

Facing Forward



A B O U T F A C E

AboutFace National Scholarship Winners Congrats Hayley Hasessian and Michelle Harwood!

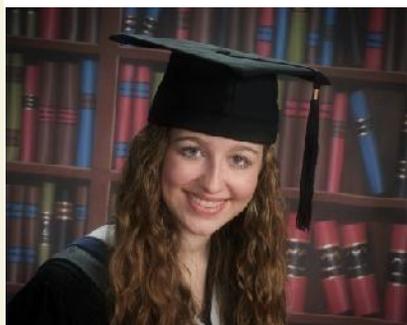
Every year, we award the AboutFace National Scholarship to two deserving youth to put towards their post secondary education. This year, the recipients are Michelle Harwood and Hayley Hasessian. Michelle will be attending Queens University pursuing a Bachelor of Science and plans to become a Pediatric Craniofacial Surgeon or Family Physician; and Hayley will be attending the Ontario College of Art and Design University to pursue a Bachelor of Fine Arts in photography and plans to pursue post graduate studies and become a Child Life Specialist. Read what they said about how AboutFace has affected their lives and influenced their life long goals.

Hayley Hasessian

My involvements with AboutFace and SickKids Hospital have both played a huge part in the development of my character and my future career ambitions. I became a patient at SickKids Hospital soon after birth, as I was born with Bilateral Microtia and slight Goldenhar Syndrome. I've had multiple surgeries for my hearing aid (bone anchored hearing aid) and to have my jaw reconstructed at SickKids hospital. As I have spent so much time at the hospital, as well as so many of my close friends and family members, I have been inspired to devote as much as myself as I can to give back. I have just completed my first year on the SickKids Council, and got a volunteer position at the hospital for the full month of July. I am incredibly excited about volunteering at the hospital every morning in July as this will be my first experience in the career I hope to have when I am older. I hope that with my past experiences, I am able to find the right ways to help the children at the hospital and inspire them to push on and stay strong. Along with this, I will be working towards my career goal of being a child life specialist (dream job at SickKids), where I can hopefully inspire and help patients, as well as hopefully provide the same comfort, friendship and trust I received from my child life specialist.

While SickKids has helped me through my medical struggles, it has also helped me find others like myself, struggling with similar challenges, which has made my journey a lot easier. Along with SickKids introducing me to all these new friends, AboutFace has done this for me as well. I started attending AboutFace events a few years ago, and it has introduced me to so many beautiful friends whom I can relate to and share common experiences with. AboutFace has taught me that it's ok to be different, and that I no longer have to be ashamed, because I have my AboutFace family with me. Seeing that there are so many people like myself (as well as those with other differences) has opened my eyes to the fact that not only am I not alone, but through my experiences, I can help others and impact their lives as much as they have for me. Through AboutFace, I have met such incredibly strong people who have inspired me to be strong and share my story with others, which has also inspired me to further help others in the future going through struggles similar to my own.

Michelle Harwood



I first heard of AboutFace and attended Camp Trailblazers in September 2009. I was already one of the older campers however I used the opportunity to assist others. I was born with Hemangioma and experienced a few surgeries throughout my life. When I first arrived at camp, I heard so many other stories of individuals going through huge journeys. Since I was nearing the end of my hospital visits, I was able to help campers so that they could see and understand that there is an amazing future ahead of them and to always keep their head up. I was bullied for having a facial difference as a child and I found it hard to fight through. Once I got to AboutFace and realized I was not the only one going through this, and my confidence and understanding grew stronger. I was able to share my stories with younger children so that they could also gain confidence and courage to stand up for themselves in similar situations.

I continued on working with children through a program called "Big Brothers Big Sisters of Toronto" where I was a mentor to a younger "sister" to help build her confidence and trust towards others as well as herself. I have also been involved in the "Me to

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We" campaign for six years where I have raised awareness and funds for children in need both globally and locally. I have been the chair for this committee and have raised money through events and fundraisers in addition to taking part and running local food drives.

I realized through my work with children and AboutFace that my passion is helping children. At school, I enjoy studying science and math and I hope to be able to use my science education to become a doctor. My hospital visits while I was younger opened my eyes to the many different careers that are focused on helping children. These visits and my later involvement in AboutFace helped me realize that I wanted to be either a family practitioner or a pediatric craniofacial surgeon. I want to be able to give back to children who are going through situations similar to those I experienced.