



## PHOEBE FLAHERTY

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*“I want to make a positive difference in the lives of others”*

**By David Grossman**

You won’t find Phoebe Flaherty backing away from a challenge or even missing out on an opportunity to have a positive impact on the lives of others.

She’s that kind of person.

Only 17 years old, Flaherty has left a path of success in her early years of education – and there’s more to come after winning a lucrative Morehead-Cain scholarship to study at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. – a 12-hour drive south from her home.

That’s four years of education, room and board, and more, covered in a total package estimated at around the \$150,000 mark in American currency. It’s also not an award that officials hand out without merit.

“I still can’t believe it,” said Flaherty. “This means the world to me. I met so many amazing young people at the final selection weekend for the scholarship in North Carolina, and I am honoured to have been considered deserving of this amazing scholarship. It marks the beginning of an amazing adventure, and I am very excited for the opportunity to grow and learn.”

Looking back, first at Diefenbaker Public School, Flaherty was a gifted student. At Westwood Middle School, she was Valedictorian, and now approaching her final months as a high school student at Monarch Park Collegiate, Flaherty will leave with academic honors and some fond memories.

When you first meet Flaherty, an individual bubbling with a positive and contagious personality, it’s easy to see that she is looking beyond a personal thirst for excellence.

“I want to make a positive difference in the lives of others,” said Flaherty, heavily involved in a variety of community service events and a benefactor of six years at an all-girls summer camp north of Kingston. “I can remember learning so much about leadership and skills that continues to help me these days.”

Character, vigor and a person of authority are just a few words that fit the description of Flaherty, a young woman with a bright future. In 2017, she was the recipient of an athletic council award for leadership at Monarch Park.





A multi-sport athlete and strong candidate for the prestigious Female Athlete of the Year in her swan song year at Monarch Park, Flaherty did more than toss the javelin, run cross country and play field hockey. In the pool, Flaherty was a four-time MVP in swimming and former Toronto District School Board champ and, get this, never competed as a club swimmer.

“She’s very athletic, bright, humble and has this natural curiosity to excel at everything,” said Jenna Grzela, head of Guidance at Monarch Park and staff supervisor for the swim team. “In addition to being one of the better swimmers that I’ve ever coached, she’s always thinking of others and is someone we’ll hear about again doing special things for people.”

When an industrial accident caused havoc to the Monarch Park gym and pool for several months this year, and the swim team was on the verge of folding, Flaherty, a very modest person in many ways, took over. Excelling on a regular basis in leadership skills, Flaherty was pivotal in keeping the team intact and having them shuffle off to another high school for practices in the winter months.

On a personal note, Flaherty finished among the top 10 in Ontario, make that No. 7, in the final of the 100-metre breaststroke at the provincial high school championship in Windsor.

Flaherty is also the winner of the Duke of Edinburgh Award, a special citation given to students who undertake a variety of voluntary events - “set their own goals and challenges, work towards achieving them, and then be recognized at the end for sustaining the commitment they have made”.

As for the future, Flaherty is looking at the possibility of becoming a Professor in English Literature, but also hasn’t ruled out surrounding herself with people of experience and taking on a federal Government diplomacy role in a foreign country.

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