

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Rural Ontario Institute announces Youth Engagement Showcase finalists**

**Guelph, Ontario, January 11, 2016.** Rural communities nominated nearly 50 local engaged youth for recognition in the first Youth Engagement Showcase, an initiative of the Rural Ontario Institute.

Eric Duncan of Winchester, Emily Morrison of Beaverton, Megan Raftis of Harriston and Branden Trochymchuck of Thunder Bay have been selected as the four showcase finalists.

“Communities need engaged youth to succeed and we are proud to recognize these individuals and share their stories,” says Norman Ragetlie, Director of Policy and Stakeholder Engagement, Rural Ontario Institute. “From establishing community programs to getting involved in municipal politics, the finalists are already leaders in their communities and represent the future of rural Ontario.”

The four finalists will be profiled through individual video documentaries filmed in their respective hometowns. These documentaries will highlight individual involvements and accomplishments as well as programs and organizations that are successfully engaging youth in their local communities. Filming will begin in late January 2016.

A panel of judges comprised of Youth Engagement Showcase advisory committee members evaluated each nomination and selected the finalists, noting that all nominees should be proud of their accomplishments and represent their communities well.

Special mentions have been awarded to Alycia Bannon of Melancthon, Noor Cheema of Simcoe, Cassandra Chornoboy of Rockwood, Tate Driscoll of Moorefield, Alex Halonen of Schreiber, Ashton Lawrence of Ayton and Alison Vasey of Mount Forest.

Finalists and nominees will be featured on the Rural Ontario Institute blog in the coming months at [www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca](http://www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca).

The Youth Engagement Showcase will profile compelling stories of young leaders tackling important local issues, highlight the impact youth can have in their communities and demonstrate how different types of rural communities can successfully involve youth in addressing local challenges.

The Rural Ontario Institute is a non-profit organization committed to developing leaders, initiating dialogue, supporting collaboration and promoting action on issues and opportunities facing rural Ontario.

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