





Welcome Message

Central Alberta is home to exceptional young leaders driving innovation, creating lasting change, and shaping the future of our communities. In 2024, we proudly launch Central Alberta's 40 Under 40, recognizing these remarkable individuals. As an affinity group of United Way Central Alberta, GenNext is committed to empowering young professionals by igniting their passion for leadership, philanthropy, and change.

This initiative spotlights the region's top young leaders, who are making a lasting impact. It's our way of honoring their contributions in a small but meaningful way. As we celebrate these honourees, we're reminded of the broader work of United Way Central Alberta—building relationships and mobilizing resources to meet our community's needs and create thriving communities. 40 Under 40 reflects this impact, recognizing talent and empowering the continued positive change they inspire.

Congratulations to all of our 2024 honourees—you are making a difference, and we look forward to seeing your continued success!

Alexandria King
GenNext Co-Chair

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S **40** UNDER **2024**
TOP 40
HONOUREE

Allison Knelsen



Allison Knelsen exemplifies the qualities of a 40 Under 40 Honouree through her exceptional leadership, profound community impact, and dedication to personal growth. As a Doctor of Chiropractic and owner of Hope Wellness Clinic, she has built a thriving practice where she not only provides innovative care, such as specialized concussion treatments, but also fosters a culture of wellness and education among her team. By empowering healthcare practitioners like Registered Massage Therapists and Manual Osteopaths to succeed, Allison demonstrates leadership that uplifts others.

In her role as the board of trustees president and chair of Lighthouse Christian Academy, Allison has an even broader reach. She shapes the future of 125 students, their families, and staff, as well as homeschool families, providing strategic leadership and guidance. Her ability to impact both healthcare and education speaks to her multifaceted leadership and commitment to building stronger communities.

What sets Allison apart as a 40 Under 40 Honouree is not only her ability to excel across multiple domains but also her deep-rooted values of integrity, faith, and service. She seamlessly integrates her roles in business, education, and family life, modeling balance and intentionality. Her commitment to personal growth is evident in her continuous professional development—whether through advanced training in chiropractic care or leadership courses for her role at the academy.

As a mentor and role model, particularly for young women, Allison's journey is an inspiring example of what it means to lead with compassion and purpose. She has shown that it is possible to balance a thriving career with family life while positively impacting the broader community.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S
40 UNDER
2024
TOP 40
HONOUREE

Andrea Ruyselaar



Andrea Ruyselaar exemplifies leadership through her unwavering commitment to empowering others and enhancing community engagement. As a core team member at MEGLOBAL Prentiss Site, she has tirelessly promoted United Way Central Alberta's services, organizing events and mobilizing employees and contractors to support the campaign. Her efforts have solidified MEGLOBAL's role as a community leader and strengthened its contributions to local charitable initiatives.

Andrea played an active role in advocating on behalf of United Way Central Alberta's fundraising campaign during her time at NOVA Chemicals Joffre Site, where she not only planned events but also canvassed for donations. Since transitioning to MEGLOBAL in 2021, she has further elevated the company's support for United Way Central Alberta, amplifying its impact in the Central Alberta region.

Believing in the power of empowerment, Andrea approaches leadership as a means to uplift those around her, whether through fundraising campaigns or supporting her children's minor hockey team. Her active participation in school events and local business initiatives reflects her deep sense of responsibility to serve her community.

As a mother, Andrea uses her community involvement as a platform to mentor her children, instilling values of kindness and service that create lasting positive change for individuals and families.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S **40** UNDER **2024**
TOP 40
HONOUREEE

Ben J. Windsor



Ben J. Windsor is a dynamic marketing manager and communications consultant who has made significant strides in both his professional career and community service. As the youngest marketing manager of an enclosed shopping center in Canada, Ben led the marketing efforts for QuadReal Property Group at Bower Place and Country Hills Town Centre until late 2023. During his tenure at Bower Place, he spearheaded transformative digital initiatives, including the creation of a leasing page that featured a virtual tour and visualization tools for potential tenants, revolutionizing how new tenants are attracted to the mall.

Ben's expertise extends beyond the corporate world. By night, he manages communications for the Eparchy of Edmonton, where he has launched e-commerce stores, developed apps, and created comprehensive brand strategies. He played a pivotal role in the Humanitarian Aid for Ukraine campaign, which raised over \$2.8 million for humanitarian projects supporting those in Ukraine and refugees in Alberta.

His community involvement is equally impactful. As a member of the Knights of Columbus, Ben spearheaded the creation and distribution of the crowd-funded magazine Men of Worship, aimed at empowering men as leaders and role models. He also initiated the Candles for Charity campaign, which raised funds for the Red Deer Food Bank, and coordinated free photography sessions for families, including a Ukrainian Language School.

A graduate of MacEwan University with a Bachelor of Commerce degree, Ben served as president of the Marketing Association and Communications Director for St. Josaphat Cathedral. His leadership philosophy is rooted in motivating others to lead change, and he is continually learning and growing as a leader in both the professional and nonprofit sectors.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S **4** UNDER **2024**
40 **TOP 40**
HONOUREE

Brandon De Jong



Brandon De Jong embodies the qualities of an exceptional leader both in and beyond the classroom. As a Humanities and Social Sciences instructor specializing in Philosophy at Red Deer Polytechnic (RDP), Brandon is known for his passion, empathy, and commitment to his students' success. His teaching approach is centered on meeting students where they are, using flexible methods to create an inclusive learning environment where every individual has the opportunity to thrive.

Having experienced firsthand the transformative power of philosophy, Brandon is dedicated to instilling a love for learning in his students. He believes that philosophy encourages critical thinking and engagement with life's big questions—skills that shape thoughtful citizens. His work impacts not only the academic community but also contributes to the broader social fabric by empowering students to engage meaningfully with the world.

Brandon's leadership extends beyond traditional teaching roles. He is actively involved in campus life, organizing extracurricular events like student-led conferences, which foster inclusivity and engagement for all students, including marginalized groups. His commitment to creating thought-provoking, interactive experiences reflects his belief in the potential of every student.

Brandon is quick to recognize that his success is rooted in the strong community around him—family, friends, colleagues, and students. His humility and deep sense of gratitude underscore his values of integrity, collaboration, and service, which guide his work as both an educator and a philosopher.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S
40 UNDER
2024
TOP 40
HONOUREE

Bryce Kander



Bryce Kander is a dynamic leader in real estate and community engagement, committed to transforming lives through education and philanthropy. As the founder of the Central Alberta Real Estate Investor Network, he empowers individuals to demystify real estate investing and build wealth that can be redirected to support those in need.

Beyond his professional endeavors, Bryce and his wife are dedicated volunteers at Home Church on Gasoline Alley, where their initiatives have made a profound impact on the community. They have provided over 10,000 school lunches to children in need, organized back-to-school shopping events, and launched a bus ministry that offers transportation to those without access to church services.

In his role as a table leader at Success Builders, Bryce fosters a collaborative environment for local businesspeople by inviting top entrepreneurs to share their success principles. This initiative empowers individuals to grow, connect, and thrive together.

Bryce believes that a strong reputation is built on the perceptions others hold of you in your absence. He champions generosity by sharing his time, resources, and talents while maintaining a positive attitude. Through his leadership and commitment to service, Bryce Kander exemplifies the transformative power of community engagement and the importance of giving back.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S
4 UNDER
40
2024
TOP 40
HONOUREE

Cassandra Curtis



Cassandra Curtis is a passionate leader and advocate for vulnerable populations in Central Alberta. As the Client Intake and Liaison Caseworker at the John Howard Society of Red Deer, she serves marginalized groups, including those experiencing homelessness and individuals involved in the criminal justice system. With a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the University of Calgary and Red Deer College, Cassandra effectively marries her academic expertise with her deep commitment to community service.

In March 2020, Cassandra founded the Red Deer System Navigators (RDSN) Collaborative, a groundbreaking initiative aimed at fostering community collaboration to better support vulnerable individuals. Under her leadership, RDSN has grown to over 250 members, showcasing her ability to inspire collective action and drive meaningful change.

Since 2021, she has also contributed to the Central Alberta Poverty Reduction Alliance (CAPRA), where she advocates for local solutions to combat poverty and promote economic prosperity. Cassandra's belief in empowering others to address complex challenges underscores her leadership philosophy. Her relational approach fosters a culture of collaboration, emphasizing the importance of support and inclusion in creating lasting impact.

Through her unwavering dedication and innovative initiatives, Cassandra Curtis exemplifies the qualities of a strong leader committed to making a difference in the community, driving progress, and uplifting those in need.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S **40** UNDER **2024**
TOP 40
HONOUREE

Chelsea Bates



Chelsea Bates is a dedicated advocate for arts, culture, volunteerism, and communications, with over 17 years of experience in the field. Currently, she brings her expertise to Stingray Media, home of New Country 95.5 and Zed 98.9 Radio, where she works to elevate marketing strategies for clients and non-profit organizations across various platforms, from radio to digital media.

A true leader in her community, Chelsea exemplifies the values of hands-on leadership and collaboration. Inspired by her experiences with influential gym teachers who led by example, she believes in the importance of empowering others through active engagement and support. This philosophy is reflected in her work as an Executive Board Member of the Red Deer Summer CentreFest Society, where she has dedicated the last eight years to organizing the Centrefest Street Performer Festival. This beloved family-friendly event, held annually in downtown Red Deer, showcases an array of international and local performers, from magicians to acrobats, and operates on a donation basis, inviting the community to contribute as they are able.

In her role with the Board, Chelsea has been instrumental in various initiatives, including grant writing and reporting, marketing and social media management, organizing fundraising events, securing sponsorships, and recruiting new board members and volunteers. Her commitment to fostering a vibrant cultural landscape in Red Deer is evident through her tireless efforts to make the festival a success.

With her collaborative spirit and passion for community engagement, Chelsea Bates continues to make a meaningful impact in Red Deer, inspiring others to join her in promoting the arts and enhancing the community's cultural fabric.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S
40 UNDER
2024
TOP 40
HONOUREE

Chris Windrim



Chris Windrim is the Executive Director of BILD Central Alberta, where he plays a vital role in connecting, educating, and advocating for the residential construction industry. His deep commitment to community development is evident in his ability to build meaningful relationships and inspire collective action.

At BILD, Chris has actively engaged in addressing the housing crisis in Red Deer, initiating critical discussions that position the organization as a key player in finding innovative solutions. Under his guidance, BILD has become a cornerstone of support in Central Alberta, orchestrating significant events like the Home Show that foster collaboration within the industry.

A lifelong resident of Red Deer, Chris's early involvement in sports, scouting, and the Red Deer Royals shaped his community spirit. His education in Mechanical Engineering at NAIT and Business at the Donald School of Business further solidified his dedication to the region. In addition to his work at BILD, he serves as a Director on MEGlobal's Community Board and has held leadership roles with Tourism Red Deer and CentreFest.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Chris launched "Out and About," a video series that connected local businesses with the community, enhancing Chamber engagement during a challenging time. His contributions as a Community Builder were recognized with the Mayor's Recognition Award in 2019.

An advocate for volunteerism, Chris's involvement in scouting, BMX racing, and the Red Deer Royals underscores his commitment to a thriving community. He champions diversity, equity, and inclusion, ensuring that everyone has a fair opportunity to succeed. With a solution-oriented mindset, Chris continues to drive change and inspire others to contribute to the greater good of Central Alberta.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S
40 UNDER
2024
TOP 40
HONOUREE



Cory Kloss

Cory Kloss embodies exceptional leadership and community impact through his resilience and dedication to helping others. As an Investment and Wealth Advisor at RBC Dominion Securities, he approaches challenges with a mindset of inquiry and reflection, continuously seeking knowledge and learning from experiences. Since 2013, he has focused on guiding families in their wealth management journeys, leveraging his Business Administration degree from Mount Royal University and industry-specific training, including the Canadian Securities Course. Currently pursuing his Chartered Investment Manager (CIM) designation and holding a Life Insurance license through the Alberta Insurance Council, Cory provides comprehensive advice on risk management, tax deferral, and estate planning.

An active member of the Piper Creek Optimist Club since 2015, Cory has served on the board of directors and volunteered with organizations like the Aspire Special Needs Centre and the Lending Cupboard, organizing events and charitable initiatives. His work on the community involvement committee has facilitated support for numerous Central Alberta charities, including The Broom Tree and the Child Advocacy Centre.

Cory's leadership philosophy emphasizes diversity, equity, and inclusion, recognizing that varied perspectives enrich communities. He fosters an inclusive environment where individuals feel respected and empowered, nurturing collaboration and mutual support.

Innovation is a driving force in Cory's career, inspiring him to adapt and grow within the ever-evolving wealth management landscape while enhancing service delivery to meet clients' changing needs. Cory's dedication to excellence and passion for helping others distinguish him as a leader in his field. By guiding families in their financial journeys and uplifting those around him, Cory Kloss leaves a lasting impact on individuals and the broader community.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S
40 UNDER
2024
TOP 40
HONOUREE



Courtney Avram

Courtney Avram is an accomplished athlete and community advocate who also excels as a Proposal Specialist on Stantec Consulting's Water Strategic Pursuits Team. In her role, she drives business development for international water infrastructure projects within a global organization of over 31,000 employees, earning recognition as a rising star through her collaboration with global experts and management of high-stakes projects.

A proud alumna of Red Deer Polytechnic, Courtney holds a Bachelor of Arts and a Diploma in Business Administration. As Chair of the RDP Alumni Association since 2022, she has led a 20% increase in alumni engagement through initiatives like the Palate fundraiser and RDP Homecoming, strengthening ties between the institution and the broader community.

Courtney's leadership philosophy emphasizes collaboration and mentorship. She believes that effective leaders listen, support, and leverage the talents of those around them to inspire continuous improvement and collective success.

Her commitment to community service shines through her involvement with organizations like The Mustard Seed, Make-A-Wish, and the Red Deer Food Bank. Notably, her initiative with Cilantro & Chive's 'Burger of the Month' successfully raised funds for the Food Bank, showcasing her ability to integrate service into everyday life.

Courtney also participates in World Natural Bodybuilding Federation events, triathlons, and marathons, reflecting her competitive spirit and dedication to excellence. Through her professional achievements and community engagement, Courtney Avram is not only building lasting connections but also inspiring others to contribute to meaningful change.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S **40** UNDER **2024**
TOP 40
HONOUREE

Danby Felker



Danby Felker embodies a compassionate and empowering style of leadership, rooted in the belief that true leaders walk beside others, not in front of them. As a supporter and advocate for the most vulnerable individuals in the community, Danby empowers others to feel confident in their decisions and comfortable communicating their priorities.

For nearly a decade, Danby has provided unwavering support to those in need both in and outside of her profession. In her role at Street Connect, she works closely with individuals facing significant barriers, including those without stable housing or access to essential resources like food, warmth, and healthcare. Often finding them in hidden corners of society, Danby becomes a trusted ally, helping them build trust and access the services they deserve. She embraces the role of loving and supporting individuals until they learn to love themselves, standing by their side through life's most challenging moments. Whether sharing memories with friends and family after the passing of a loved one or offering kindness to those forgotten by society, Danby's empathy and respect for vulnerable individuals is a constant in her community service.

While humbled to be recognized as a 40 Under 40 honouree, the greatest recognition comes from the individuals she supports, who inspire her every day with their strength and resilience. She hopes her efforts encourage others to show kindness to vulnerable people in their communities, whether downtown, in the woods, or elsewhere, reminding everyone that empathy and respect are essential for all.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S **40** UNDER **2024**
TOP 40
HONOUREE

Denis O'Dwyer



Denis O'Dwyer is an accomplished leader serving as the Vice President and Team Lead for Alberta at BMO, where he has passionately dedicated over a decade to empowering the community and the agricultural sector. Since joining BMO in 2011, Denis has excelled in various roles, including four years as a Senior Relationship Manager and the last six years as Vice President. His formative years spent on his grandparents' grain farm ignited a deep-rooted passion for agriculture, which he now champions as his favorite sector within the bank.

As a lifelong resident of Central Alberta, Denis has made a lasting impact through his leadership, guiding a highly productive business banking team dedicated to supporting the local agricultural community. His strategic and thoughtful approach has garnered recognition both within BMO and across the industry, showcasing his positive influence on staff and the broader community.

Denis is actively involved in various initiatives, including Rotary, the Optimist Club, and United Way programs, guided by the core principles of giving, acting, and volunteering. He believes that effective community engagement requires continuous learning, which enhances the impact of these initiatives and empowers him to drive meaningful change.

He is a passionate advocate for diversity, inclusion, and community involvement, deeply influenced by the values he embraced through his work with United Way. Outside of his professional commitments, he actively engages in volunteer projects and mentors local farmers, exemplifying his unwavering dedication to empowering others and driving positive change within the community.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S
40 UNDER
2024
TOP 40
HONOUREE

Devyn Shannon



Devyn Shannon is a passionate advocate for mental health and inclusivity, striving to make a meaningful impact within the 2SLGBTQ+ community and beyond. As the elected President of the Students' Association at Red Deer Polytechnic, he has dedicated his leadership to fostering a supportive and welcoming environment for all students. During his two-year tenure as President of the GAME society, Devyn transformed it from a niche group into an active organization focused on student well-being, successfully launching the first EASS (Entertainment in Academia with Student Societies) conference, which emphasized maintaining a healthy balance between academic and personal life.

Under his leadership, Red Deer Polytechnic has embraced diversity, notably by commissioning a pride mural to symbolize its commitment to inclusivity. Devyn has also played a pivotal role in organizing a Truth and Reconciliation week to acknowledge and foster healing within the community. His advocacy extends beyond the campus as he works provincially to improve funding, accessibility, and support for students while developing peer-to-peer programs.

Currently a third-year psychology student, Devyn is committed to creating affordable alternative therapy tools for caregivers and group therapy settings. He believes that leadership involves collaboration and recognizes that his accomplishments are made possible by the teams he has worked with, including policy analysts, artists, and advocates. Devyn's unwavering dedication to enhancing the lives of others exemplifies his commitment to community engagement and leadership.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S
40 UNDER
2024
TOP 40
HONOUREE

Dwayne Kraushar



Dwayne Kraushar is the Shelter Manager at The Mustard Seed in Red Deer, where he has made significant strides in transforming support services for vulnerable populations. Born and raised in Winnipeg, MB, he earned his BA in Psychology from the University of Winnipeg in 2019. Shortly after graduating, he relocated to Lacombe, AB, to begin his career as an overnight shelter support worker at The Mustard Seed.

Dwayne has played a crucial role in evolving the shelter from an overnight service to a 24/7 operation, culminating in his promotion to Shelter Manager in July 2023. Under his guidance, the shelter has successfully helped 121 out of 330 unique individuals transition into permanent housing, illustrating his commitment to impactful change. In early 2024, he expanded his role to oversee both the housing diversion and shelter departments, further enhancing the organization's capacity to serve the community.

A notable achievement during the transition to a 24/7 operation was the facilitation of meetings to address concerns, foster buy-in, and engage staff in the planning process. This approach not only built trust but also enabled the shelter to support three times as many individuals.

In addition to his role at The Mustard Seed, Dwayne serves as a representative on the City of Red Deer's Housing and Homelessness Integrated Committee, actively contributing to strategic initiatives that address homelessness in the community.

Recognized for his commitment to social service excellence, Dwayne exemplifies the qualities of someone dedicated to making a positive difference in the lives of others. His contributions have not only transformed shelter operations but also strengthened community collaborations, making him a vital asset to the Red Deer community.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S
40 UNDER
2024
TOP 40
HONOUREE

Eryn Beddoes



Eryn Beddoes serves as the Project Manager for Facility and Infrastructure & Engineering at Red Deer Polytechnic (RDP), where she has made significant contributions to both the institution and the Central Alberta community. Her work embodies RDP's core values of Agility, Bravery, Connection, Discovery, and Empowerment, earning her recognition from colleagues and leadership for her unwavering dedication and excellence.

Eryn has been pivotal in advancing RDP's Green Campus Master Plan, aiming to transform the campus into a Net Zero Energy facility by 2034 and a Net Zero Carbon campus by 2041. She integrates sustainability into every facet of campus operations through energy-efficient building designs, renewable energy projects, and comprehensive waste management strategies. Under her guidance, RDP has garnered multiple sustainability accolades, including the 2023 Colleges and Institutes Canada Award for Excellence in Sustainable Development and an International Green Gown Award for emissions reduction. Eryn was also recognized as a Rising Star in the Higher Education Sector by Smart Energy Decisions' WISE (Women in Smart Energy) Awards.

Beyond her role at RDP, Eryn is committed to youth development as the Commanding Officer in the Canadian Cadet Program, where she empowers youth aged 12 to 19 by instilling citizenship and essential life skills such as leadership and public speaking. Her diverse roles in the program, including Band Officer and Training Officer, alongside her contributions to provincial events across British Columbia and Alberta, highlight her dedication to nurturing the next generation.

Eryn's passion for excellence, youth mentorship, and sustainability is making a transformative impact in Central Alberta, reinforcing her commitment to creating a brighter future for her community.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S **40** UNDER **2024**
TOP 40
HONOUREE



Ivy Parsons

Ivy Parsons is the Clinical Addiction Practice Lead with Recovery Alberta, bringing over 15 years of experience in Addiction and Mental Health. Specializing in pregnancy and substance use, Ivy has been instrumental in developing programs such as the Enhanced Services for Women and the EMBRACE program, which support women through their reproductive journey. She also initiated the Red Deer Maternal Mental Health Coalition, advocating for improved services and empowering women on their path to recovery.

Beyond her clinical work, Ivy's passion for community care is evident in her leadership. She has educated over 500 healthcare professionals on perinatal substance use, driving evidence-based practices across Central Alberta. Her efforts have expanded services in rural areas, ensuring new parents receive the critical support they need. Ivy collaborates closely with community organizations to address barriers and enhance family services.

In addition to her clinical and community impact, Ivy serves on Red Deer's Women Leading Philanthropy Steering Committee, further contributing to meaningful change in the region. Known for her innovative approach, Ivy embraces her role as a "disrupter," continuously challenging the status quo to introduce new ideas and solutions. She believes that strong parental mental health is key to building healthier communities, and her collaborative spirit has transformed care systems in Central Alberta, improving lives and strengthening families.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S
40 UNDER
2024
TOP 40
HONOUREE

Janelle Duffin



Janelle Duffinis is the Fund Development Manager at Habitat for Humanity Red Deer, where she has dedicated over eight years to advocating for safe and affordable housing as a foundation for families. Her work helps individuals secure homes and empowers them to create better lives for themselves and future generations. Janelle's commitment to her community is evident in her ability to connect with families, guiding them through the transition to homeownership with genuine support and compassion.

Through her roles in family services and fund development, Janelle has played a pivotal role in Habitat's mission, collaborating with various agencies to raise awareness and funds for housing initiatives. Her belief that every individual deserves a safe place to call home drives her to foster community partnerships and engage local stakeholders in meaningful ways. Recognizing the barriers some families face, Janelle took the initiative to learn a new language to help non-English-speaking clients feel welcome. This effort has expanded Habitat's reach and enriched her life with new friendships and cultural experiences.

Beyond her role at Habitat, Janelle is actively involved in her community through various volunteer efforts. She has contributed to organizations focused on youth justice, shelters, and animal fostering, demonstrating her commitment to social responsibility. As a member of 100+ Women Who Care, she collaborates with like-minded women to support local charities and amplify their impact.

Janelle believes that community impact does not require vast resources—small acts of kindness can create significant change. Her philosophy encourages others to speak up for what is right, offer support to neighbors, and embrace the power of collective action. Through her unwavering dedication to service, Janelle Duffin continues to inspire those around her to build a stronger, more connected community.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S **40** UNDER **40** **2024**
TOP 40
HONOUREE

Jeff Palmer



Jeff Palmer, Owner and Operator of Carbon Mechanical, is recognized for his commitment to both business excellence and community impact. As the leader of a successful mechanical solutions company, Jeff has become a trusted partner for food and beverage establishments across Central Alberta, providing essential support for their operational and equipment needs.

Beyond his professional achievements, Jeff is a passionate advocate for men's mental health in Central Alberta. He has used his platform to raise awareness and funds for this often-overlooked issue through various initiatives. Jeff has been featured as a guest chef at prominent local establishments like Cilantro and Chive and Lodge 43 in Sylvan Lake, where proceeds from his events were dedicated to mental health initiatives. One of his proudest contributions is the "Jeff Palmer" beverage created by Snake Lake Brewery, with proceeds also benefiting men's mental health causes.

Jeff's dedication extends beyond fundraising. In 2023, he hosted the inaugural Carbon Mechanical Open, a mini-golf tournament that raised over \$10,000 for men's mental health. His efforts have made a tangible difference, and he remains committed to expanding these initiatives in the years to come.

Jeff is also an active member of the Red Deer Polytechnic Alumni Association, further contributing to his community by advocating for educational and mental health initiatives. As a leader, Jeff believes in balancing compassion and strength, fostering an environment where people are supported and empowered to thrive. Being named a 40 Under 40 honouree reflects Jeff's role as a community builder, uplifting those around him through his business, advocacy, and personal contributions.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S **4** UNDER **2024**
40 **TOP 40**
HONOUREE



Jesse Smith

Jesse Smith, Chief Executive Officer of Tourism Red Deer, is dedicated to transforming Red Deer into a premier destination for major events. With a career marked by innovation and a strong commitment to community, Jesse's leadership is defined by his ability to embrace new ideas, experiment, and create a culture of resilience. He believes in learning from setbacks and staying true to his values, which has helped him guide his team to success.

Jesse has played a key role in advancing Red Deer's profile, having been instrumental in the success of major events such as the Canada Winter Games and Red Deer's hosting of the IIHF World Juniors. His current focus as CEO is to bring even more large-scale events to Central Alberta, continuing to raise the region's profile.

Deeply involved in his community, Jesse is a passionate advocate for volunteering and fostering strong connections. Whether supporting local sports and arts or participating in community events, he believes that building meaningful relationships is essential to creating vibrant neighborhoods. Jesse's achievements are backed by a strong support system of family, friends, and colleagues, who challenge him to think bigger and stay grounded in his people-first approach. His leadership has not only shaped his career but also made a lasting impact on Red Deer and the surrounding community.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S
40 UNDER
2024
TOP 40
HONOUREE



Joe Ireland

Joe Ireland, a Civil Engineer at Stantec, is a leader in his professional field and community, known for his exceptional contributions to Central Alberta and beyond. As a key design team member, Joe has played a significant role in the planning and execution of over \$50 million in water infrastructure projects across Central Alberta and over \$100 million in Western Canada, including the raw water sedimentation pond in Grande Prairie and underground infrastructure renewal in Fort McMurray. His technical expertise supports safe water supplies and infrastructure growth across major regions, showcasing his commitment to engineering excellence.

Beyond his professional achievements, Joe is deeply invested in giving back to his community. He serves on the Host Organizing Committees for high-profile events like the 2024 Grand Slam of Curling Canadian Open and the Hlinka Gretzky Cup, coordinating sponsorship benefits and managing logistics for top international teams. His leadership extends to the Red Deer Curling Centre, where he sits on the Board of Directors, contributing to the facility's long-term strategic planning.

Joe's community engagement also includes his role as an Executive for the Central Alberta Branch of the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists (APEGA), where he co-organizes key events like the annual golf tournament. Additionally, he supports Hockey Alberta's Spring Showcase and serves as a Game Day Lead Attendant for Red Deer Polytechnic Athletics, helping run major sporting events such as the Women's Volleyball CCAA National Championships and ACAC Men's Hockey Championships.

A passionate advocate for a stronger, more connected community, Joe volunteers for causes like the Red Deer Food Bank and the Make-A-Wish Heroes Challenge. His proactive leadership, adaptability, and solution-oriented approach make him a driving force in both the engineering world and the community organizations he supports.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S **4** UNDER **2024**
40 **TOP 40**
HONOUREE

Jonathan Luscombe



Jonathan Luscombe is a passionate advocate and community leader, dedicated to creating spaces where everyone can feel accepted and valued. As the founder of Lacombe Pride Society, Jonathan has spearheaded Lacombe's only 2SLGBTQIA+ non-profit, organizing two highly successful Pride weekends and various programs and events throughout the year. Their commitment to fostering inclusivity extends beyond Lacombe, as they also serve on the executive boards of HOMES Red Deer, a 2SLGBTQIA+ youth agency, and Echo Energy Lacombe, a non-profit supporting local initiatives such as food rescue and community sponsorship programs.

Jonathan's journey into advocacy began with a transformative six-month experience in South Africa, where they worked with homeless populations, igniting their passion for making meaningful changes. This drive inspired Jonathan to create safe, inclusive spaces for marginalized communities in Alberta. Their advocacy is grounded in using their privilege to amplify the voices of others, aiming to foster acceptance and community for all.

In addition to their advocacy, Jonathan is deeply involved in the art of drag, founding Lush PanHick Productions, a drag company that challenges misconceptions and stimulates conversations around the art form's role in society. Jonathan sees drag as a powerful platform for raising awareness about social issues and inspiring acceptance.

At the heart of Jonathan's work is a commitment to ensuring that every individual, especially those in marginalized communities, can live safely, confidently, and authentically. Their leadership is driven by the belief that through knowledge, understanding, and advocacy, true change is possible for everyone in Alberta.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S **40** UNDER **2024**
TOP 40
HONOUREE

Jordan Thompson



Jordan Thompson, Director of Operations and Planning for the City of Lacombe, is a dedicated leader committed to professional excellence and community service. He has overseen key infrastructure projects, including the groundbreaking of a new public works facility and the award-winning Heart of Lacombe project. Jordan's strategic leadership and ability to see the bigger picture have been instrumental in advancing initiatives that benefit the Lacombe region.

His community involvement reflects a passion for inspiring the next generation. As the volunteer coordinator for the Lacombe Flying Club's Pancake Breakfast, Jordan plays a key role in organizing the club's inaugural "Discover Aviation Day," aimed at introducing youth to aviation through their first small plane flight. This commitment to youth engagement showcases his belief in fostering growth and creating opportunities.

In addition to his role with the City of Lacombe, Jordan serves as the Chief Administrative Officer for the North Red Deer Regional Wastewater Commission, where he continues to make a lasting impact on regional infrastructure and operations. His ability to build relationships, empower his team, and lead with purpose positions him as a vital force in both his professional and volunteer efforts.

Jordan's dedication to his community and his solution-oriented leadership are shaping the future of Lacombe and inspiring those around him.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S
40 UNDER
2024
TOP 40
HONOUREE

Joshua Graber



Joshua Graber is the owner and operator of Edge-It Decorative Curbing, Inc., a thriving business based in Penhold that specializes in custom concrete curbing and landscaping projects across Central Alberta. With over 10 years of service to the community, Joshua has built strong relationships with thousands of homeowners and local businesses, fostering a collaborative spirit that enhances the region's economic landscape. His commitment to quality and innovation has revolutionized the curbing industry, positioning him as a sought-after trainer for curb installers internationally.

Joshua believes that true leadership involves taking ownership of the team's success and cultivating an environment where everyone can thrive. He emphasizes accountability, celebrating the achievements of others, and learning from mistakes to continually improve. His approach to personal growth is rooted in the philosophy of striving for 1% improvement each day, instilling consistency and routine that empower both his team and himself to reach new heights.

Beyond his business accomplishments, Joshua is deeply committed to giving back to the community. He actively contributes to local charities and causes, reflecting his belief in the importance of supporting those around him. As a dedicated father and stepfather, he balances the demands of entrepreneurship with his family life, exemplifying the values of integrity and hard work.

Joshua Graber stands out as a young entrepreneur who embodies the spirit of community engagement and personal excellence. His journey inspires others to pursue their passions while uplifting those around him.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S **40** UNDER **2024**
TOP 40
HONOUREEE

Josh Hall



Josh Hall is a dedicated journalist committed to impactful storytelling, with a career built on passion, integrity, and advocacy. His journey began in 2009 with YouTube fan videos about the Vancouver Canucks, leading him to pursue a Radio & TV Broadcasting diploma at Columbia Academy in Vancouver after a break from political science studies. Josh's career started in 100 Mile House, B.C., as a news anchor, later moving to Red Deer in 2015 to join Pattison Media, where he's spent over nine years reporting on important stories.

Josh's journalism has earned recognition, including an RTDNA award nomination for his story on Humboldt Broncos player Graysen Cameron and the 2023 Journalist of the Year 'Jimmy' award from Pattison Media. He champions accountability, kindness, and advocacy, particularly for Indigenous issues, founding the Pattison Media Indigenous Issues Committee and improving land acknowledgment practices.

A strong voice for marginalized communities, Josh addresses the needs of the 2SLGBTQ+ community and systemic injustices. His resilience, shaped by personal experiences, drives his commitment to bettering others' lives. Beyond journalism, he serves as honorary chair of the Red Deer Gutsy Walk for Crohn's and Colitis Canada and supports local organizations like the Ronald McDonald House of Red Deer, Waskasoo Environmental Education Society, and the Alzheimer Society of B.C. Through his unwavering dedication and impactful storytelling, Josh Hall has become a powerful force for positive change in his community, inspiring others to join him in the pursuit of justice and advocacy for those in need.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S
40 UNDER
2024
TOP 40
HONOUREE



Kaelyn Gillard

Kaelyn Gillard is an influential leader and advocate for community engagement, whose work at NOVA Chemicals and beyond has significantly shaped Central Alberta's philanthropic landscape. With a background in communications and marketing, she drives initiatives that connect businesses with the communities they serve. Kaelyn believes leadership emerges through action, vision, and the ability to inspire others.

As the Regional Public Affairs Specialist at NOVA Chemicals, Kaelyn leads community investment and volunteerism efforts, including overseeing the company's annual United Way campaign. Under her leadership, the campaign has raised substantial funds, making a tangible impact on local residents. Her collaborative approach has transformed the campaign into a platform that engages employees and delivers meaningful community support.

Kaelyn is also a steering committee member of Women Leading Philanthropy, an initiative supporting innovative women's healthcare projects through the Red Deer Regional Health Foundation. Her work empowers women to engage in philanthropy and decision-making, reflecting her commitment to health equity and collective action.

Her leadership extends to organizing roles at major events like the 2019 Canada Winter Games and the 2016 MasterCard Memorial Cup, where she demonstrated exceptional organizational and unifying skills. Kaelyn's dedication to impactful storytelling and community engagement makes her a key force for positive change in Central Alberta.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S **4** UNDER **40** **2024**
TOP 40
HONOUREE

Kristy Jackson



Kristy Jackson is a trailblazing entrepreneur and community leader, co-founding Salted, a luxury salted caramel company that has gained national recognition while creating local jobs in Killam, Alberta. As CFO, Kristy has led Salted's rapid growth, showcasing how a rural business can thrive on the national stage through innovation and strong community roots. Her ability to merge financial acumen with creative business strategies has made Salted a standout success story in Canada's confectionery industry.

Before launching Salted, Kristy's career journey reflected her passion for leadership and problem-solving. After earning a BComm (Honors) in Accounting from the University of Alberta in 2010 and obtaining her Chartered Accountant (now CPA) designation, she began her career at MNP, where her leadership potential quickly surfaced. Her path took a pivotal turn when she moved to Forestburg, Alberta, to help manage her family's third-generation grain farm. She also served as Station Accountant at ATCO Power's Battle River Generating Station, where she oversaw finance and purchasing teams. Recognized for her leadership, she was selected for ATCO's prestigious Leadership Program, where she further honed her skills in driving innovation and managing change.

Kristy's leadership philosophy centers on empowering others and fostering inclusive environments. She is deeply committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), working to create spaces where everyone feels valued, regardless of background or identity. As a mentor to young entrepreneurs and a champion of rural business development, Kristy actively contributes to building stronger, more equitable communities. Her leadership, both in business and her community, is driven by her belief that true success lies in uplifting others and creating opportunities for collective growth.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S
40 UNDER
2024
TOP 40
HONOUREE

Lindsey Wheeler



Lindsey Wheeler is a passionate salon owner and hairstylist at Crybaby Hair Haus, where she combines her passion for beauty with a commitment to community well-being. Lindsey believes that leadership is rooted in initiative, drive, and clear communication, enabling meaningful change and progress in her surroundings. Her dedication to understanding diverse perspectives shapes her approach to connecting with others, fostering an environment of compassion and acceptance.

In her daily life, Lindsey actively seeks to bridge the gaps in basic human experiences for those around her. She and her team have partnered with local social agencies over the years to provide free haircuts to individuals experiencing vulnerability, including those who are unhoused or without work. Whether it's offering a haircut, a smile, or food and clothing, she strives to make a positive impact on individuals' well-being. Lindsey is committed to facilitating donation drives and engaging with her peers to address community needs, while also investing time in educating herself about harm reduction and supporting local initiatives that promote understanding and compassion.

Lindsey exemplifies the spirit of collaboration and growth. She recognizes the value of learning from the varied life stories that surround her, using her strengths and weaknesses in harmony with those in her community to drive positive change, no matter how big or small. Her unwavering dedication to enriching the lives of others and enhancing community connections positions her as a vital force for good in Central Alberta.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S **4** UNDER **2024**
40 **TOP 40**
HONOUREE



Melissa Ray

Melissa Ray is a passionate Licensed Practical Nurse at Alberta Health Services, specializing in addictions and mental health care through the Red Deer Step Up Step Down Program. In her role, she provides critical support to youth navigating the complexities of mental health and addiction, exemplifying her deep commitment to compassionate care and advocacy. Currently advancing her expertise in the LPN-BScN bridging program at Red Deer Polytechnic, Melissa is dedicated to enhancing her clinical skills to deliver the highest quality of care to her patients.

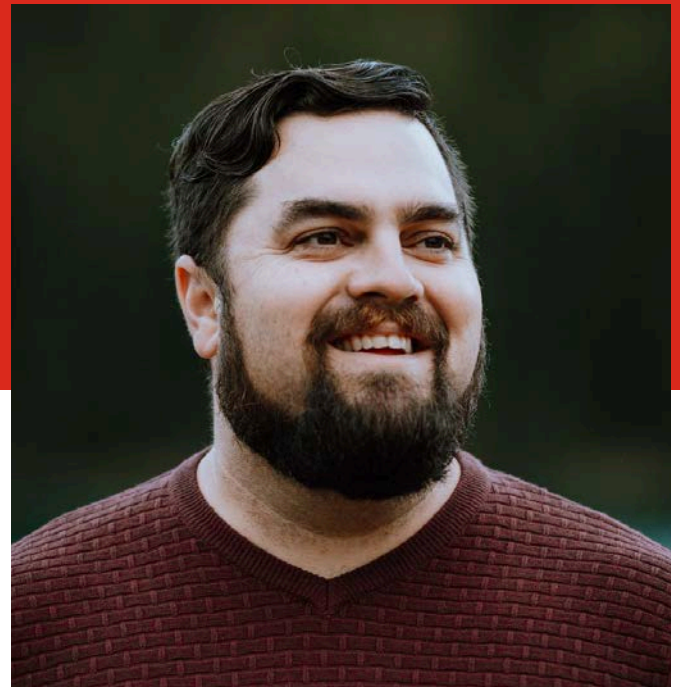
Beyond her nursing career, Melissa is a driving force in promoting community wellness as a Run Leader at the Red Deer Run Collective. She has created an inclusive and welcoming environment for runners of all ages and skill levels, fostering a sense of belonging while encouraging physical activity. Through her vision, the Run Collective has transformed into a vital community resource, offering free fitness opportunities and showcasing the stunning trails of Red Deer.

Melissa's philanthropic endeavors further demonstrate her commitment to creating positive change. In honor of a dear friend who passed away, she established a foundation dedicated to supporting single mothers in nursing programs, ensuring that her friend's legacy of empowerment and resilience continues to inspire future generations. Her leadership capabilities are also highlighted by her achievements as a member of the RDP Queen's Cross-Country and Track & Field team, where she has earned a scholarship for her exceptional performance.

Melissa Ray's dedication to mental health, community fitness, and the empowerment of others makes her a truly inspiring figure in Red Deer. Her contributions as a nurse, athlete, and advocate create a lasting positive impact, making her an invaluable part of both her professional field and the broader community.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S
40 UNDER
2024
TOP 40
HONOUREE

Michael Yargeau



Michael Yargeau currently serves as the Mayor of Penhold, where he is a driving force for community development and civic engagement. His leadership has garnered significant recognition, including the prestigious Alberta Municipalities Award of Excellence in 2022, which honors outstanding contributions to municipal politics. This accolade reflects his unwavering commitment to improving the quality of life for residents and fostering a vibrant community.

As a lifelong resident of Penhold, Michael's roots run deep in the town. He co-owns Alarm Tech Inspection Services with his father, combining his entrepreneurial spirit with a dedication to local economic growth. Before becoming mayor, he served as a Town Councillor, where he laid the groundwork for his current role in civic leadership.

Michael's tenure has been marked by initiatives aimed at enhancing public spaces, promoting community well-being, and encouraging civic participation. He believes in the power of collaboration to achieve common goals, working tirelessly to engage residents and support local projects that bring people together. Through his efforts, Mike Yargeau has become a testament to the positive impact that dedicated leaders can have on their communities.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S **40** UNDER **2024**
TOP 40
HONOUREEE

Michelle Doucette



Michelle Doucette is a passionate social media consultant and community leader who believes that true leadership is about listening, learning, and growing alongside others. Her leadership style emphasizes collaboration, openness, and the drive to continually improve while inspiring those around her.

As a self-employed social media consultant, Michelle uses her expertise to help businesses and individuals build authentic online presences. Her approach goes beyond mere promotion—it's about fostering meaningful connections and empowering her clients to share their stories in ways that resonate with their audiences.

Michelle is also deeply committed to giving back. She has donated her time and resources to Journey Youth Creative, an organization focused on teaching internet safety and responsibility to young people. In addition to her work with youth, Michelle serves as a business ambassador for the Red Deer Chamber of Commerce and sits on the board of Habitat for Humanity, where she plays a key role in supporting housing initiatives that improve the lives of families in need.

Grateful for the mentorship and support she has received throughout her career, Michelle is dedicated to paying it forward. She strives to inspire and uplift others, ensuring that her impact extends beyond her work, helping to shape a stronger, more connected community.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S **40** UNDER **2024**
TOP 40
HONOUREE

Natasha Beekman



Natasha Beekman is a transformative entrepreneur and the visionary founder of The Baby Footprint and its accompanying café, Spill the Beans, located in Sylvan Lake. Over the past decade, Natasha has successfully transitioned her online business into a thriving physical storefront, becoming a cornerstone of the Central Alberta community. Her commitment to offering eco-friendly products has not only catered to families seeking safer options but has also fostered a culture of sustainability within the local shopping experience.

Under Natasha's leadership, The Baby Footprint has grown into a trusted destination for families, offering a curated selection of environmentally responsible products. Her café, Spill the Beans, has further enriched the shopping experience, providing a unique space for community engagement. Natasha's dedication to creating an inclusive environment has resulted in strong, lasting relationships with her customers, who appreciate her personal approach to service.

Natasha has actively contributed to the community by supporting local events and sports groups during their fundraising efforts. She has hosted numerous workshops and information sessions at her café, where educators and local authors share valuable insights on parenting and community resources. These initiatives have not only enhanced community awareness but have also helped create a supportive network for families in the area.

Recognized for her entrepreneurial spirit and community involvement, Natasha Beekman has made a significant impact through her businesses. Her unwavering dedication to quality, sustainability, and community engagement not only enhances the local retail landscape but also serves as a powerful testament to the transformative change that passionate entrepreneurs can achieve.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S
40 UNDER
2024
TOP 40
HONOUREE



Rachel Hum

Rachel Hum, a Doctor of Chiropractic (D.C.) from the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College, is making a remarkable impact in Central Alberta with the recent launch of her chiropractic practice in 2024, located in the heart of Gasoline Alley. With a Bachelor of Science (BSc) from McGill University, Rachel combines her extensive education with a deep commitment to helping individuals live healthier lives. Her practice focuses on delivering personalized, evidence-based care that addresses a wide range of health concerns for patients of all ages. By employing a head-to-toe treatment approach, she ensures that each patient receives customized care designed to optimize their well-being.

Rachel's dedication to community health extends beyond her practice. As an active runner and participant in various running and obstacle course racing (OCR) groups, she not only embodies a healthy lifestyle but also motivates others to engage in physical fitness. Her community involvement is further highlighted through her support for local charities, including the Red Deer Food Bank, where she contributes her time and resources to help those in need. Additionally, Rachel actively promotes and collaborates with other small businesses, fostering a strong sense of community and support among local entrepreneurs.

Believing that true leadership comes from setting an example, Rachel demonstrates her commitment to service and support in every aspect of her work. She inspires others by creating an inclusive environment in her practice and actively engaging with community members. Through her unwavering passion for wellness and her commitment to community connection, Rachel Hum is not just building a successful practice; she is also creating a lasting positive impact on the lives of those around her.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S **4** UNDER **40** **2024**
TOP 40
HONOUREE



Russ Dodd

Russ Dodd is an accomplished leader at Nova Chemicals, serving as the Production Team Leader for the E1/E2 units. With over 15 years of experience in the oil, gas, and petrochemical industries, Russ is known for his ability to lead high-performing teams, enhance operational efficiencies, and uphold the highest safety standards. His leadership journey began with a Power Engineering Technology Diploma from SAIT, followed by pivotal roles as a Control Room Operator, Shift Supervisor, and Incident Commander in Northern Alberta, where he navigated complex challenges with skill and resilience.

Since joining Nova Chemicals' Joffre site in 2017, Russ has earned his 1st Class Power Engineering certification and taken on key leadership roles such as Back-up Chief Power Engineer and Shift Manager. His commitment to continuous improvement is reflected in his pursuit of advanced certifications in Agile Leadership, Lean Practices, and completion of an executive program at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management. At Nova, Russ is dedicated to fostering a culture of inclusivity and innovation, championing diversity in hiring practices, and ensuring equitable opportunities for all team members.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, Russ is deeply involved in his community. As a Volunteer Head Coach with Sylvan Lake Minor Hockey, he mentors young athletes, instilling values of teamwork, perseverance, and leadership. His passion for community service extends to his active involvement in Nova Chemicals' United Way campaigns and participation in the Days of Caring program, where he dedicates his time to making a tangible impact on local initiatives. Russ's dedication to his family, community, and workplace defines his holistic approach to leadership, making him a respected figure both in his industry and beyond. His leadership is driven by a commitment to excellence, innovation, and the belief that empowering others leads to collective success.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S **4** UNDER **2024**
40 **TOP 40**
HONOUREE



Ryan Keeley

Ryan Keeley is a prominent figure in the Central Alberta hockey community and the head coach at the North Stars Hockey Academy, where he is known for his strong acumen and unwavering passion for growing the game. In addition to his coaching role, Ryan works at Graham Construction, where he applies his leadership skills and dedication to community engagement.

With years of experience in hockey, Ryan began as an elite-level prospect player in British Columbia before transitioning to coaching youth hockey over the past five years. His vision as a coach focuses on developing young talent while fostering a love and respect for the game.

Ryan places an intentional emphasis on players as individuals, prioritizing their growth as strong people, students, and team players. Known as a players' coach, he values communication and strong team chemistry, recognizing these as essential keys to success. Over the past three seasons, he has led the elite 2015 division in Central Alberta, achieving top quartile standings in both league and tournament play, including a commendable third-place finish in 2024 in a higher age division.

His commitment to diversity and inclusion is evident in his efforts to ensure that players and staff reflect the communities they represent, fostering an environment rich in diverse perspectives that inspire and motivate athletes to excel. Ryan's practices are high-energy and blend skill development, systems, and puck movement appropriate for each age group, all aimed at promoting continuous improvement.

Beyond hockey, Ryan is dedicated to youth development in soccer, lacrosse, and supporting fundraising initiatives for youth cheer and dance. Through his leadership, Ryan Keeley demonstrates a genuine commitment to engaging and empowering the next generation of athletes while making a significant contribution to the growth of youth sports in Central Alberta.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S
40 UNDER
2024
TOP 40
HONOUREE

Sarah Steinbach



Sarah Steinbach is an inspiring educator and dedicated leader in central Alberta, currently teaching Secondary Sciences at H.J. Cody High School. With over 15 years of experience, she has cultivated a dynamic learning environment, engaging her students through innovative teaching methods and genuine care. Her commitment to academic excellence has made her a beloved figure among students.

In 2023, Sarah earned her Master of Science in Psychology to better support learners in a post-COVID world. This achievement has opened new opportunities, including her role as an instructor for a Science curriculum course at Red Deer Polytechnic. That same year, she was honored with the Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence, a prestigious recognition awarded to only a few dozen teachers across Canada.

Beyond teaching, Sarah actively engages with her community. She is known for her presence on social media, particularly through her Instagram account, "Science with Steinbach," where she connects with students and offers support like diploma exam preparation and fun breakfast events. Additionally, she has coached the school's volleyball team and frequently attends extracurricular activities.

Sarah believes effective leadership means leading by example and creating an inclusive space for all learners. As a single mother of two, she models resilience and determination for her children, hoping to instill the same values in them. Her dedication to education, mentorship, and community involvement reflects her commitment to empowering others and fostering a brighter future for all. Through her multifaceted role as an educator and community leader, Sarah Steinbach is making a profound difference in the lives of her students and beyond, exemplifying true leadership and the importance of nurturing growth and potential in others.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S **4** UNDER **40** **2024**
TOP 40
HONOUREE

Savannah Snow



Savannah Snow is a dynamic leader and advocate for Indigenous inclusion, making a significant impact at NOVA Chemicals and in her community. As an Administrator, Savannah co-founded the Indigenous Employee Resource Group, driving efforts to foster a more inclusive and culturally aware workplace. Her commitment to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Indigenization (EDI) shapes policies that amplify diverse perspectives and create equitable opportunities within the organization.

Beyond her corporate work, Savannah serves as the youth representative on the Red Deer Native Friendship Society's Board of Governors and as Secretary for the Alberta Indigenous Youth Council. Her previous role as Alberta's National Youth Representative for the National Association of Friendship Centres showcases her leadership on a national level, where she has been a tireless advocate for Indigenous youth and communities.

Savannah's leadership philosophy is rooted in resilience, teamwork, and the courage to take initiative. She believes leadership is about inspiring and guiding others through confidence and collaboration, not just holding a title.

Whether through her advocacy for Indigenous rights, non-profit governance, or promoting EDI at NOVA, Savannah consistently drives positive change.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S
40 UNDER
2024
TOP 40
HONOUREE



Sharon Diep

Sharon Diep is a transformative leader whose influence spans her professional roles and community engagement. In her current role with Alberta Health Services, Sharon brings her expertise by leading a team to leverage financial reporting and analytics to support data-driven decision-making.

Previously, as the Business Intelligence and Performance Supports Supervisor for the City of Red Deer, she initiated and led impactful projects that redefined how teams leveraged data to meet evolving needs, aligning organizational goals with community priorities. Sharon's talent for uniting diverse teams, mentoring colleagues, and fostering collaboration empowered her peers, creating a culture where everyone was encouraged to contribute their best.

In addition to her career in public service, Sharon co-owns Bamboo Hut Southeast Asian Cuisine in Sylvan Lake, a thriving restaurant that beautifully fuses Cambodian, Thai, and Vietnamese flavors. Under her co-ownership, Bamboo Hut has become a community favorite, earning the prestigious title of TELUS Small Business Hero in 2023.

Sharon is also dedicated to promoting wellness and personal growth as a yoga instructor, creating inclusive spaces for individuals to connect and thrive. Her involvement extends to mentoring students at Red Deer Polytechnic and volunteering at local events, where she actively supports community-driven initiatives.

Her leadership philosophy—centered on empowerment, collaboration, and empathy—continues to make a profound impact on her teams and the broader community.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S **40** UNDER **2024**
TOP 40
HONOUREE

Steven Wheeler



Steven Wheeler is an inspiring leader and community advocate enhancing the lives of those in Red Deer. As the Team Lead for Programs at Between Friends, he launched Camp Bonaventure, an inclusive summer day camp that addresses the community's need for accessible recreational opportunities. Under his leadership, the camp has become a vital resource, fostering connections and support for individuals of all abilities.

Steven began his journey with a Music Performance Diploma from Red Deer College and later studied Music and Recording Arts in St. John's, Newfoundland. He transitioned from a role at Walmart's Head Office to the non-profit sector, where he led engaging music sessions at the Cosmos Group of Companies, empowering individuals with disabilities through music.

In addition to his work at Between Friends, Steven performs as a percussionist with the Central Alberta Chamber Orchestra and teaches young musicians at various band camps in the region. He also serves as a Nightreach Worker at Turning Point, helping individuals experiencing homelessness and addictions, advocating for their dignity and support.

Steven's leadership philosophy emphasizes empowerment and continuous learning. He believes every challenge presents an opportunity for growth and actively involves his team in problem-solving.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S **40** UNDER **2024**
TOP 40
HONOUREE



Ted Emmett

Ted Emmett is a dedicated media professional and community leader, currently serving as the Morning Co-Host on the Morning Rewind with Matt & Ted on 106.7 Rewind Radio. With a deep passion for storytelling and community engagement, Ted also co-created and co-hosts the popular Oh, Deer Podcast, which launched in 2020. His journey in radio began as a news and sports reporter at 99.7 Sun Country in High River and The Eagle 100.9 in Okotoks from 2013 to 2015, followed by roles as an in-game host for the Okotoks Dawgs and a color commentator for the Okotoks Oilers. In 2015, Ted transitioned into marketing and communications with Hockey Alberta but returned to radio in 2022, inspired by the success of his podcast. His love for media is matched by his commitment to community service. Since moving to Red Deer in 2015, Ted has been an active member of the Piper Creek Optimist Club, where he served on the board from 2017 to 2021, including a term as president from 2019 to 2020.

Ted's leadership is evident in his involvement in numerous community events, whether as a volunteer, organizer, or emcee. He has played key roles in the Piper Creek Optimist/Hockey Alberta Foundation Comedy Night, the PCO Charity Golf Classic, and the upcoming Pickleball Classic. He also helps organize the annual Chubbs Golf charity events, which have raised \$80,000 since 2016 for Central Alberta organizations, including the Central Alberta Child Advocacy Centre, Aspire Special Needs Resource Centre, and the Red Deer Food Bank.

For Ted, leadership means leading by example and making decisions that benefit the community, not just oneself. Inspired by the generosity and dedication of those around him, Ted strives to leave a lasting, positive impact on Red Deer and beyond.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S **40** UNDER **2024**
TOP 40
HONOUREE



Tyson Czuy

Tyson Czuy is a dynamic entrepreneur and owner of Adrenalin Motors, making a significant impact in the Central Alberta business community for over a decade. His commitment to local investment is evident through the expansion of his flagship Sylvan Lake store and the establishment of new locations in Red Deer and Carstairs, where he prioritizes hiring locally and partnering with community businesses.

A passionate supporter of local causes, Tyson actively sponsors sports teams, donates to families in need, and hosts community events like “Supercars and Santa,” where over 250 children visit his showroom for a photo with Santa. His flagship initiative is an annual charity golf tournament that raises awareness for organ donation and benefits the HOPE Program at the University of Alberta Foundation.

Tyson believes that community involvement and giving back are essential to success. He is dedicated to mentorship, guiding fellow entrepreneurs through the challenges of business ownership and fostering a spirit of collaboration within the community. His leadership philosophy centers on inspiring and empowering others to reach their full potential while demonstrating integrity, humility, and resilience in all endeavors. Through his actions, he continues to drive meaningful change and strengthen the bonds of community in Central Alberta.



The Next Generation of Community Leaders

GenNext brings together dedicated professionals in their 20s and 30s who are committed to shaping the future of our community. As an affinity group of United Way Central Alberta, GenNext empowers each of its volunteer members to develop a deeper understanding of local issues while igniting a passion for leadership and philanthropy to drive meaningful change.

GenNext in Action

Harnessing the skills, passions, and networks of our members, GenNext fosters local leadership and inspires collective action around community needs. We mobilize the energy of our generation by engaging young adults in evolving community issues, creating valuable learning experiences, holding insightful discussions, and implementing hands-on initiatives and activities that drive positive change toward a brighter future.

Meet GENNEXT



Central
Alberta



Connor Dobko

Co-Chair of GenNext

Connor Dobko is originally from Saskatchewan and first relocated to Central Alberta for an Internship at the Joffre Site in 2017. Luckily, he was able to relocate permanently in 2019 and was able to call Central Alberta home for the next five years. Starting as an Engineer-In-Training. Connor held various roles at Joffre and was successful in becoming a Professional Engineer (P.Eng) in October of 2023. Connor was an active part of NOVA Chemical's workplace United Way Campaign and this exposure eventually led him to join GenNext as a Co-Chair. He's appreciated the growth, knowledge, and opportunity to get more involved within the Central Alberta community and the United Way. Recently Connor has moved north, joining Dow Chemical as a Sr. Improvement Engineer at their Fort Saskatchewan site, but is staying active in Central Alberta through the amazing opportunities present at GenNext.



Alexandria King

Co-Chair of GenNext

Alexandria King is an alumna of Red Deer Polytechnic and the University of Alberta. And now currently serves as a Social Media Specialist in the Marketing & Communication department at Red Deer Polytechnic. She has volunteered with the Journey Youth Creative child programs in Lacombe, where she mentored and supported 2SLGBTQI+ youth and those interested in connecting through video games and social media in a supervised manner through mentors.

In her current role as co-chair of the GenNext committee, Alexandria hopes to engage the community through fundraising and activism. Her interests include animals, graphic design, traveling, and fostering community connections through artistic pursuits.



Aisley Miles

GenNext Member

Aisley Miles is the Harm Reduction Program Lead at Turning Point Society and an active member of the GenNext cabinet, as well as a board member for the Central Alberta FASD Network. With a rich history of community service, Aisley has enjoyed roles such as fostering dogs through ALPL and being a core member of Food Not Bombs in Red Deer while it was operational. They joined GenNext to leverage her lived experience and expertise, aiming to positively impact the community and support those in need.

Meet GEN^{Next}



Central
Alberta



Shaun Kolody

GenNext Member

Shaun Kolody was born and raised in and around Calgary. After graduating from university with a degree in Chemical Engineering in 2022, he moved to Red Deer and began working at NOVA Chemicals Joffre site. A lifelong Albertan who values his roots greatly, he joined the UWCA's GenNext committee in 2023, to give back to the community and help people throughout Alberta.



Leah Marrington

GenNext Member

Leah Marrington was born and raised in Calgary, where she completed her schooling and started her career. She has held multiple roles within BMO across business lines. She and her family moved to Central AB in 2021, now calling Red Deer home. Leah champions community involvement, as evidenced by her work with Central Alberta's GenNext committee, the Calgary Drop-in Center, and the parent-led Coop Preschool board. In her current role within BMO as Regional Vice President, Leah leads large teams to drive financial outcomes and strong customer loyalty. Her leading style includes a unique blend of direct-line coaching with a strong emphasis on being human first. She sits on regional and national committees for BMO's Indigenous sharing circle and Pride ERGs and is the regional co-chair for BMO Mosaic, helping and supporting new to Canada employees and customers.



Ariel Kim

GenNext Member

Ariel Kim immigrated to Canada, from South Korea, when she was 17. After graduating from university with a degree in Chemical Engineering in 2022, she moved to Red Deer and began working at NOVA Chemicals Joffre site. As a visual minority, her experiences in Canada led to her interest in volunteering. In 2023, she joined the United Way Central Alberta's GenNext committee to contribute to improving diversity and other social issues throughout Central Alberta.

Meet GENNEXT



Daniel Mbewa

GenNext Member

Daniel Mbewa is a dedicated mobile app developer at Marshall Technologii, specializing in supporting small businesses. His mission is to help entrepreneurs thrive and become heroes for their families and communities through innovative technology solutions. Beyond his professional work, Daniel cherishes spending quality time with his wife and three daughters. In his leisure time, he enjoys playing soccer and basketball, as well as going camping and hiking with family and friends. A strong advocate for community involvement, Daniel is also passionate about volunteering and engaging in philanthropic activities, always striving to make a positive impact.



Cameron Dyson

GenNext Member

Cameron Dyson is originally from rural Manitoba and moved to Alberta for school before settling in Red Deer. He is a member of the GenNext cabinet and regularly helps to run donation drive events for United Way Central Alberta at his workplace, NOVA Chemicals. He works as a process engineer in training and primarily focuses on projects to improve process safety as well as the monitoring and reporting of sustainability initiatives. In his free time, he is an avid hiker, especially in David Thompson Country.



Mitchell Danser

GenNext Facilitator

Mitchell is a dedicated leader in the non-profit and social sector, serving as the Community Relations Associate at United Way Central Alberta. With a background in communications and journalism, he is passionate about bridging community needs with impactful initiatives. An advocate for 2SLGBTQI+ rights, Mitchell has previously volunteered with Calgary Pride and continues to support community-driven efforts as a committee member for Giving Tuesday Central Alberta and UWCA staff lead of GenNext. His commitment to fostering inclusive, thriving communities is at the heart of his work and volunteerism.

CENTRAL ALBERTA'S
40 **UNDER**



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