

# East Van student earns Rhodes Scholarship

**VANCOUVER** | Recipient is in fourth year at UBC, studying microbiology and immunology

BY CHAD SKELTON  
VANCOUVER SUN

A 21-year-old University of B.C. student from east Vancouver has won a prestigious Rhodes Scholarship to study at Oxford University in England.

Emma Preston, a fourth-year student of microbiology and immunology, was chosen for her outstanding grades but also for her community-service work, including pressuring her own university to improve access to drugs for the world's poor.

"Emma's remarkable in terms of her combination of enthusiasm and intellect and really extraordinary community participation," said Andrew Wilkinson, who helps administer the scholarship in B.C. "She's a real builder and a real go-getter and we're delighted to have her as a Rhodes Scholar."

Each year, a single student in B.C. is selected as a Rhodes Scholar, one of 11 such prizes across the country and several dozen around the world.

Many prominent people, such as former U.S. president Bill Clinton, are Rhodes Scholars.

Preston said she is planning to use the prize – worth nearly \$150,000 – to pursue a master's degree in global health science at Oxford.

Her main interest is how diseases such as HIV affect poor people, something she said she first became interested in early in life when she saw the problems in the Downtown Eastside.

"Growing up in east Vancouver, you drive through the Downtown Eastside and it just strikes you how there's this 12-block radius and there's so much disease and poverty," she said. "Even as a young child it struck me as incredible that this could exist."

For the past two summers, Preston has been working at the B.C. Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS doing lab work and at the B.C. Centre for Disease Control researching how diseases spread among drug users.

She volunteers at Vancouver General Hospital and the Dr. Peter Centre and plays intramural basketball.

Preston was also a founding member of the UBC chapter of Universities



STEVE BOSCH/VANCOUVER SUN

**Emma Preston's community service includes volunteering at Vancouver General Hospital.**

Allied for Essential Medicines, a group that lobbied UBC to ensure any drugs and technologies developed on campus are made available to the world's poor at low cost.

Just this week, UBC became the first university in Canada to adopt a "global access licensing" strategy that commits the university to many of the group's principles.

Preston said she hopes someday to work for the World Health Organization or an international charity like Doctors Without Borders.

She acknowledged that her many extracurricular activities don't leave her much spare time, though she confessed she enjoys watching the British soap opera *Coronation Street*.

"A lot of these things I do, I enjoy doing them, so that's relaxing in itself," she said.

Preston graduated from Vancouver Technical secondary school in east Vancouver.

Her father is a media archivist with the CBC and her mother is a special-education assistant.

The Rhodes Scholarships were established in 1903 following the death of British diamond magnate Cecil B. Rhodes.

His will stipulated that the awards should go to "not merely bookworms," but well-rounded students who were involved in community service and "manly outdoor sports such as cricket."

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