

Elan Panov's Speech – July 2011

I just want to start off by saying what a pleasure it is to be given the opportunity to meet you all and to thank you in person. I am truly honoured to be receiving the Arnold Edinborough award. I cannot quite express what it means to me to have even been considered a top applicant, let alone to have won this award. I really want to thank all of you for giving me this great honour.

Since childhood, my parents made me aware of the importance of saving for my future university education and therefore made a financial sacrifice to put aside monthly installments into an RESP plan for my brother and me at [Knowledge First Financial]. Now that I am a little older and perhaps more mature, I can fully appreciate how fortunate I was to have had my parents, with the help of this organization, support my post-secondary studies. Now that I am looking to support myself in the next stage of my education, I am once again very appreciative of the assistance [you are] giving me today.

To help you understand what this scholarship means to me, I would like to explain how the RESPs have aided me during my undergraduate years. I studied at the University of Western Ontario, where I did my Honors Specialization degree in Biology. Yet despite the demands of doing well in school, the RESPs enabled me to make my university education more than just about academics. Because I did not have to worry as much about my finances I was able to spend time on extracurricular activities, such as volunteering in the community and on campus. In the community I worked with an organization called Seniors-in-IT, teaching seniors how to use the computer and internet. On campus, I founded and ran a charity club called Canadian Feed the Children Club. As president of the club, I spent much of my four years working with other students and the local London community to organize fundraising and awareness events for Canadian Feed the Children, an organization that acts to alleviate the impact of poverty on children around the world.

Knowing that I had financial support from [Knowledge First Financial] also allowed me to take time off work during the summers to do some volunteer work abroad. This included going to Israel for the Save a Child's Heart Program, an organization that brings children from third world countries to Israel for life saving heart surgery. I was also able to travel to a rural community and native reserves in northern Ontario, where I assisted with some of the medical and social issues occurring there.

I am telling of these experiences because over the past four years they have helped me grow as a person and develop into the individual I am today. My experiences have taught me about leadership, team work, empathy, and hard work, both in school and outside of it. These qualities are not only important in life, but will also be essential to me as I enter a career in medicine. Indeed, without the support of the RESPs, I may not have had these incredible opportunities. So to me, the RESPs not only meant financial support during my undergraduate education, but the RESPs also meant that I was able to grow as an individual, while at the same time giving back to my community and preparing for my future career.

At the end of August I will be entering my first year of medical school at the University of Toronto, and the Arnold Edinborough scholarship I am receiving today means just as much to me now as the RESPs from [Knowledge First Financial] have meant to me over the past 4 years. Yes, I am honored alone by the fact that I have been selected for this prestigious award, but to my great fortune, this scholarship comes with a \$25,000 cheque. By using this money to pay for my tuition and cover some of the costs of living expenses, it is very comforting to know that I will have some financial stability entering my first year of studies. With much of my financial worries set aside, I can once again focus on my academics, while embarking on new ventures to give back to the community, and continue to grow as I have these past four years.

So once again, to [Knowledge First Financial and the Knowledge First Foundation], and especially to all of you on the Post-Graduate award committee, thank you so very much for giving me this incredible award and opportunity.