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Generation next: Krammer named 2014 Schulich Leader

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BY ADELA TALBOT



Special to Western News

Mark Krammer of St. Mary High School (Prince Albert, Sask.) has been named a Schulich Leader Scholar, awarded to 40 nationwide high school students intending to enrol in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) areas of study.

At his high school graduation, Mark Krammer cleaned up.

The 17-year-old Prince Albert, Sask., native took home six awards, including the Governor General's Scholarship and Medal, Canadian Parents for French Award, Western Communities Foundation Bursary Award and Prince Albert and Area Teachers' Association Award. He also captured the University of Toronto National Book Award, which recognizes the top students across the country.

Krammer even surprised his parents when he stood up to give the valedictory address – after which his classmates at St. Mary High School gave him a standing ovation.

But that's not all.

This month, Krammer arrived at Western and its Faculty of Science to study astrophysics as one of this year's recipients of the prestigious Schulich Leader Scholarship.

Schulich Leader Scholarships are awarded to high school students intending to enrol in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) areas of study. Forty students are selected from across the country, two for each participating university. Stratford, Ont., native Ben Congram entered the Faculty of Engineering this fall as Western's other Schulich Leader Scholar.

At an early age, Krammer was visibly gifted, said his father, Randy Krammer.

"When he was young, he would do those computer educational programs for hours; he would just eat that kind of stuff up," his father said.

"Before Grade 1, he was reading at a Grade 4 level. A teacher across the street from us listened to him read, and she shook her head in astonishment. From an early age, he showed a talent for academics but as he grew up, he pursued that and a lot of volunteering in the community," he continued.

At St. Mary, Krammer received the First Academic Award for three consecutive years by maintaining the highest overall average of 250 students. He did this while juggling a job and schedule laden with community service.

"Despite starting a part-time job at 14 years of age, and putting in the maximum number of hours for someone his age, year after year, his school grades never suffered. He was able to maintain his exceptional scholastic achievement, despite logging some really heavy hours," his father continued.

Krammer's list of commitments, aside from his job at Harold's Family Foods, is extensive.

He served on student government since Grade 9, was the provincial representative for Students Against Drinking and Driving and treasurer of the Student Leadership Council, helping to fundraise more than \$3,000 for disaster relief in the Philippines. Krammer also volunteers at the Prince Albert Share-A-Meal Food Bank, creating and distributing food hampers in the mornings and preparing and serving meals in the afternoon.

In the midst of all this, he has been very humble and modest.

"He just kind of chose that path on his own. He was always involved in his church, and he has a sense of social conscience and a responsibility to his fellow man. He's a really hard worker," Randy Krammer said.

"We're amazed and proud; he's exceeded our expectations."

As if the above didn't keep Krammer busy enough, he also plays the piano and has participated in track and field and cross-country.

Ask him about his accomplishments and talents, and he will humbly defer the praise, noting in anything he does, he does his best and expects no recognition.

"What motivates me is the impact on the community that I see; at the food bank, you can see a tangible effect and how people are helped," he said.

At 17, Krammer eloquently speaks of his desire to pursue a degree in astrophysics, acknowledging that somewhere along the way, his plans could change. For now, he's coming to Western and joining the Scholar's Electives program, hoping to hone his research skills.

"I'm interested in the Big Bang, and the events surrounding that. I was always interested in science and math and I think it's interesting to study where the whole universe originates from. It's interesting, how we can figure it out, even though it's

billions of years later," he said.

And the scholarship? "It was a real surprise, for sure. I couldn't believe it. It took a few days to sink in. It's a great honour."

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