



Left to right is Sara AL Mukdad, Maria Scarfo (Managing Partner, Blaney McMurtry LLP) and Ian Epstein (Partner, Blaney McMurtry LLP)

Raising scholarship funds to promote diversity and empower young community leaders

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The donors: Bill McMurtry, Kevin Lee, Ian Epstein and colleagues at Blaney McMurtry LLP

The gift: Raising \$1-million and climbing

The cause: To fund scholarships to promote diversity

Bill McMurtry spent more than 30 years fighting for social justice as a lawyer and philanthropist.

One of the Toronto lawyer's many initiatives was co-founding the Investing in Our Diversity Scholarships with Kevin Lee from the Scadding Court Community Centre. The scholarships are now run by Toronto Community Housing and they provide financial assistance to university and college students who promote race relations, community safety and youth empowerment.

Since the program began in 2001, around \$1-million has been raised to fund more than 540 scholarships. Mr. McMurtry died of cancer in 2007, but his law firm, Blaney McMurtry, became deeply involved in the program and continues to award two scholarships: the Blaney McMurtry Diversity Scholarship and the William R. McMurtry Memorial Anti-Racism Diversity Scholarship.

"The idea has been to try and promote these people as community leaders and use the scholarships as an opportunity to get others involved," said Ian Epstein, a partner at the firm who leads the scholarship program. "This was particularly something that touched me coming from South Africa."

Mr. Epstein said some past recipients have become city councillors and one of the 2018 winners of the firm's award, Sara AL Mukdad, is a Syrian refugee who is studying business at Lakehead University in Orillia and is working at Blaney McMurtry this summer. "It's really cool to see some of these people and to see how they've grown," he said.

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/article-raising-scholarship-funds-to-promote-diversity-and-empower-young/>

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