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2021 Urban Hero Awards have a different look again this year

Nominations in Health and Social Issues categories up this year

BY SCARBOROUGH MIRROR OCT 29, 2021 UPDATED MAR 7, 2022



Unfortunately, for a second year, we can't celebrate our Urban Hero Awards winners with a gala the way we did in past years, like this one at York Mills Gallery in 2019. - Dan Pearce/Metroland file photo

By Dan Pearce/Torstar



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Across Toronto, there are people dedicated to helping their communities without expecting a reward in return. We call them urban heroes.



The judges and people have spoken, and Star Metroland Toronto has named 16 winners for the 2021 Urban Hero Awards in the Judge's Selection and People's Choice categories.



The awards, now in their 12th year, recognize individuals and groups for work, leadership and good deeds in the categories of: Arts, Business, Education, Environment, Good Neighbour, Health, Social Issues and Sports. Traditionally, we awarded two winners in each category, but we have broken that tradition for a second straight year to nominate more winners in the Health and Social Issues categories in which we have received so many nominations, reflecting how our communities have been affected by both areas this past year.



Our award winners are everyday people stepping up to help better the lives of others in communities throughout Toronto. Unfortunately, for a second year, we're unable to celebrate our winners with a gala as in years past, due to the pandemic. This year, as we continue to face the pandemic, contributions to society are perhaps more important than ever, and our winners certainly answered the call to action.

And the 2021 Urban Hero Awards winners are:

- [Vaccine Hunters](#), which helped an estimated 1.2 million Canadians get vaccinated against COVID-19.
- [Scarborough Health Network staff](#), who have gone above and beyond to provide compassionate care for patients and roll out vaccines during the pandemic.
- [Edsel Mutia](#), a charge nurse in North York General's intensive care unit, who keeps finding ways to lift people's spirits even amid the pandemic.
- [Leandra Briones](#), a compassionate personal care worker caring for long-term-care residents with dementia and Alzheimer's disease.
- [ICU staff at Scarborough General Hospital](#), who have pulled together to provide exceptional care to patients and their families during the pandemic.
- [Joy Xu](#), who has founded several initiatives to increase academic accessibility and development opportunities for students.
- [Debbie Lee](#), who pivoted during the pandemic to keep organizing health and wellness programs for seniors.
- [Honey Novick](#), a singer and poet helping to make theatre and creative expression accessible for marginalized community members.
- [Paul Nguyen](#), who launched a website promoting positive news and showcasing local talent in the Jane and Finch area.
- [Andrew Young](#), a web developer who founded Vaccine Hunters Canada to help connect Canadians with COVID-19 vaccines.
- [James Ince](#), who mows a neighbourhood field to give kids a safe outdoor space to play.
- [Tina-Nadia Gopal-Chambers](#), who founded a charitable organization helping youth in custody awaiting trial access education.
- [Jovan Biggart](#), who empowers and mentors youth through basketball.
- [Cathy Tsong Deh Kwe](#), an advocate and activist who helps vulnerable people and empowers others while speaking out about Indigenous issues and other causes.
- [Mary Hawk](#), who co-founded a charity providing free self-care services for underprivileged women and raising awareness about women's issues.
- [Nelson Camara](#), a pastor running an outreach program helping persons experiencing homelessness.

Star Metroland Toronto first introduced the Urban Hero Awards in Etobicoke in 2009. From there, it grew to honour people in Scarborough and North York and then residents across Toronto.



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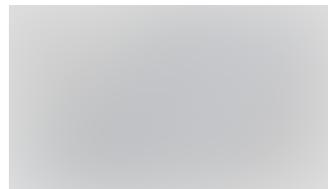
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