

Carleton Biomedical Engineering Student Discovers Benefits of Volunteering by Chance

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By Susan Hickman

Intrigued by the union of technology and the human body and its potential to improve our lives, Christopher Heit was naturally drawn to the study of biomedical engineering.

“I believe technology can be applied to not only supplement some missing or damaged functions of the body, but also to augment the way we interact with the world around us,” says the 21-year-old, who has earned this year’s Adrian D.C. Chan Award for Volunteer and Community Service.

Interacting with the world around us

Since he enrolled in Carleton’s [Biomedical and Mechanical Engineering](#) program in 2014, Heit has been involved with the university’s chapter of [Engineers Without Borders Canada](#) as a volunteer and vice-president of engagement. He hosts classroom talks, workshops and conferences for younger students to encourage them to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), and learn how such careers can apply to global development.

For the past two years, Heit has also been a first responder with [Carleton’s Student Emergency Response Team](#) (CUSERT). Additionally, he has coached youth football in his hometown of Waterloo, Ont., for the past seven years.

The \$500 award is presented annually to a Faculty of Engineering and Design student who maintains a high academic standing while engaging in volunteer work.

Reflecting on his volunteerism, Heit explains: “In all cases, the reasons I started were not the reasons I stayed. I started coaching to complete my 40 hours of community service to graduate high school. I stayed because helping kids learn and seeing them improve was an extremely rewarding experience.”

Discovering a cause

While his work with Engineers Without Borders was a way to become involved in campus life, he soon discovered a cause in which he deeply believed.

When he joined CUSERT, he thought it would look good on his resumé. “When I saw the extent of what happens on campus in terms of injuries and mental health, I now could never willingly turn away from helping.”

The Adrian D.C. Chan Award for Volunteer and Community Service was established in 2012. It is awarded annually to a full-time undergraduate or graduate student enrolled in the Faculty of Engineering and Design. This award recognizes the student’s volunteer involvement and community engagement outside the classroom, at Carleton University and in the community at large. Prof. Chan created the award as a way to thank the many Engineering students who contribute to the university and their community.