

A fitting winner of the 2008 Wally McIntosh Scholarship whether she realizes it or not, Alana Aird has a profile totally in keeping with the Wally McIntosh motto 'Be the best you can be'. The daughter of John Aird (Gentry Environmental Systems, Ltd., Rexdale), Aird graduated from St. Mildred's-Lightbourn School with an impressive average of 94.8% in her best six Grade 12 subjects. Out of a total of ten subjects she scored 93.1%. According to her high school principal, Aird has a solid history of high academic achievement receiving a proficiency award in each of the four years she attended high school – meaning that she achieved an overall average of 90% throughout her high school studies.

A leader in intramural sports, Aird held a valued spot on her school swim team and the Oakville Aquatic Swim Team where she qualified for the club's provincial team three times. An invitation to coach younger swimmers led to Aird being named Most Valuable Player when two of her groups placed first and the overall team came in second. Aird is also an award winning track and field champion, qualifying for the provincial trials of the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations (OFSAA). Refusing to be held back by the cancellation of her senior track team, Aird volunteered to coach the junior track athletes, sharing her knowledge and reveling in her charges' excitement as they excelled in competition.

Aird is also an accomplished equestrian, competing on the National 'A' circuit, placing in the top ten in Ontario five times in the past 10 years. Once again, she served as a coach and trainer to younger students, successfully guiding them in competition where they scored a number of top ranking places.

Outside of the competitive arena, Aird is equally impressive. Inspired by former Ontario Lieutenant General James Bartleman's initiative to improve literacy in Ontario's First Nation's communities, she organized a book drive at her school. When she delivered the results to the local OPP station, she had amassed well over 500 books.

In 2008-09 Aird, scholarship in hand, attended the University of Guelph majoring in biological science, taking courses in biology, chemistry, physics and mathematics. She plans to work in the field of medicine on graduation. "First year was good and very different," she reports. "We had larger classes than high school and a lot more independence - a good arrangement - when I figured things out." Aird was placed in the biology school cluster in residence, meaning that she and her classmates could work cooperatively. Aird is grateful to OSM for the scholarship award, using it to buy needed textbooks and pay part of her tuition. This summer she is splitting her energy between working with her father and working at the stables in preparation for another successful school year.