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Duchess Park grad wins premier's academic award

by FRANK PEEBLES Citizen staff

A local student is one of 15 in B.C. who has been named a winner of the Premier's Award of Excellence, being handed out this coming Saturday by Premier Gordon Campbell. Only 15 students in B.C. are awarded the \$15,000 education prize for outstanding B.C. students who commit to stay in B.C. for their post-secondary education.

"They look at your grades, what you've done for community service and leadership, there was an essay, also, on the topic of who you would most like to have lunch with," said Church, who wrote on a hypothetical lunch meeting with Roger Bannister, the first human to run a mile in less than four minutes.

Church is a runner himself, capturing first place in the Junior Male category at this year's Labour Day Classic, and came third in British Columbia in the Under 20 men's division at the 2005 Vancouver International Marathon. He is an executive member of the Prince George Roadrunners running club.

Church is also active in social development realms. He is conspicuous by his young age on the Prince George Public Library's board, and is promoting the influence of youth at the library.

"One of the outgoing members of the board, Mitch Hoeg, encouraged me to apply for a position on the library's board through City Hall," said Church. "I did and I was selected. I've been serving on the board since this past March." Some of the initiatives Church is forwarding is the implementation of integrated computer gaming at the library and the development of an all-youth shadow board.

When Church was attending Duchess Park Secondary School he was the one who led the student charge to save the school, including a plea to the board of trustees at a public meeting. He was thrilled to hear that the school is not only saved but being entirely rebuilt.

Church graduated from Duchess Park in June, from the French Immersion program. He won numerous other awards and scholarships, including the Principal's Cup as top overall student. He won a Canada Millennium Scholarship, as well as a UNBC Scholars' Award. He is now attending UNBC taking courses in bio-chemistry and molecular biology.

Part of the Premier's Excellence Award prize is travel arrangements made for he and his parents to attend the ceremony.