



RTOERO’s post-secondary scholarships empower change for communities

Toronto, May 27, 2024 – They’re aspiring rural physicians, nurse practitioners, health researchers, environmental scientists and advocates, therapists and more. Across Canada, 20 college and university students are getting a boost in their quests to make a positive difference after receiving an RTOERO scholarship.

Since 1968, RTOERO has been a voice for education sector workers in their retirement. The organization’s vision is a healthy, active future for every member of the education community in Canada.

The annual scholarships serve that objective and to date have awarded more than \$600,000. This year’s scholarships total \$60,000.

Eligible students are enrolled in programs that lead to careers related to seniors health and well-being, education or environmental stewardship – or that reflect a strong commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.

“With their passions and pathways, these students will make an impact in many ways. What they all share is a commitment to improving life in their communities. The scholarship program is one way we give back and help make that happen,” says Martha Foster, chair of the board for RTOERO.

For nominations, RTOERO members are encouraged to recommend students in their lives, from their family or the community.

The full list of the 2024 scholarship recipients, who received \$3,000 each:

Student Nominating RTOERO district	Program	Interests/goals
<p>Kassandra Fernandes Thunder Bay, Ontario</p> <p>Nominated from District 2 Thunder Bay</p>	<p>PhD – Western University</p>	<p>Kassandra is dedicated to improving health and well-being for older adults. Having a close bond with her grandparents, and experiences in diverse communities, have developed her understanding of the importance of social engagement. She is studying occupational science and aging, with a dissertation on naturally occurring retirement communities in Thunder Bay. Kassandra aims to empower aging populations through community-based research and knowledge integration.</p>

<p>Nicholas Lambert Elliot Lake, Ontario</p> <p>Nominated from District 4 Sudbury & Manitoulin</p>	<p>MD – NOSM University</p>	<p>Nicholas, who’s pursuing a Doctor of Medicine, is passionate about helping people understand their health, especially older adults and those from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. He plans to return to his hometown in rural Northern Ontario and practice as a bilingual family doctor, aiming to improve access and outcomes. Outside of his studies, Nicholas keeps active by doing triathlons.</p>
<p>Brooke Gelinas Iroquois Falls, Ontario</p> <p>Nominated from District 5 Cochrane & Temiskaming</p>	<p>BHSc – Western University</p>	<p>Following her degree in Health Sciences, Brooke is preparing to start a Doctor of Dental Surgery degree. Her experience with and understanding of Northern Ontario’s health care needs drives her ambition to return to serve the community upon graduation. Brooke aims to develop culturally safe resources and services tailored for Indigenous elders and other underserved groups. Her active leadership in community engagement initiatives underscore her inclusive, values-based approach to health care.</p>
<p>Brooke Currie Barrie, Ontario</p> <p>Nominated from District 9 Huron-Perth</p>	<p>BScN – Western University</p>	<p>Brooke’s awareness of the challenges facing our health care system and aging population motivated her to study nursing. Previously, she was a PSW in a long-term care home during the COVID-19 pandemic. Her experiences instilled a commitment to provide holistic care supporting the emotional, social and physical well-being of older adults. She wants to infuse creativity, innovation and global perspectives into work as a geriatric nurse practitioner.</p>
<p>Megan Acres Meaford, Ontario</p> <p>Nominated from District 10 Bruce Grey & Dufferin</p>	<p>BHSc (Hons) – Western University</p>	<p>Megan is passionate about building a more equitable and accessible health care system. Following her Health Sciences program, she plans to study medicine, and eventually wants to return home to provide tailored care to the aging population. She aspires to deliver health care in a way that recognizes diverse lived experiences and tackles systemic issues in her community. Currently, Megan serves her campus community as a volunteer emergency medical responder.</p>
<p>Spencer McMillan Barrie, Ontario</p> <p>Nominated from</p>	<p>MSc – University of Guelph</p>	<p>In his Clinical Studies program, Spencer’s research focuses on improving outcomes for seniors and others requiring minimally invasive surgeries. He’s working towards the</p>

<p>District 10 Bruce Grey & Dufferin</p>		<p>implementation of a new suturing tool, with the potential to be more intuitive and cost effective than existing options. In tandem with his academic work, he has taken on leadership roles, as an emergency surgery technician at a campus veterinary hospital, and a medic in the military reserves.</p>
<p>Hannah Faber Burlington, Ontario</p> <p>Nominated from District 11 Waterloo Region</p>	<p>BSc (Hons) – McMaster University</p>	<p>Hannah’s degree in Life Sciences has nurtured her understanding of aging from a biomolecular perspective. This has motivated her to pursue pharmaceutical research and policy, aiming to remove barriers and promote equity and accessibility in health care. She plans to start a Master of Public Health with a specialization in applied gerontology. Hannah hopes to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those affected by age-related and chronic conditions.</p>
<p>Vanessa Trinca Georgetown, Ontario</p> <p>Nominated from District 11 Waterloo Region</p>	<p>MScOT – University of Toronto</p>	<p>Vanessa is committed to providing person-centered care as a future occupational therapist. Her experience navigating long-term care with an aging relative inspired her passion for promoting equitable, accessible and evidence-based improvements in the field. After graduation, she aims to practice with a tailored approach, empowering her clients to lead fulfilling lives. She also plans to continue research and advocacy work to drive positive change in health care delivery.</p>
<p>Adam Omarali Toronto, Ontario</p> <p>Nominated from District 16 City of Toronto</p>	<p>BSc – University of Toronto</p>	<p>Adam’s academic focus on Engineering and Neuroscience is driven by a desire to create novel and innovative solutions, notably to age-related health challenges. His goal is to enhance health outcomes, particularly in historically marginalized communities, through the research and development of digital applications and physical tools. Adam is interested in merging AI algorithms with pathology results to deliver personalized recommendations for patients.</p>
<p>Daniela Sablinskas Vancouver, B.C.</p> <p>Nominated from District 16 City of Toronto</p>	<p>MA – Adler University</p>	<p>Driven by the belief that nobody should suffer in silence, Daniela has found strong purpose in pursuing Counselling Psychology. With a background in recreational therapy, and experience working in a retirement home and long-term care, she understands the many dimensions of health and well-being. After graduation, Daniela aspires to support her</p>

		clients through life's transitions with a holistic and compassionate approach.
<p>Ayva O'Mahony Newmarket, Ontario</p> <p>Nominated from District 16 City of Toronto</p>	MSc – Queen's University	In her Rehabilitation-Physical Therapy program, Ayva is inspired by the transformative power of movement on health, well-being, and independence. Working in rehabilitation with people who have had hip and knee replacements has developed her insight into the challenges facing many older Canadians. She's gaining awareness of the diverse and complex needs of individuals undergoing rehabilitation, and once in the field aspires to help people get back to the activities they love.
<p>William Barbour Toronto, Ontario</p> <p>Nominated from District 17 Simcoe County</p>	MD – University of Ottawa	In his medical studies, William is focused on enhancing quality of life and health care outcomes by eliminating barriers and providing equitable care. He plans to specialize in cardiology and looks forward to collaborating with multidisciplinary teams to address age-related health challenges. William's involvement in the Ontario Medical Students Association Advocacy Team and the Medical School Sustainability Committee demonstrate his commitment to values-driven health care.
<p>Sophie Dembski Cambridge, Ontario</p> <p>Nominated from District 23 North York</p>	MSc – Western University	Sophie's Interdisciplinary Medical Studies research focused on infectious disease and inflammation. Her volunteer work includes working with the Arthritis Society of Canada to improve their diversity, equity and inclusion policy. That has cemented her commitment to accessibility and patient-centred care. Sophie is driven by helping others and looks forward to bringing her curiosity, dedication and enthusiasm to the health care field.
<p>Jack Barrera Toronto, Ontario</p> <p>Nominated from District 23 North York</p>	BSc – McMaster University	Jack is developing an academic foundation in Life Sciences, driven by a passion for advancing dementia and Alzheimer's research. In school and his future professional endeavors, he seeks to contribute to the understanding and treatment of these conditions, having experienced their impact firsthand within his family. He plans to specialize in either chemical or molecular biology. Jack's dedication to equity and access, alongside his acknowledgment of the pivotal role of informal caregivers, underscores his commitment to inclusive health care.

<p>Benjamin Organ Brantford, Ontario</p> <p>Nominated from District 27 Ottawa- Carleton</p>	<p>MPH – University of Toronto</p>	<p>Benjamin studies Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics, and strives to improve outcomes for seniors in hospitals, long-term care or the community. With volunteer experience in retirement settings, he saw the challenges and opportunities for this age group. His degree positions him at the intersection of clinical and public health. Benjamin looks forward to collaborating with interdisciplinary teams to help prevent malnutrition and chronic disease, reduce food waste and improve health literacy.</p>
<p>Maxwell Campbell Watford, Ontario</p> <p>Nominated from District 33 Chatham- Kent</p>	<p>PhD – Western University</p>	<p>Maxwell’s PhD research in Biomechanics focuses on osteoarthritis and the development of interventions that reduce the need for invasive surgeries. Combining his passions for medicine and design, Maxwell is working on solutions that are accessible, cost-effective and efficient for doctors and patients alike. He plans to pursue a career in orthopedic device research and design, to improve outcomes for patients facing this prevalent and often debilitating age-related condition.</p>
<p>Katia Cestra Maple, Ontario</p> <p>Nominated from District 34 York Region</p>	<p>MSc – Queen’s University</p>	<p>Through her pursuits in Occupational Therapy, Katia strives to alleviate social isolation and dismantle age-related stereotypes. She’s dedicated to promoting inclusivity and advocating for a society where everyone can flourish, regardless of age or ability. Katia recognizes the crucial role that leisure activities play in overall well-being. She aims to empower her clients to lead fulfilling lives, reflecting her passion for promoting equality and dignity for all.</p>
<p>Annabelle Rayson Sarnia, Ontario</p> <p>Nominated from District 38 Lambton</p>	<p>BSc – Harvard University</p>	<p>Annabelle is pursuing a degree in Environmental Science and Engineering and has future aspirations in environmental policy and research development. She aims to bridge the existing gaps between science, law and government policy to enact meaningful change, and create a greener and healthier world. Outside of her academic pursuits, Annabelle spearheads a charity dedicated to supporting vulnerable women, underscoring her compassion and commitment to both social and environmental justice.</p>

<p>Noah Boudreault Brantford, Ontario</p> <p>Nominated from District 40 Brant</p>	<p>BAS – University of Guelph</p>	<p>Through a dual major in Criminal Justice/Public Policy and Biology, Noah is cultivating an interdisciplinary approach to address complex societal and environmental challenges. He plans to pursue law, particularly in environmental and Indigenous contexts, and aims to champion the shared protection of nature and Indigenous rights. Noah is motivated by a desire for justice and fair outcomes and aspires to contribute to a more equitable and harmonious society.</p>
<p>Anna-Livia Perry Vancouver. B.C.</p> <p>Nominated from District 42 Mainland British Columbia</p>	<p>BMT – Capilano University</p>	<p>Anna-Livia is pursuing a degree in Music Therapy, driven by a heartfelt desire to make a difference in the lives of seniors facing Alzheimer's, dementia and other psychological challenges. She values the importance of building community connections and fostering trusting relationships with her clients. Anna-Livia volunteers in palliative care, further demonstrating her dedication to providing comfort and support to those in need.</p>

RTOERO is a bilingual trusted voice on healthy, active living in the retirement journey for the broader education community. With 84,000+ members in 51 districts across Canada, we are the largest national provider of non-profit group health benefits for education retirees. We welcome members who work in or are retired from the early years, schools and school boards, post-secondary and any other capacity in education. We believe in ***a better future, together!***

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