

## Top 20 Under 20™ Alumni Profile:

The Science Entrepreneur: Joshua Liu

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Innovator. Entrepreneur. Emerging Doctor.

These are just some of the words that are used described Joshua Liu, a 20 year old science student at York University. Though he may look like every other student on campus attending classes and completing midterms and assignments, beyond Joshua's ever-constant smile and friendly and approachable demeanor is a driven spirit to merge his ambitions in science and medicine with his passion for entrepreneurship and business.

If his past is any indication of his future, the future certainly looks bright for Joshua Liu.

Several years ago when Joshua was only 16 years old, he started a youth science network called SMARTS (Student Mentorship Association Regarding Technology & Science). Although Joshua was fortunate to receive opportunities to participate in various science, technology, engineering and mathematics competitions and programs when he was growing up, this was not the case for most students. When Joshua realized this, SMARTS was born.

"SMARTS provides peer mentorship for science projects, organizes an online database of opportunities in Canada for youth, and information about how to prepare and get involved in science fairs," Joshua explains. "Ultimately we hope to expose all students to science and technology opportunities, which is vital in maintaining Canada's status as a world leader in science, technology, engineering and mathematics."

A little over a year after Joshua founded SMARTS in 2004 and having already accumulated substantial early success, a new opportunity presented itself to Joshua that he certainly wasn't expecting.

"A teacher of mine in my high school saw an advertisement for the 'Top 20 Under 20' award and suggested that I applied," Joshua explains. "I thought it was really cool, but I really wasn't expecting it. You apply and you just hope it happens, but you don't really know."

Fortunately for Joshua, his teacher's instincts were correct, and in 2005 Joshua was selected as one of the winners of the Top 20 Under 20 by Youth-in-Motion.

"Winning the Top 20 Under 20 award was amazing, and gave SMARTS a lot of credibility and a lot of national media. We became a recognized program all across Canada."

But it wasn't just the useful boost the Top 20 Under 20 award gave to SMARTS that Joshua values the most.

"The people that you meet in the Top 20 Under 20 program, share a lot more common that you might not find in your day to day life," he explains. "Some of them became to mentors to me, and I think that one of the best things Youth-in-Motion has done, bringing people together who have these big accomplishments."

One of the fellow award-winners that Joshua has met and built a personal relationship with through Youth-in-Motion is 19 year old 2005 Top 20 Under 20 winner, Wojciech Gryc.

"We have similar experiences and I got to know him even better because of the program. I looked to him as my own additional mentor."

Joshua's formal mentorship would prove to be just as valuable. A mentorship program is offered to all winners of the Top 20 Under 20 award and each award recipient is paired up with a well established professional in a field of the winner's interest.

"The mentor I got, Dr. James Rutka, who's a pediatric neurosurgeon at Sick Kids Hospital was really cool," Joshua remembers. "I spent the year shadowing him in his clinic, and he let me observe as he interacted with patients and analyzed several brain tumour cases."

In 2002, Dr. Rutka was listed by Globe and Mail as one of the Nation Builders in Canada, and has subsequently continued his involvement with Youth-in-Motion's mentorship programme.

"It's really hard to work with people like Dr. Rutka and get that inside experience at my age. The fact that Youth in Motion got me in contact with him was amazing."

So what is next on the horizon for Joshua? He's just completed his medical school applications, and is focused on finishing off his third year at York University. However, although Joshua is interest in medicine and neurology, his career prospects could possibly span a wide field of teaching, speaking, and starting some businesses.

"Youth-in-Motion helped me realize that there is no one single career path that you have to take – there are so many opportunities that you don't have to pick just one if you don't have to," said Joshua.

Whether it be science, technology, business, the future for Joshua Liu is indeed, looking bright.

