

May 9, 2018

To the donors of the "Berti Farag Science Award for Best Research Project in Biology",

I am both very happy and deeply encouraged to have been honoured with this award, and I thank you very much for your generosity! I am particularly gratified at the recognition of the work that went in to my research project, and I must say that the feelings of confidence and encouragement which this instills in me surpasses even the generous financial support which you have afforded me.

I am 31 years old, and my wife and I have four children of ages 0 to 7 years. When I made the decision to begin undergraduate studies four years ago, I had to start from the very beginning. I had never attended high school due to a strict religious upbringing, let alone university, and so I faced quite the challenge to say the least. With the support and encouragement of my wife, I have now completed the final year of my B.Sc. Honours in Cell and Molecular Biology, and I have thankfully excelled in my studies. Amazingly, I have just been accepted to medical school at McGill University, where I will begin studying in August! I had to sacrifice a lot to get here, and my income has been diminished as a result, but I persevered in the hopes that acquiring an education would eventually lead to better future returns. Every so often, it happened that I stopped to ask myself if it was all worth it, which I suppose is quite a natural thing to do. Your recognition and support of my accomplishments goes a long way in encouraging me to continue in my studies and to aim for success, in addition to the helpful financial support which you have provided me.

I have lived and worked for about eight years now in the Cote-des-Neiges community, after moving here from the United States. For three years I managed a summer camp in the neighbourhood which saw over 100 children attending, and I also play guitar and sing professionally at all sorts of events, from weddings to funerals and everything in between. I have developed a close relationship with many of the people here, and I love to help, encourage, and relate to everyone whom I meet. Besides for my full-time studies at Concordia, I have been volunteering at a cancer research lab at the Lady Davis Institute here in Montreal, where I have been involved in several research projects over the past three years. The amount which I have been able to learn in this short time amazes me, and I know this is due to the incredible support I have had from family, teachers, and friends. It really does take a community to teach a student.

It is in great part thanks to the generosity of people such as yourselves that we students can succeed and build a better future, both for ourselves and for the greater community. In encouraging us to continue with our undertakings, you are helping us to move forward and accomplish that which would never have been possible on our own. Thank you again for your meaningful and touching support of my endeavors. I am confident that due to your support I too will one day be able to give back to the community, in multiple ways.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yitzchok Leib Ahisar', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Yitzchok Leib Ahisar