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## TOGETHER: CHANGEMAKERS

# A group of Toronto kids raised \$40,000 for charity during COVID. Here's how

File this under “reasons to believe in the next generation.”

By **Star Staff**

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In Toronto's Explorer Hop entrepreneurship program, kids create a business in a single week, and all the proceeds go to charity. During the pandemic alone, the groups have raised more than \$40,000 through magic shows, virtual concerts and live cooking demonstrations. “These kids have risen and delivered in such an outstanding way,” says Hasina Lookman, Explorer Hop's founder and CEO. “More than anything, they believe in making change in the world.”

We asked six of the kids to share their thoughts on giving back as well as their hopes for 2021 in six words, a form of memoir popularized by Ernest Hemingway.



Avery Hanlon, 11. "The best parts were raising money for a cause my friends and I believe in and having a lot of fun doing it." COURTESY EXPLORER HOP

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**Avery Hanlon, 11**

**Business created:** Lockdown Leftovers Cookbook. Inspired by empty grocery store shelves during the early days of lockdown, Avery and her team of eight- to 12-year-olds created recipes and drawings and published their own cookbook on Amazon. The \$350 raised so far will go to the Toronto Zoo.

**Avery on giving back:** "The best parts were raising money for a cause my friends and I believe in and having a lot of fun doing it."

**Avery's hope for 2021 in six words:** "Remember our strength. Grateful when together."



Lincoln Dugas Nishisato, 10, shares his six-word hope for 2021: "Safety, reconciliation, empathy, humanity, coexistence, prosperity." COURTESY EXPLORER HOP

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**Lincoln Dugas-Nishisato, 10**

**Business created:** Virtual Holidays with Teens. Lincoln and fellow entrepreneurs formed a virtual-travel company that took viewers around the world, from travels through India to a safari in Kenya. The \$500 they raised allowed 25 babies in war zones to be born safely through Doctors Without Borders.

**Lincoln on giving back:** "The best thing about giving back is knowing that even though some people are suffering, you can help them and change their lives for the better."

**Lincoln's hope for 2021 in six words:** "Safety, reconciliation, empathy, humanity, coexistence, prosperity."



Mirabella Kolodkin, 13. "The best thing is realizing I can make an impact on the world." COURTESY EXPLORER HOP

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**Mirabella Kolodkin, 13**

**Business created:** Couch Potato Fitness. Mirabella's group created a live fitness workout that raised more than \$700. This allowed Doctors Without Borders to safely deliver 7,000 vaccines to war zones.

**Mirabella on giving back:** "The best thing is realizing I can make an impact on the world."

**Mirabella's hope for 2021 in six words:** "World becoming better for all people."



Noah Backman, 12. "I love the feeling you get knowing that you have made a positive difference in someone's life." COURTESY EXPLORER HOP

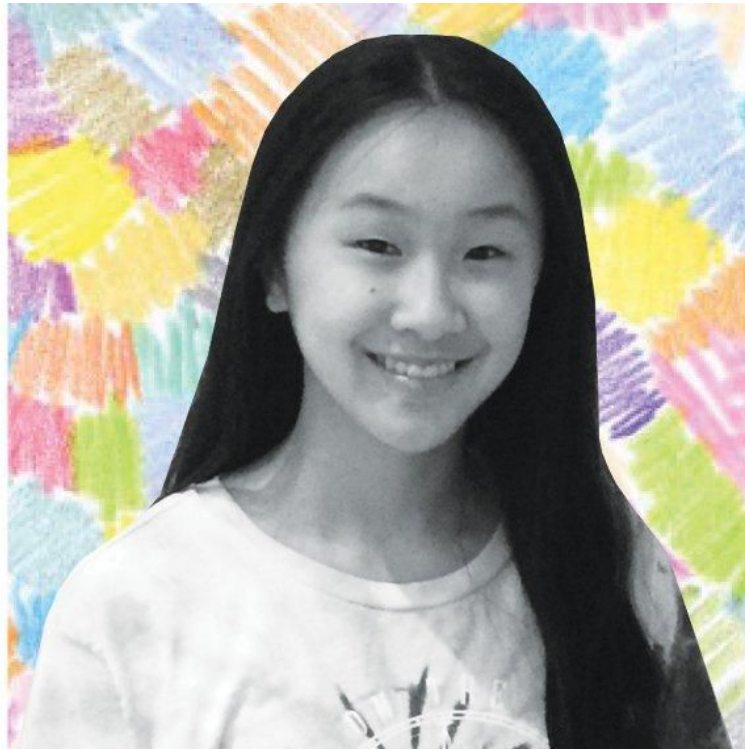
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**Noah Backman, 12**

**Business created:** Together Apart Concert. During the first lockdown, Noah and his Toronto team worked with a group of teen entrepreneurs from Dubai, France and Bulgaria to create an international music concert to lift people's spirits. The concert raised \$620, which allowed for 1,200 kids in Rwanda to have music lessons with Musicians Without Borders.

**Noah on giving back:** "I love the feeling you get knowing that you have made a positive difference in someone's life"

**Noah's hope for 2021 in six words:** "COVID will come to an end."



Leianna Leong, 13. "The joy of giving and the opportunity to contribute to a worthy cause that benefits those who are less fortunate has given me a sense of pride and accomplishment. It has also helped me appreciate what I do have." COURTESY EXPLORER HOP

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**Leianna Leong, 13**

**Business created:** Kid Chef Canada. Leianna and her team created a live cooking show that showcased food the kids made themselves. In two hours, they raised more than \$1,100 for Doctors Without Borders, which provided meals for 1,400 kids in Yemen.

**Leianna on giving back:** "The joy of giving and the opportunity to contribute to a worthy cause that benefits those who are less fortunate has given me a sense of pride and accomplishment. It has also helped me appreciate what I do have."

**Leianna's hope for 2021 in six words:** "We need CPR: Compassion, patience, resilience."



Teddy Finkelstein, 9. "It feels good to help people and make a better community." COURTESY EXPLORER HOP

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#### **Teddy Finkelstein, 9**

**Business created:** Force For Good. Teddy was part of a group of Select Class A hockey players who created their own Instagram page for sharing "secret hockey moves" in exchange for donations to the Daily Bread Food Bank. In one week, they raised almost \$6,200, which fed more than 6,000 people in Toronto.

**Teddy on giving back:** "It feels good to help people and make a better community."

**Teddy's hope for 2021 in six words:** "Unplug, together again, coming through stronger."

**Correction — Jan. 3, 2021:** This article was edited to correct the spelling of Leianna Leong's surname.

What's your hope for 2021 in six words? We'd love to hear it. Get in touch: [together@thestar.com](mailto:together@thestar.com).

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