

## Miss Teen Canada wins YMCA Oakville Peace Medal

November 18, 2009

Miss Teen Canada, Molly Burke, has added another jewel to her crown — the YMCA of Oakville's Peace Medal for 2009.

The 15-year-old Oakville resident will receive the award at the YMCA's annual Peace Week Breakfast on Thursday, Nov. 26 at the Peter Gilgan Family YMCA.

The Grade 10 student at W. Ross Macdonald School for the Blind in Brantford has a unique resume that made her nomination stand out for the YMCA's selection committee, said committee chair Jeanette Heywood, vice president, membership services and strategic planning.

"Throughout her lifetime, Molly has sought to turn adversity into hope and for this reason we selected her for the peace medal," said Heywood. "Peace is more than the absence of war; it is about human relationships based on respect and caring despite differences. We believe Molly is a shining example of that."

Since the age of four, when she was diagnosed with the genetic, vision-robbing disorder retinitis pigmentosa, Burke has been a youth ambassador for the Foundation Fighting Blindness. She has spoken to countless audiences in an effort to educate people about blindness and turned her last birthday into a fundraiser for the foundation, which resulted in close to \$30,000 in donations.

Earlier this year, Burke was crowned Miss Teen Oakville, followed by a first-place finish at the Miss Teen Canada International pageant.

As part of those competitions, she collected thousands of teddy bears for children in Uganda.

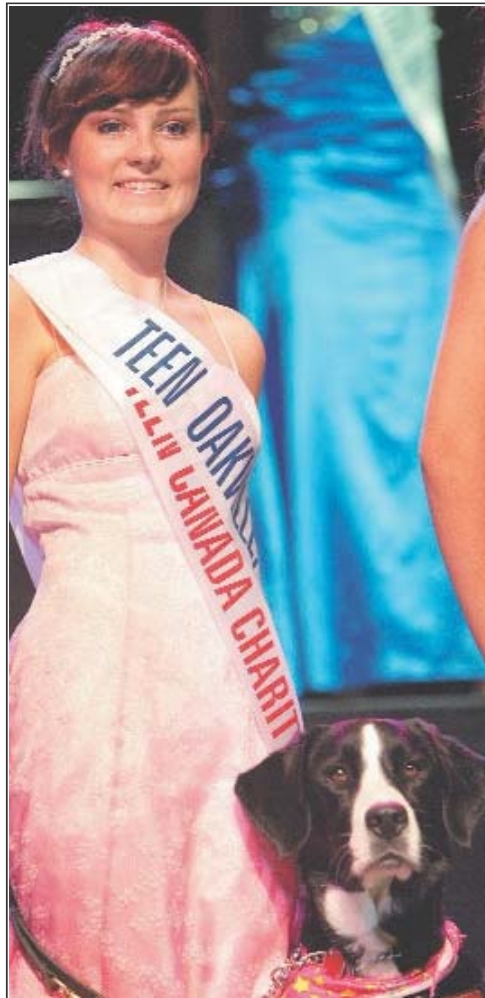
Last summer, Molly — accompanied by her guide dog, Gypsy — was a camp counsellor at YMCA of Oakville's day camp.

"Molly was our first vision-impaired counsellor and she made the experience invaluable for us," said Heywood.

"As employers we need to see opportunities rather than challenges when people with disabilities apply for jobs."

Each year, YMCAs and YMCA-YWCAs across Canada dedicate the third week in November to celebrate YMCA Peace Week.

A highlight of the week is the awarding of the YMCA Peace Medal to an individual or group who, without any special resources, demonstrates a commitment to peace through contributions made within their community or overseas.



**Miss Teen Canada wins YMCA Oakville Peace Medal.** Molly Burke and her guide dog, Gypsy.

Tickets for the YMCA of Oakville Peace Week Breakfast cost \$10 and can be purchased at the Peter Gilgan Family YMCA, 410 Rebecca St. or by calling Sabrina Casciani at 905-845-5597, ext. 331.

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