

Merit Award Bursary

Year in Review



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The Upcoming Year

2020 was a year like no other.

The pandemic made this a year of obstacles for students. Students and their families faced stress and uncertainty like never before.

- *Curriculums were in flux*
- *Summer jobs disappeared*
- *Part-time work was limited*
- *Parents were laid off or their businesses closed*

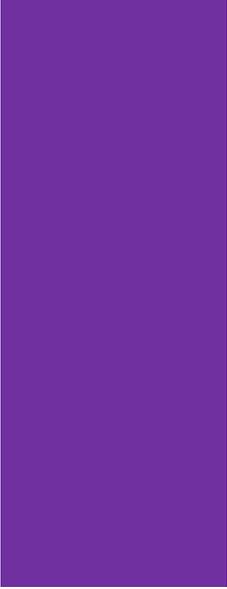
Uncertainty increased exponentially.

With the help of our generous donors and energetic volunteers the Merit team was able to respond.

We reviewed more applications, awarded more bursaries, in more high-schools and assisted more past recipients with our mentor and life skills events than any other time in our 25 year history.

2020 will be a year to be remembered, yes because it was the beginning of the global pandemic but also because it reminded all of us about the resilience of our youth to prevail and of our communities to respond to the need.

*Brian Smeenk, President
Merit Award Bursary Program*



2020

The Most Impactful Year Yet



- Received record number of applications [#757] despite the pandemic.
- Awarded the most bursaries ever: 239
- Increased base bursary by 33% to \$1,000
- Expanded Merit into 3 Peel high schools.
- Doubled mentor partnerships from 20 to 40.
- Created virtual networking and learning events to support the personal and professional development needs of Merit Award recipients-our alumni.
- Maintained donor funding in a turbulent operating environment.
- Implemented a new volunteer registration system.
- Welcomed 3 new board members, increasing the board membership roster to 15.

Our Program Strategy



Concentrated Impact

Merit is offered in 67 schools in the GTA, with high-need students. It is a motivational tool for students and educators.

Collaborate with educators

Merit works with the Toronto, Toronto Catholic and Peel District School Boards to identify schools.

Critical time for intervention

Merit rewards students in grades 11 and 12, encouraging post-secondary education.

Encourage higher education.

Proof of returning to school triggers bursary disbursement. University/college degrees significantly decrease unemployment and increase earnings. Merit helps students achieve these results.

Reward more than just marks.

We make character count.

A blueprint for volunteerism

Merit rewards contribution to community volunteerism.

Support beyond the bursary

Merit is a portal to skill building, mentoring and networking.

25 Years of Leveling the Field



Sham Al Mukdad
2020 recipient

Merit provides incentives to youth of all abilities to pursue advancement through education.

8,513 applications

2,779 awards

\$2,939,750 awarded

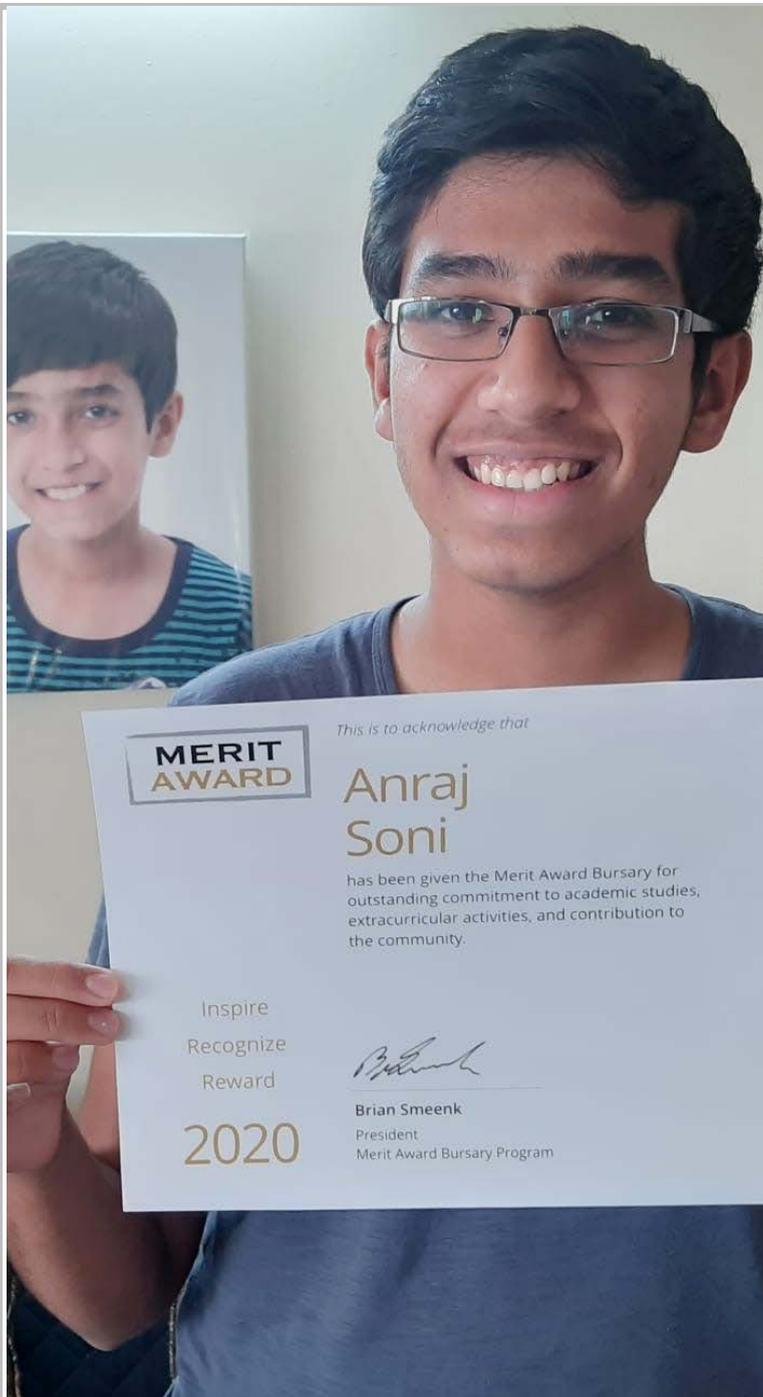
A diverse pool of recipients
- *75% visible minorities*

Low-income relief
- *60% with HHI less than \$40K*

Post secondary enrolment rates of 98%
- *Well above the prov. average*

Volunteerism amplified
- *Recipients play a major role on our committees*

2020 At a Glance



Total amount dispersed
\$243,000

Students awarded
239

Applications received
757

School boards involved
3 - Toronto, Toronto Catholic and Peel

Schools in the program
67

Active volunteers
150+

Alumni events
5

2020 Recipient Highlights

The awards were increased both in number and in \$ value.

Of the 239 recipients 186 graduated from grade 12 and 53 from grade 11.

The \$750 bursary increased to \$1,000.

The bursary amounts were:

2 - \$5,000

21 - \$2,000

163 - \$1,000

53 - \$500

7 Computers

The award recipients were celebrated on September 22nd

- at a virtual event attended by recipients, friends and family.
- Diana Braithwaite, renowned Jazz vocalist gave a rousing performance and keynote speech.
- The event was generously supported by Dragon Fly, experts in event productions.

"It is my greatest accomplishment so far. You have lightened my financial burden." Gregory Begeah, 2020 Recipient.

2020 Alumni Highlights



Established

- 1st Alumni Workshop Event July 25
- 1st Empowerment Workshop Event February 24

Continued

- 5th Alumni Networking Event August 26 with over 100 registrants.
- Mentoring summer program for 40 recipients, with mentors matching career goals. Many mentorships continue informally.

The Merit Alumni program is propelled by diverse, engaged and ambitious previous recipients eager to be involved and contribute to the needs of community and their own personal development.

2020 Volunteer Highlights

Established

- An online volunteer system, Volgistics, that went live February 20, 2020.

Continued

- To engage 150+ volunteers to review bursary applications, to support Alumni, Communication, School Outreach and Volunteer committees. Volunteers include both Merit alumni, seasoned professionals, and business leaders.

Connected

- 40 new volunteers to the program increasing the registered volunteer base to 355.



2020 Donor Highlights

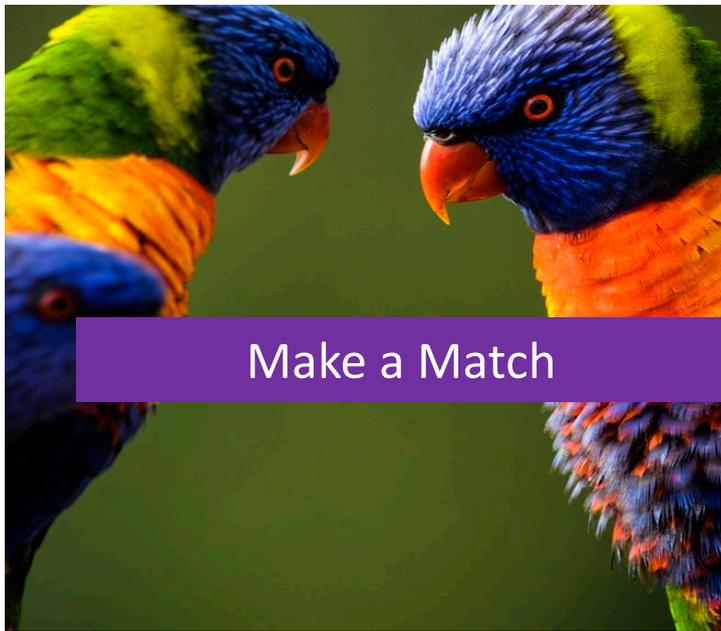
Corporate, Foundation & Other Charity Giving

Merit continued to be generously supported by long standing partners - Corporate Giving, Foundation Grants, Rotarian Donations and Registered Charities.

 Cadillac Fairview	FASKEN	 RBC Foundation
 Sherway Gardens		The Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation
Rotary Etobicoke 	Rotary Bay-Bloor 	Rotary The Rotary Club of Toronto 

Partnership donations represent 50% of Merit funding.

2020 Donor Highlights



Make a Match



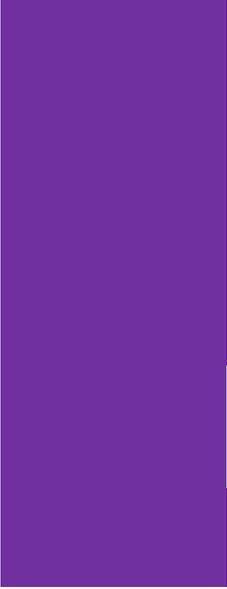
Win a Wine Cellar

Individual Giving

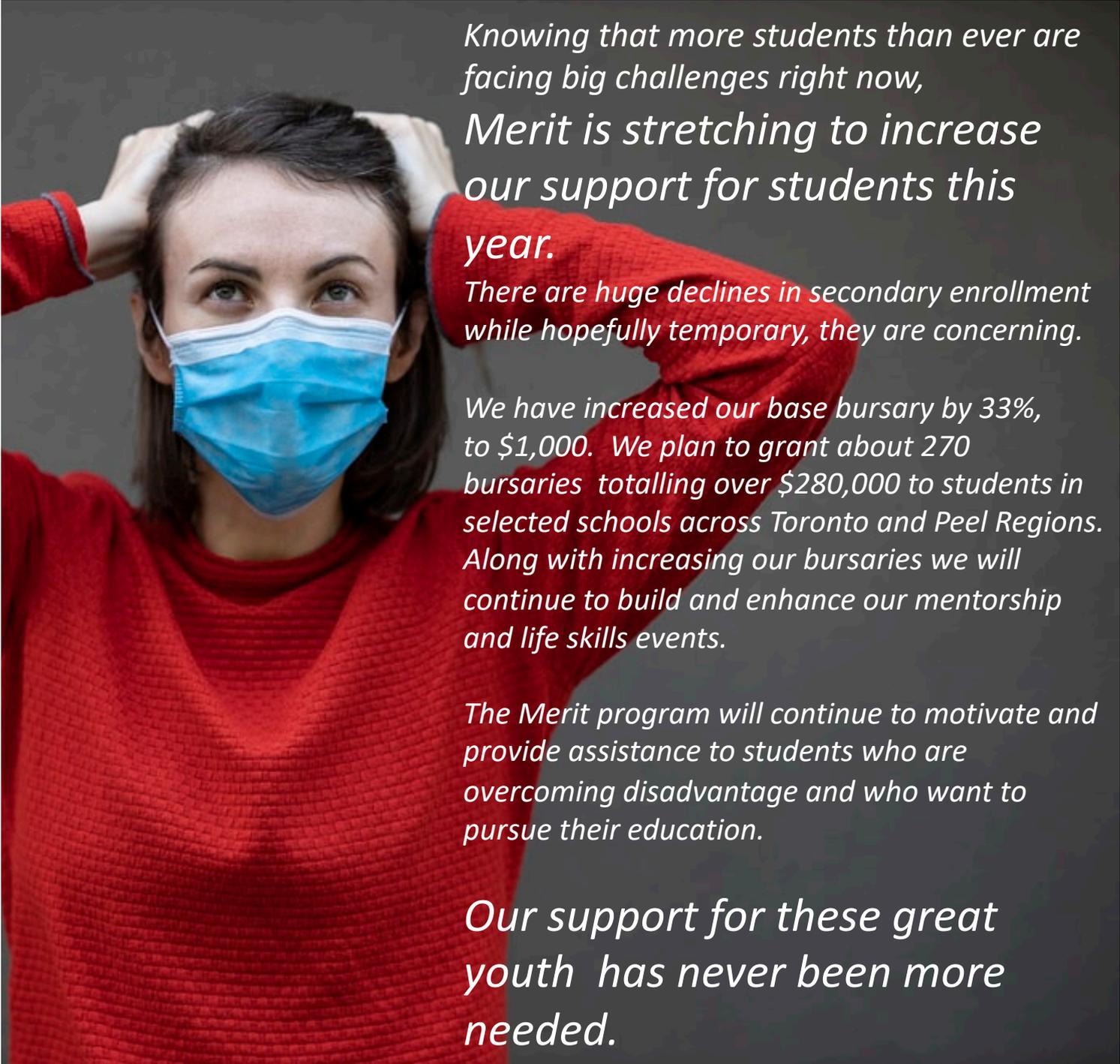
Many individuals rallied to the support of Merit's two new virtual fundraisers. These were established to replace the annual in person Bowling for Bursaries Event.

- The holiday matching campaign ran November through December 2019. The matching fund was generously donated by an anonymous donor.
- The summer 2020 wine raffle event was generously supported by Buyers & Cellars, a distributor of fine wine.

Individual donations represent 50% of Merit funding.



This coming year



Knowing that more students than ever are facing big challenges right now, Merit is stretching to increase our support for students this year.

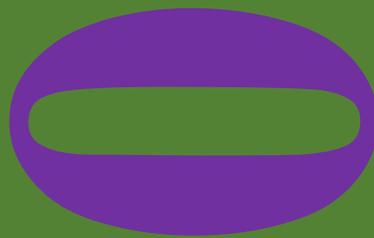
There are huge declines in secondary enrollment while hopefully temporary, they are concerning.

We have increased our base bursary by 33%, to \$1,000. We plan to grant about 270 bursaries totalling over \$280,000 to students in selected schools across Toronto and Peel Regions. Along with increasing our bursaries we will continue to build and enhance our mentorship and life skills events.

The Merit program will continue to motivate and provide assistance to students who are overcoming disadvantage and who want to pursue their education.

Our support for these great youth has never been more needed.

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Thank you to all Merit friends and supporters.

www.meritaward.ca

The Merit Award

25

1995-2020