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Local

Geneticist honoured

Discovery of epilepsy gene puts researcher in elite group

BY VERONIQUE MANDAL
STAR STAFF REPORTER

A Windsor scientist has won one of Canada's top honours for superachievers under 40 years of age.

Steve Scherer, 35, was a recipient of The Top 40 Under 40 award, which has been given to 200 men and women over the past five years. He received his Birks-designed trophy at a banquet in Toronto last week.

The award is sponsored by eight Canadian organizations including the CIBC, Petro Canada, Canadian Airlines and Caldwell Partners International.

Scherer is associate director of the Centre for Applied Genomics at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto. He discovered the gene which causes a rare form of epilepsy and that work is opening the

door to insight into all forms of the disease.

Scherer shared the spotlight with winners such as astronaut Julie Payette. "I was so honoured to be part of a very talented group of Canadians," said Scherer. "They are all so successful, many very rich, but hard working and down-to-earth."

The winners were picked from 1,000 nominations by a 21-member board and had to have excelled in five categories:

vision and leadership, innovation, community involvement, impact and gross strategy.

Nominees were asked to sign statements attesting to the truth of

the information provided to the board.

Part of the process of winning saw all 40 recipients take part in a three-day retreat where they were able to get to know each other.

"It was great to be locked in a room with so many energetic high achievers who think like you," said Scherer. "In some of the team-developing games we played, it was fascinating to see how competitive they were, even when the prize was something cheap and their net worth was in the billions."

"Dr. Scherer is one of the most accomplished scientists of his generation, not only in Canada but also around the world," said Manuel Buchwald, a senior scientist with the University of Toronto. "I believe that Dr. Scherer is a unique individual who has made a difference in the world."

Scherer's initiatives have led to awards of more than \$7 million to the centre and his own research. Recently he received \$5 million from publishing magnate Conrad Black to hire scientists to help new genetic research on autism.

"We are in a furious race with two other groups in the world and I think we're doing very well," said Scherer. "This award was the icing on the cake and gave me the best four days of my life."

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