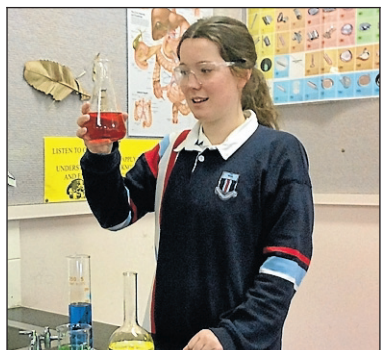


Secondary entry #15: Toronto High School

Toronto Times



Mikaela at work in the laboratory.
Picture: Daniel Morris

Student off to science youth forum

By LACHLAN MACKAY,
DANIEL MORRIS and
JOSHUA MCNAMARA

YOUNG science enthusiast Mikaela Bell has been selected to attend the 2016 National Youth Science Forum in Canberra in January 2016 along with another 400 aspiring scientists from around Australia.

The 14-day program, sponsored by Rotary, is an annual event targeted at nurturing the next generation of scientists and engineers.

Each year students entering year 12 can apply to attend the forum through a keenly contested application process. There was an anxious 3-month wait for Mikaela to learn that her application was successful.

Mikaela's selection is particularly remarkable as this year she is completing her year 11 studies as an accelerated student, having moved directly from year 9 to year 11.

The forum will be hosted by the Australian National University and Mikaela will be "kept very busy with lectures, group activities, practical laboratory sessions and social events".

Mikaela's main interests in science are marine biology and chemistry, and she hopes to find ways to explore these areas further at the forum. "I think it's going to be a really good opportunity to not only learn about science but also learn where I fit into science and where I can go with science in the future."

A place to hide, survive

By KOBE NOBLE,
ULA JOHANSSON and
ABBY ROOKER

THE Threatened Species Last Stand Project is fighting to save the endangered squirrel glider.

The Coal Point Progress Association has initiated the project to help preserve the glider and other threatened species in the area.

The project will cost around \$250,000 and undertake a range of measures over six years to protect threatened and endangered species.

The squirrel glider is a native possum whose numbers have decreased due to habitat loss, and was officially listed as a vulnerable species in 2008.

Suzanne Pritchard, president of the Coal Point Progress Association, said preserving habitat is critical to maintaining glider numbers: "The main thing that stops the squirrel glider population growing is that they don't have enough habitat hollows. They only need small hollows but any size hollow takes 100 years to form."

Unfortunately the natural process of forming hollows is being disrupted, partly through measures that may be targeting safety concerns: "When branches snap off that's actually what starts to make the hollow that an animal or bird can live in, but what's happening is that when branches have snapped



Dr Chris McLean and Norbert Lica installing a squirrel glider box in Threkeld Reserve.

off or trees have tilted over a bit people come along and chop the whole tree down."

Lake Macquarie City Council has recognised that the "squirrel glider habitat is expected to be subjected to continuing development impacts over the next 50 years" in their Squirrel Glider Planning and Management Guidelines 2015.

To combat this loss of habitat for the squirrel glider, the Threatened Species Last Stand Project has installed 28 nesting boxes in the Coal Point area.

Engaging the community to join the effort in saving the squirrel glider has included working with Coal Point Public School where the students are planting banksia and

wattle to provide the squirrel gliders with winter food, which is scarce.

Suzanne Pritchard says that everyone can help out. "There are many things people can do for the wildlife: keep an eye out for their cats and their dogs ... You can also plant natives in your backyard and join a local Landcare group."



Hair ... going ... gone. Amy Clarke shaves her hair to help find a cure for cancer.

Brave Amy shaves to find a cure

By ASHLEIGH COLLETTE, KIRI GARNETT and
JESSICA HJORT

SHOWING courage and compassion, year 11 Toronto High School student Amy Clarke has taken on the Leukaemia Foundation's challenge of The World's Greatest Shave and shaved off all her hair in front of 1000 students and staff.

Amy's efforts have seen her fundraising tally climb

over \$3000, exceeding her initial goal of \$2000.

Amy became involved in the challenge because of both her desire to help others and a personal connection.

"I wanted to make a change in both my life and other people's lives and help the Leukaemia Foundation because I have had family

members affected in the past."

Amy felt nervous on the day of the shave yet was committed to making a difference and determined to go through with it. "I was really happy when they handed me the pony tail and I realised it was the best decision I have ever made."

Amy's actions have also sent a powerful message to the school community about compassion.

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