



Western

# Annual IMPACT

2020 REPORT TO ANNUAL DONORS

## Unearthing a dream

A wish, framed on Jasmine Nieva's wall, written in her elementary school hand, reads, "I want to be a mineralogist." It's a journal entry from long ago, back when she hammered rocks with her father's hammer, eager to learn what was inside.

"I found this journal while I was doing my first degree in toxicology," Nieva said. "I actually started crying because I realized, 'Oh wow, this is something I always wanted and what I should have done.' At that point, I knew I really needed to do geology."

She finished her degree and took a year off before coming to Western to pursue her dream.

Today, Nieva is in the fourth year of her Bachelor of Science Honours Specialization in Geology and a two-time recipient of a J.P. Bickell Foundation Mining Scholarship.

"The scholarships gave me so many amazing opportunities in the geology field and helped pay off a portion of my tuition, and my lab equipment and field gear."

The funding also helped cover some of her travel expenses for a geoscience field experience in South Africa during reading week last November.

"The field school focused on economic geology, mineral exploration and how mining companies work," Nieva said. "I actually got to go into a diamond mine and a gold mine too. I always hear about it and learn about it in classes, but actually experiencing it first-hand was amazing. I never thought I'd end up going to South Africa, ever. Part of me still can't believe I went."

She's grateful for the experience she knows will serve her well in the future, along with both degrees.

"My toxicology background made me more environmentally cautious because I learned how toxins hurt the environment. I would like to incorporate that with my geology degree and have a career in the mining industry in risk assessment, environmental remediation or mining exploration."



Jasmine Nieva in a diamond mine in South Africa, as part of a field school experience partially supported by her J.P. Bickell Foundation Mining Scholarships.

## Addressing community need

"My daughter is in crisis and I need help now."

When Julie's (name has been changed to protect her identity) 15-year-old was in need of immediate help with anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic, she, like many others, encountered a health-care system with a long wait list.

So, Julie turned to the Faculty of Education's Child and Youth Development Clinic (CYDC), where she was able to get the supports her daughter required.

The CYDC provides consultation, assessment and intervention services from graduate student clinicians in psychology, social work and speech pathology to children and youth from three to 18 years of age.

As a result of the pandemic, the clinic also began to offer online counselling services. Since April it has helped more than 64 families with 430 tele-psychology appointments.

Impressed with the help her daughter received and having seen first-hand the positive results, Julie became a CYDC donor by supporting the clinic's Accessibility Fund.

As a training site, the clinic provides services at a lower cost, but those costs may still be prohibitive for some. The Accessibility Fund helps support families and ensure everyone in need is able to receive support.

"What an amazing thing," said Julie. "I know how hard it is to find mental health services."

The clinic has been filling the community need since it opened in October 2017 and receives one referral every 1.5 days. So far, it has received more than 800 referrals and provided support to more than 500 families. In Ontario, 28,000 children are waiting for these supports, making financial support for the clinic more important than ever.

"The pandemic has had a significant impact on the mental health of many children and families. I am so grateful to donors like Julie for helping us provide support to as many individuals as possible," said CYDC director, Colin King.

"I'm a huge fan of the clinic and I'm really thankful because we hit so many walls in getting help," said Julie. "The clinic saved us."



Colin King, education professor and academic director of Western's Child and Youth Development Clinic is grateful for donor support amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.



# Looking ahead

Civil Engineering student Lucas Capretz spent his summer using a virtual world to understand real-life problems.

The fourth-year undergraduate student used what are called “digital twin cities” – exact digital replicas of real cities to investigate things like air movement and pedestrian traffic inside buildings and urban environments. The work could help better understand how things like pollution and viruses spread, and what could be done to stop it.

“It was really interesting,” Capretz said. “By studying traffic patterns in a building, you can find ways to make spaces less congested in the future. You can see the direction of airflow in hallways and use that to plan for alternate layouts with more open spaces and less constricted hallways.”

In a world with COVID-19 still ever-present, it is timely work.

It was made possible by the Lassonde Family Foundation which, in Spring 2020, made a \$20,000 gift to support summer research internships for four Western engineering students.

Through the gift, Capretz and three other students were given the chance to

conduct their own research under the supervision of a faculty member, developing valuable skills for their future careers.

Capretz worked with Professor Girma Bitsuamlak, associate director of Western’s WindEEE Research Institute and Canada Research Chair in Wind Engineering.

“It was great seeing how his team worked,” Capretz said. “Each week someone presented their research and the team asked questions, critiqued and found ways to help if they were stuck. I got to see all the research possibilities that exist ahead, beyond undergrad.”

During COVID-19, many student summer employment opportunities were lost. The Foundation’s gift helped ensure students like Capretz had educational opportunities, and a summer job – making the learning experiences all the more meaningful.

“I’m so thankful I was able to do this,” he said. “This opportunity allowed me to take the first steps into conducting my own engineering research and gave me a greater appetite for pursuing my postgraduate degree.”



Donor support helped fourth-year civil engineering student Lucas Capretz conduct his own research using digital twin cities.



“Being a Mustang is about getting back up when things don’t go well. Even with the current setbacks, it’s important we continue to find a way through and come out stronger, and this could not be done without donor support. Thank you for helping my teammates and me through this chapter of our lives. Your generosity does not go unnoticed.”

**Stephanie Cairns**  
4th Year, Medical Sciences, Swimming Team



Western’s #KindMail project has become a favourite way for Mustangs to encourage, and financially support, students. In the midst of the COVID pandemic, our latest campaign gave supporters an entirely digital way to connect with students.



**Fiona Cuddy @ficuddy** • Apr 9, 2020  
I just participated in [#KindMail](#) and made a donation in support of the Student Relief Fund. Send a note of encouragement to a [#WesternU](#) student today. via [@westernuAlumni](#)



**Dr. Savita Dhanvantari @sdhanvan** • Apr 8, 2020  
[#KindMail](#) is a terrific initiative from [@WesternU](#). If you are an alumna, staff or faculty member, please send a [#KindMail](#) to our students. You can also donate to a special COVID19 fund to help students. [@SchulichMedDent](#) [@westernuBIRC](#) [#KindnessMatters](#)



**Day Kibilds @kibilds** • Nov 21, 2019  
I just sent [#KindMail](#) to support a student in exam season! I absolutely love this [#WesternU](#) campaign! Don't forget to make a gift too! [westernconnect.ca/kindmail](#) via [@westernuAlumni](#)

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