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Aiming for the stars

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Kyra McLellan poses with the telescope she bought with her summer job money and her Schulich Leader Scholarship

A local Melfort high school graduate is blasting off to Toronto to peruse her space and astronomy dreams after receiving 1 of 25 Canadian-wide \$80,000 Schulich Leader Scholarships.

Recent MUCC graduate Kyra McLellan received the scholarship in the Science Technology Engineering and Math sector. She will be going into space engineering at York University.

"I had always been very interesting in space and astronomy since I was a kid. Figured out that York University was the only school in Canada to offer the program, so I thought it was the perfect fit for me."

McLellan was nominated by her guidance councillor for the opportunity. She had to write an essay on why she was a great Schulich Leader, which included her top three personal achievements.

Her biggest accomplishment of the three was using her summer job money to buy herself a telescope. McLellan then joined the World Astronomical Society of Canada, and works together with them using her telescope.

"I didn't expect the nomination, I thought 'oh well I might as well try.'"

York and other participating universities partnered with the Schulich Leader program to select two students from the leader nominees that applied at their school to receive the scholarship.

"...Never thought a small town girl like me could win something like this. If you work hard it will pay off."

Her winning essay was inspired by a previous commander of the international space station. "Commander Chris Hadfield... has such a passion for everything he does and has a way of encouraging people." He showed McLellan that being a leader was about "encouraging others, and stepping back."

The budding engineer is flying out to Toronto on August 31st. "I've been to the Toronto Airport (Pearson International), but nothing outside of that," she said. "I think I need to take big steps to make big accomplishments. I've talked to past Schulich Leaders, and they're really helping me out. I am very grateful for this opportunity, and to learn and grow in a field that interests me."

Schulich Leader Scholarships is a \$100 million scholarship fund that provides 50 undergraduate scholarships each year, across top Canadian universities. Twenty-five scholarships, valued at \$80,000 each, are designated for students pursuing an engineering degree. Twenty-five scholarships, valued at \$60,000 each, are designated for students studying science, technology or math. Founding philanthropist Seymour Schulich believes "together we are creating the next generation of technology innovators."

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