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## Scholarship sees Oakville teen STEM into artificial intelligence

Oakville Beaver  
By Abigail Cukier, special to the Beaver

Ella Rasmussen is fulfilling her goal to study engineering at the University of Waterloo. And she is doing it with the help of a prestigious Shulich Leader Scholarship.

The scholarships are aimed at helping students pursue an education in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) at universities across Canada and in Israel. To be selected, students must meet two of three criteria, which include academic excellence, outstanding community, business or entrepreneurial leadership and financial need. Each high school can select one student nominee, who then completes a scholarship application. Universities review applications and select their recipients.

**Scholarship sees Oakville teen STEM into artificial intelligence**  
submitted photo  
*Ella Rasmussen.*

Seventeen-year-old Rasmussen earned a \$80,000 scholarship and is studying mechatronics engineering — a combination of mechanical, electrical and software engineering.

"I didn't believe it for about two or three weeks," she said of her reaction to earning the scholarship. "You don't expect it to happen to you. I was ecstatic and so excited."

Rasmussen developed a passion for robotics when she attended a summer camp for LEGO robotics after Grade 6. She got hooked on building robots, programming and competing in robotics competitions.

Following her Grade 11 year, she was selected to participate in SHAD. Each year, SHAD provides the opportunity for students from across Canada, and internationally, to attend a month-long summer program in residence at a Canadian university focused on STEM.

SHAD alumni have gone on to become Rhodes Scholars, Top 40 Under 40 and Top 20 Under 20 award recipients.

Participants typically have grades more than 90 per cent and are leaders in their schools, act as volunteers within their communities and are often gifted musicians, artists and athletes.

Rasmussen spent a month at the University of Saskatchewan learning about everything from nuclear energy to how to start your own business. The program also included outings and team building activities.

For three years, Rasmussen has been a programming instructor at E-bots Robotics, teaching the fundamentals of building and programming robots to children aged nine to 14. She was also co-captain and programming lead for the Ebots Pi-Ions, that competed in the VEX Robotics Competition and was crowned world champions in 2013.

The Oakville teen is also a leader with Tech Under 20 with Silicon Halton, which connects and provides opportunities for the local tech community.

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Rasmussen organizes events to help young people interested in technology and business learn and gain exposure. She also maintained a 94.3 per cent average in high school.

Now she is enjoying expanding her knowledge even further. "It's really busy, but I am loving it," says Rasmussen of university so far.

After graduation, she plans to travel to pursue a master's degree in artificial intelligence.

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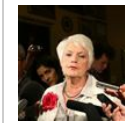
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