involve locomotives. The pair brainstormed some ideas and decided to contact the Toronto Railway Museum.

Housed at the Roundhouse across from the CN Tower in downtown Toronto, the museum features a number of outdoor displays, as well as a miniature, seven and a half inch gauge functioning steam locomotive and a small, temporary gallery. The museum also does quite a bit of restoration work on larger locomotives.

Sean was introduced to Mike Roberts, who is the Assistant Chief Engineer at the museum. The two of them hit it off and Mike toured Sean around the museum. All of the other volunteers at the museum, along with Mike, were so impressed with Sean’s knowledge of trains and his passion for the subject. Sean was eager to ask about volunteering opportunities and Mike was happy to offer him a position.

“The very first thing Sean did was ask a question, to me, in front of our CEO and it was a really, really good question,” said Mike. “We agreed then that ‘this kid knows a lot about trains and it would be great to have him around’.”

For Sean, it was an amazing opportunity.

“I said ‘I could do volunteer work here and Mike trusted my instincts,’” he said.

Starting out with basic tasks to learn the ropes, Sean quickly moved from cleaning displays to helping maintain the miniature railway. In a special project, Sean spent hours of physically demanding work replacing almost fifty ties on the railway.

“He was incredibly energetic at replacing ties on our miniature track,” said Mike, “we got an incredible amount of work done. He didn't come in for a lot of hours, but he doubled the amount of work we were doing. It was great.”

As winter sets in, the work at the museum has slowed, but Sean expects to be back on the job in late winter or early spring. Meanwhile, he keeps himself busy with competitive swimming. A member of the Weston Collegiate swim team, Sean recently placed third in the 100-meter freestyle event. When not at the museum or swimming, Sean visits his family’s cottage where he kayaks and water skis.

So what’s next for Sean?

“I might get a part-time job at the museum, since I already know what I'm doing,” he said confidently. He also expressed interest in working for the South Simcoe Railway, a tourist railway in Simcoe County in the town of Tottenham.

Whatever he chooses, his opportunity at the Toronto Railway Museum helped him take a step in the right direction.

“It's broadened his environment in that not only does he go to a specific place to do something, to learn new things and make new friends,” said Sean’s mother, Janet, “it also gets him out via public transit, which is really important too.”

His enthusiasm and willingness to work hard impressed Sean’s mentor. “He's willing to do a lot of different jobs,” said Mike.

Sean, his mother and Mike all agree that the experience has been a great learning opportunity.

*Evelyn Senyi, Community Living Ontario*
B rodey Wilson, a high school student from London, has a passion for music that exceeds learning to play a single instrument. In fact, Brodey is interested in experimenting with multiple instruments and has a passion for the performing arts. The famous musical piece “The Music of the Night” from Andrew Lloyd Webber’s Phantom of the Opera is an all-time favourite of Brodey’s.

When it came to introducing a mentor to Brodey, it was a mutual love of music that brought him and his mentor Steve Crew together in the summer of 2015. Steve, a professional musician, plays a variety of instruments including the drums and guitar, and even composes his own music. Brodey and Steve were eager to explore together how they could develop Brodey’s interest in music and performance.

“I was shocked to meet a drummer of a band, and he has made me knowledgeable about instruments,” said Brodey of Steve.

Initially the two men focused on a mentorship to develop Brodey’s interest in music and enabled him to develop a broader network of people associated with the London music community.

Over the last year, Brodey has made connections with other local musicians, and has frequented local music shops where he tries out a number of instruments. He’s even attended one of Steve’s live shows.

As the two musicians have gotten to know each other, they’ve also become friends. Brodey spent some time at Steve’s friend’s pizzeria, where he learned how to make pizza. He’s now considering the opportunity for a part-time job at the pizzeria. This would allow him to earn money to purchase some of the musical instruments he’s got his eye on. Brodey and Steve don’t mind testing out the pizzeria’s product either. ‘We eat pizza a lot’ remarks Brodey.

For his part, Steve enjoys furthering Brodey’s interests and “the excitement Brodey gets from visiting places he loves, or is passionate about, music stores for example. There are so many instruments he loves to play and find out about.”

Steve recently watched Brodey perform at his high school. “He is such a great person and it has been wonderful to watch him grow over the past year,” said Steve. Brodey seems to share these sentiments. When he’s asked what he would like to do in the future with his music he remarks “I want to perform on stage with Steve.”

Linda White and Lorna Anderson,
Community Living Ontario

Are you a high school student? Connect with us!

Let Student Links introduce you to interesting people who are doing work that appeals to your interests. Get inspired to imagine your own possibilities!

For more information contact Joel MacIntyre at: jmaclntyre@communitylivingontario.ca or Linda White at: lwhite@communitylivingontario.ca

Eligibility to participate in this initiative: Students enrolled in high school, who are 14-21 years of age and who have an intellectual disability.

Without skipping a beat

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