

Students join federal youth council



NHHS Grade 10 student Jordan Jordan, left, and Grade 12 student Lexus Lexus, right, said they look forward to participating in MP Mike Bossio's youth council. / SARAH SOBANSKI Staff

By Sarah Sobanski

Three students from North Hastings High School (NHHS) have been selected for the area's federal youth council.

Grade 12 student Lexus Scott, Grade 10 student Jordan Brownlee and Grade 11 student Chloe Mountney have joined MP Mike Bossio's Hastings-Lennox and Addington Youth Council. They were selected after applying in the fall. The council is meant to help young people better engage with the Canadian government.

?The decisions we make today as a government have a great impact on that generation, so it's so important to have them involved and that they have a voice,? said Bossio, explaining that the council aims to have young opinions and ideas shared at the federal level. ?Youth are so dynamic. They're fearless and they aren't tainted by what can't be done or what's impossible. They'll think outside the box.?

Lexus applied for the council because she enjoyed her experience attending the Rural Ontario Summit (ROS) in the summer. ?I got to represent Hastings Highlands as a ROS delegate with my mayor and that was an exciting event,? said Lexus ? Bancroft Mayor Bernice Jenkins sent her the application for the youth council. ?That's how I got started.?

Lexus is the NHHS student council prime minister. She plays on the school's rugby, volleyball and badminton teams, volunteers and maintains a part-time job in Maynooth.

?There's going to be a lot of opportunities that come from being a part of this,? said Lexus, mentioning that she hopes to design her own clothing brand one day. ?It's going to be a great part of my applications and resumes.?

Jordan found out about the youth council through Grade 10 history and civics teacher Kelly Waterbury. Waterbury announced the opportunity to join the council to her class and Jordan was the only student to apply.

?I wanted to be able to voice my opinions to a bunch of people who have the same opinions as me without blowing me off and saying I'm just a kid,? said Jordan.

She plays on Bancroft's midget B girls hockey team and volunteers with the Heritage Shoppe in her spare time.

?I hope to become less shy. I'll be in an area where I'm voicing my opinions and come away with knowledge,? added Jordan, explaining her hopes that the council would increase her confidence when meeting new people. She said she wants to get into the field of health care after she graduates.

Both young women travelled to Napanee Oct. 14 for to meet Bossio and attend the council's inaugural meeting. There are 18 youth on the council in all.

?They're remarkable young ladies. They are smart, passionate, engaged [and] committed,? said Bossio. He expressed he was impressed with each member of the council after meeting them.

Lexus and Jordan came away from the meeting feeling encouraged. Both admitted they were nervous to meet Bossio, but after the meeting were excited to continue with the council.

?He's very friendly. He's very open and he's really interested in what we have to say. Everybody was really respectful of everyone's opinions and listened,? said Jordan. ?It's pretty amazing. It's not something other kids get to do especially in our area.?

?I feel the youth in our communities appreciate this opportunity the most,? added Lexus, explaining the council is a rare connection for young people in rural areas. She said access to transportation, infrastructure and development in rural communities is sparse creating fewer avenues to opportunities compared those in larger centres.

?I didn't choose to live here, I was born here. It's very neat to have the opportunity that other [young people in] places that are never forgotten like Belleville or Toronto do.?

Bossio said he hoped to have the council visit Ottawa in the summer of next year to meet other government leaders. He also noted his office will welcome any other students who are interested in joining the council.

?I was nine or 10 years old when I first went to the house,? said Bossio. He explained he knew from that moment that he wanted to work there one day, but until late in his life never thought he would actually be there. ?I want to plant the same seeds with [the council]. No matter what your dreams are don't ever let anyone tell you that it isn't possible.?

The council intends to meet three or four more times before the end of the school year. Anyone between the ages of 15 and 19 can find out more about the council and how to contact Bossio's office at www.mikebossiomp.ca.

Chloe was unavailable for interview when *Bancroft This Week* visited NHHS.