

Announcing our 2025 Nominees



APEX
YOUTH AWARDS

Kaydence Smith

Kaydence Smith is a grade nine student at St. Mary's School in Taber. Kaydence is the type of person that doesn't like to sit around and do nothing. She has quite a full schedule but she always finds time to lend a hand. Kaydence's school principal, Michelle Nevil says, "Kaydence is inclusive and non-judgmental, consistently offering others a chance and fostering a welcoming environment for all."

Kaydence has been volunteering with the breakfast program at St. Pat's Elementary School since grade four. She spends her PD days baking and cooking for the breakfast program and she helps to serve breakfast at St. Pat's School, as well as, at St. Mary's School during exam weeks.

Kaydence is very involved in a variety of sports. She has been a soccer referee for the past two seasons for the Taber and District Soccer Association. Kaydence is very reliable and willing to fill shifts as needed.

Kaydence also participates in 5-pin bowling through Youth Bowl Canada (YBC). She bowls out of Holiday Bowl in Lethbridge, and has qualified for numerous provincial tournaments over the past four years. She has consistently scored in the top ten junior female bowlers in the province of Alberta at these competitions, with a few top five finishes. She currently holds the Ladies High Game Single of 297 at The Pin in Taber for Thursday adult league.



Kaydence also enjoys curling. This year she is on a competitive curling team but she also put together a fun curling team along with her sister and two friends. She plays a leadership role as the Skip for the team. The sole purpose of this team is to gain experience and have fun.

Kaydence enjoys being at the curling rink and so this year she took a resume into Dolf's (restaurant at the curling rink) and she was hired right away. Amber Rudolf says, "At just 14 years old, she has already proven to be an incredibly hardworking, eager to learn, and dedicated employee."

Congratulations, Kaydence Smith, on your APEX Youth Award nomination.



Nikolas Binnie



Nikolas Binnie is a grade eleven student at W.R. Myers High School. With a positive attitude and outgoing personality, Nik falls into a leadership role naturally.

Nik joined 4-H when he was nine years old and as a member of the Taber Corn Dawgs 4-H Club he participated in the canine project for a number of years where he trained his dog for agility and obedience. He also joined the Retlaw Prairie 4-H Club for a couple of years so that he could participate in the horse project and the small engine project. During his time in 4-H, Nik held executive roles as club president and treasurer. As president, Nik is in charge of running the meetings using the proper parliamentary procedures. Nik is an outstanding public speaker who has competed at the club, district and regional level. He has also participated in leadership activities, camps and symposiums at the district, regional and provincial level.

This year Nik decided to focus more on the sports that he loves, football and wrestling. Nik has been playing football since age eight with the Taber Rebels and has received multiple Rebels awards. This year he was recognized as the Southland Football League's Most



Outstanding Defensive Lineman. Nikolas's athletic abilities spilled over into Wrestling and he contributed to taking home the 2023-2024 Provincial Banner. Nik has also decided to play baseball this year for the W.R. Myers team.

The W.R. Myers wrestling team was in great need of a new mat for practice and hosting wrestling events. Nikolas used his creative abilities to brainstorm fundraising ideas and presented them to the team. The goal was set to be able to purchase a new mat early next season, however the wrestling team was able to purchase the mat this season and are looking forward to the possibilities of hosting events next season with their new equipment.

Congratulations, Nikolas Binnie, on your APEX Youth awards nomination.



Tate Nakashima

Tate Nakashima is a grade eleven student at W.R. Myers High School. Tate is described as bright, funny, and empathic. His ability to communicate with both young and old is commendable. Tate takes time to engage in conversation with anyone. Tate has the ability to engage and make people feel valued.

Tate is a dedicated air cadet at 225 RCACS - Taber Comets and is serving as the Cadet Squadron Commander, tasked with overseeing the squadron and facilitating communication between cadets and officers. His positive attitude and approachability make him a valued member of the cadet program and distinguishes him as an outstanding leader. Tate is working towards obtaining his small engine pilot licence.

This year Tate was honored with the opportunity to deliver an address at the Taber Remembrance Day service. The crowd was around six hundred people. Tate's address was well researched, thoughtfully written and delivered with such grace and confidence that you could hear a pin drop. Tate's skill in public speaking not only captivates listeners but also motivates them. Tate was all the talk on Facebook with many asking who the young cadet was that delivered the address and commending him on a job well done.

Tate also plays hockey with the Taber Oil King's and has been named the "Player's Player" for the past two seasons by his coach. His coach, Nolan Kinniburgh says,



"Tate's enthusiasm for the team and the game made an enormous positive impact on the team."

Tate is also a member of the Myers Rebels Football team and is the skip of his W.R. Myers Men's Curling Team.

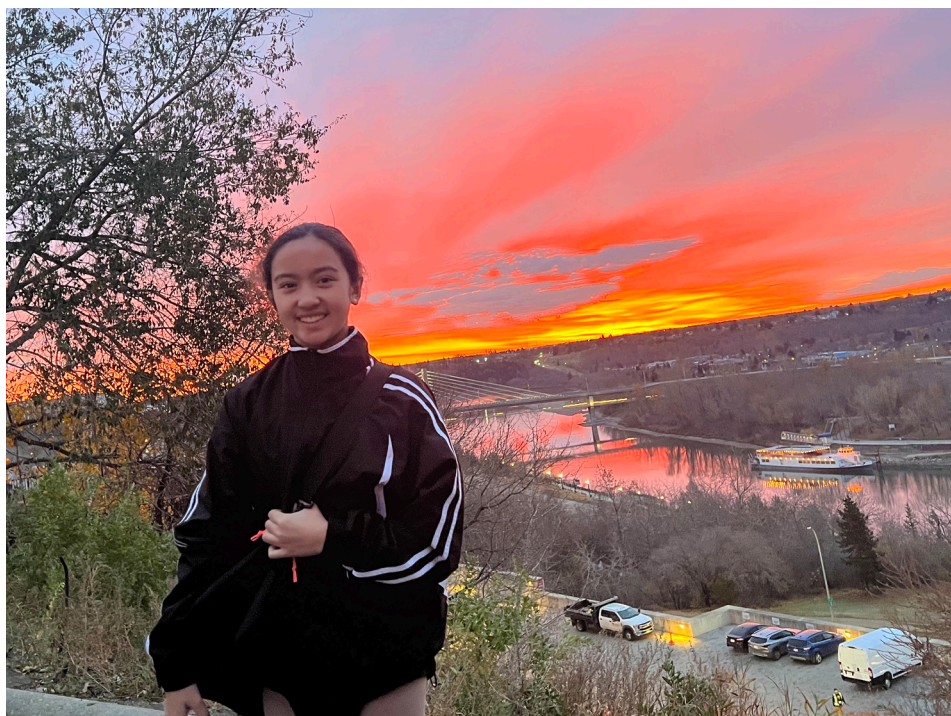
This year Tate volunteered his services to lead an extra-curricular French Club at Dr. Hamman School. Dr. Hamman School principal, Alyson Archibald says, "Tate's leadership, understanding, modeling and fluency of the French language along with his professional and engaging demeanor have greatly impacted student learning and achievement through this club."

Congratulations, Tate Nakashima, on your nomination!





Jasmine Downey



Jasmine Downey is a grade eight student at D.A. Ferguson Middle School in Taber. Jasmine's teacher, Michelle Sawchuk states, "A natural leader, Jasmine carries herself with self-respect and maturity. She leads through example demonstrating humility and a strong work ethic in every endeavor."

Beyond the classroom, Jasmine is an active member of her church and a devoted volunteer that is always seeking ways to give back to her community. Jasmine is also very involved with dance. Jasmin's dance instructor, Kandis Howells says, "From a young age, she demonstrated stand-out qualities. She has since, year after year, outdone herself from the last." Jasmine has been described as gracious, receptive, hard-working, humble, kind and always

respectful.

Jasmine is an exceptional student with top-notch marks and is one who always approaches her classwork with enthusiasm. Jasmine participates in extracurricular events, performed at the talent show and has earned numerous academic and community awards. Jasmine is also an active member of the Fox Force, where she plays a key role in planning and executing school activities. She also volunteers her time in the school library.

One of Jasmine's most striking qualities is her creativity. This was evident when she won the D.A. Ferguson Orange Shirt contest. Teacher Judy Wilson says, "Jasmine consistently creates spaces where others feel heard, values and supported."

Congratulations, Jasmine!

Torynn Plumb



Torynn Plumb is a grade eleven student at Vauxhall High School. School principal, Todd Ojala says, "Torynn exemplifies what it means to be a quiet, yet impactful leader, one who influences others through her actions, character, and commitment to serving others."

Torynn participated in the Stepping Stones Mentorship Program this year and demonstrated commendable leadership when working with her mentee. Torynn was able to handle her mentee's needs with patience, empathy, and understanding. She was a positive role model and has left a lasting impression on her young mentee's life.

Torynn has been a member of 4-H since she was nine years old. She was a member of the Retlaw Prairie 4-H Club for a number of years and then has been a member of the Bon Ayr 4-H Multi Club

for the last three years. Torynn is an incredibly hardworking young woman who always puts her animals first, demonstrating responsibility, dedication, and compassion in everything she does. Torynn's aunt Lisa Egeland says, "Her work ethic shines through whether it is working with cattle, competing in rodeo, or raising her 4-H animals - she shows patience, skill, and respect for both the animals and agricultural way of life." Torynn always has time to help the younger members in her club with their projects and is an excellent example of what a 4-H member should be.

Over the last few years Torynn has really improved with her public speaking and has competed at the club, district, and regional level. Torynn is quiet by nature so public speaking has been something that Torynn has worked very hard



at and her determination and commitment shows.

Torynn is an important member of the Vauxhall Skating Club. Torynn has skated with the Vauxhall Skating Club since a very young age and continues to skate with the club but also helps the coaches with the younger members of the club and is happy to help the younger members get through their stations on the Can Skate nights.

Torynn has a positive attitude and she approaches everything with determination, poise, maturity, and kindness. Congratulations, Torynn!



Lillian Bennett

Lilly Bennett is a grade eleven student at W.R. Myers High School. Darrell Bergmann, Athletic Director for W.R. Myers says, “Lilly truly has a magnetic personality that draws everyone closer to her.” He continues by saying, “coaches always rave about how coachable Lilly is, her dedication to the team and how they wish they had a “team of Lillys.” Chad McClenaghan, W.R. Myers Senior Varsity Girls Basketball coach says of Lilly, “I have had the privilege of coaching Lilly in basketball for five years, and in that time, I have witnessed her unwavering dedication, outstanding athleticism, and blossoming leadership.” Lilly also plays volleyball and is a very skilled soccer player.

Lilly is very aware of how others feel and often goes out of her way to make other people feel

welcome and included. Lilly has served as Class President for her church Youth Group and goes out of her way to make others feel like they belong. Lilly is responsible for conducting class planning meetings and helps to organize and run the planned activities. She also teaches lessons to her class of Young Women that range in age from fourteen to eighteen. She is always well prepared and thoughtful with the lessons that she gives. Lilly has a quiet demeanor that almost adds to her strong leadership ability.

Lilly is a student that works hard to balance her schoolwork with her extra-curricular activities. Lilly is a very talented artist that is passionate about her creations and is always excited to see where the next project will take her.

Congratulations, Lilly Bennett, on your nomination for an APEX Youth Award.



Sebastian Hoekstra



Sebastian Hoekstra is a grade twelve student at Taber Christian High School. Sebastian is described as a positive, cheerful young man who brings an infectious energy and enthusiasm to everything he does. Teacher, Trina Mantler Friesen says, "His ability to balance both individual effort and teamwork makes him an outstanding role model and a true asset to any group or project he is involved in."

Sebastian is deeply involved in his school community and is an important member of his high school sports teams, the Lions. As the team captain for both the Lions volleyball and basketball teams, he has led both teams to provincials, showcasing his leadership and dedication to his teammates.

Sebastian also dedicates his time to coaching grade six volleyball, basketball, and badminton at Taber Christian School as part of his grade twelve Passion Project. He is



able to clearly explain expectations, rules and skills to the younger students, adjusting his approach to suit the group's skill level and fosters a healthy, inclusive environment for all.

Sebastian's commitment to giving back to his community is apparent. Whether participating in his local church and youth events, lending a hand at the Taber Food Bank and Lethbridge Soup Kitchen and Streets Alive program, Sebastian is always willing to lend a hand and does it all with a rare enthusiasm.

Sebastian has been very involved with the Trail 77 community where he helps to build and maintain mountain biking trails, and volunteers for the Oldman Mayhem Bike Race. His dedication to Trail 77 has made a positive impact on the community.

Sebastian is the eldest child in his family and is an excellent role model to his younger siblings. He is tasked with the typical homelife duties like doing chores, cooking supper and helping his younger brother and sisters with homework and their chores. Sebastian takes on these responsibilities with maturity and enthusiasm.

Congratulations, Sebastian Hoekstra on your nomination.

Ivy Hughes



Ivy Hughes is a grade seven student at D.A Ferguson Middle School. Kristen Irvine, previous Head Coach of the Taber Vipers Swim Club, describes Ivy as a silent leader. She says, “Ivy is an example of what it means to be a silent leader. Her impact is not made through being loud or being in the spotlight, but rather through the quiet consistency with which leads by example. She exudes kindness, humility, and grace.”

Ivy is an active member of 4-H. She initially joined the Taber Corn Dawgs and participated in the canine agility and obedience project with her little dog, Molly. She continued onto the New Ewe Club where she participates in the Market Lamb project. She holds the executive position of Club Secretary and always comes prepared to the meetings. The

one portion of 4-H where Ivy really shines is Public Speaking. She consistently wins at the club and district level allowing her to qualify for the South Region Communications Competition. She has shown tremendous growth in her communications skills as she has moved up into Intermediate competitions.

Ivy is able to balance her academics with her extracurricular activities. She is an important member of her school volleyball and basketball teams, her Wham Club Volleyball team, and the Taber Vipers Swim Club. Her work ethic, contagious smile and infectious laughter make her a valued member of her teams and her school community.

Congratulations, Ivy Hughes on your nomination for an APEX Youth Award.

Zuri Gardner



Zuri Gardner is a grade ten student at W.R. Myers High School. Zuri is described as being kind, caring, talented, and accepting of others. Zuri shows great passion for everything she does.

Zuri is very talented and is passionate about the fine arts. Her music teacher, Jaimee Jarvie has this to say about Zuri, “Every lesson she shows up ready to work hard and is constantly seeking growth. She takes criticism professionally, and is truly a joy to work with. Zuri is constantly performing gigs as a soloist and an ensemble member, and is already making a name for herself in the southern Alberta music scene. Zuri is a leader amongst her peers, and radiates positivity and encouragement in our voice studio.”

Zuri is an integral part of the W.R. Myers band program. Zuri

had the opportunity to participate in the University of Lethbridge Honour Band, conducted by Ken Rogers. This prestigious ensemble featured some of the top high school musicians from Southern Alberta. Zuri represented her school with distinction.

Her artistic talents also extend to drama. She played the leading role in the W.R. Myers production of *Almost Maine* and performed in the Lethbridge production of *Romeo and Juliet*. She has inspired others by performing and encourages her peers to be brave enough to step onto the stage.

Zuri is also a member of the Taber Rugby Club, a member of the Southern Alberta Interscholastic Leaders and has attended leadership conferences with this group and a leader in her church youth group program.

Congratulations, Zuri Gardner, on your nomination.





Brilynd Unser

Brilynd Unser is a grade eleven student at W.R. Myers High School. Brilynd is known for his sense of humour, his willingness to lend a hand to others, his quiet strength and resiliency.

Jason Jensen, President of the Taber Football Association and Head Football Coach of the W.R. Myers Rebels has known Brilynd for over a decade and he says, "In that time Brilynd has stepped up over and over (without anyone asking him) to volunteer in any capacity needed. This is particularly impressive, considering the fact that he doesn't play football. He just loves being around the games and more importantly, just loves to help out in any way possible." Brilynd shows a great amount of selflessness, consideration of others, and constantly shows quiet leadership making him an extraordinary role model for his peers. He has volunteered to cover concession shifts for football games, allowing parents the opportunity to watch their player during the game.

This past fall Brilynd faced a serious illness that led to an extended hospital stay at the Children's Hospital in Calgary. Despite the hardship, Brilynd



remained positive, although the road to recovery has been long. He has been diagnosed with a very rare autoimmune disease requiring vigilant attention to his medication. W.R. Myers High School Principal, Adam Hughes says of Brilynd, "He fought to stay connected with his schooling, kept his spirits up and never once gave in to self-pity. He modelled perseverance." Hughes continues, "He carried himself with grace, grit and humility. He didn't look for recognition or sympathy." Brilynd is back to school, is on track with his schoolwork, and is back to working at the South Country Co-op Food Store. He has proven to be the definition of resilient.

Congratulations, Brilynd Unser on your nomination.





APEX YOUTH AWARDS

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After a 4 year hiatus, the APEX Youth Awards are back! Three \$1000 bursaries will be awarded to our top nominees.

The APEX Youth Awards were launched in 2002 by the Rotary Club of Taber and the Taber Times. These awards were created to recognize individuals that represented the best qualities in our youth from Taber and area; youth who unselfishly give of themselves in the service of others and who have shown resiliency when faced with adversity. The awards went through committee changes over the years but had remained committed to recognizing our youth for over twenty years. In 2021, the APEX Youth Awards continued with a virtual awards presentation because COVID restrictions did not allow us to gather to celebrate our youth.

Unfortunately, 2021 was the last year that our committee held the APEX Youth Awards because for a few years there really wasn't any opportunity for the young people of our community to volunteer or participate in events because there were still restrictions, and it took a few years to get back to normal. AND THEY'RE BACK...and we are so excited!