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WEST EDITION



Dan Pearce/Metroland

Paul Nguyen, founder of hyper-local website Jane-Finch.com, has won a national volunteer award. Nguyen represented Ontario in the community leader category as part of the 2018 rendition of Canada's Volunteer Awards.

JANE-FINCH.COM FOUNDER WINS NATIONAL AWARD

AARON D'ANDREA
adandrea@toronto.com

Paul Nguyen credits Toronto's Jane and Finch neighbourhood for the opportunities he's had in life.

If it wasn't for the area, the 38-year-old might not have the "extra drive to get up and try and do something" like create the hyper-local website, Jane-Finch.com.

"Lots of people feel they're discriminated against and maybe

not just on skin colour but they come from a stigmatized area," he said. "You can go out and people ask where you're from and you're like, 'Jane and Finch,' that's like a big-time conversation killer. People are struggling to try and say

something nice about it."

Recently, Nguyen was one of several Canadians who won an award during the 2018 rendition of Canada's Volunteer Awards.

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WEBSITE A TOOL TO BATTLE STIGMA SURROUNDING AREA

Continued from page 3

He represented Ontario in the community leader category and won for his website, which he created to fight the negative reputation of his neighbourhood historically plagued by crime, low employment and poverty.

In 2004, Jane-Finch.com was started as a way to promote local artists.

With its roots in hip-hop and rap, eventually the website grew and Nguyen was told he had a platform and should use it to promote social issues in the area.

Today, Jane-Finch.com is filled with content like videos, interviews, articles and more.

"In the decades past, the

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media has always been telling the story for us, which is usually there's a shooting here, a shooting there or there's some sort of tragedy," he said. "We took it to the next level to try and counter the mainstream dialogue and show there's a lot of stuff happening in Jane and Finch. We have a lot of cool things and cool people there and we try and showcase the positive side."

Like Nguyen, Jamal Campbell grew up in Jane and Finch.

Now an offensive lineman with the Toronto Ar-

gonauts, Campbell said he's happy to see Nguyen, who he's known since he was a kid, to be recognized for his community work.

"When you live in Jane and Finch, there are certain stigmas that are associated with the people who live there," he said. "Jane-Finch.com gives a platform to express ourselves as community members, to show the positive about the community, the different cultures and how music influences so many young people."

When it comes to breaking down the stigma,



Government of Canada photo
Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development presents Paul Nguyen with the Community Leader - Ontario award at Canada's Volunteer Awards.

Nguyen said it starts by "showing life, real life."

"We're not just a propaganda showing all things positive, we do cover some serious stuff whether it's a victim of crime and we interview the families," he said. "We don't shy away

from real stuff and I think it's important to have the full spectrum of life in the

THE ISSUE:
FIGHTING NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES
LOCAL IMPACT:
AWARD-WINNING WEBSITE PROMOTES THE POSITIVITY OF JANE AND FINCH NEIGHBOURHOOD

community."

Nguyen added he hopes his win inspires youth in Jane and Finch.

"Jane and Finch can produce (talented) young people," he said. "There are a lot of hard-working people who care about their community and I hope it serves as an example so other people can follow in those footsteps and say, 'Hey, I'm from Jane and Finch and I can do the same thing this guy does.'"

STORY BEHIND THE STORY

We received an email about Paul Nguyen winning a national volunteer award for his website Jane-Finch.com. We wanted to hear more about the work that he does, and the impact that it has on the community.

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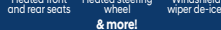
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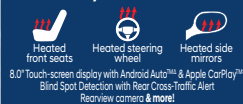
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