OUWB Diversity and Inclusion Student Intern Receives KOD Scholarship

Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine (OUWB) congratulates Joseph Kirma, Oakland University biomedical sciences and Honors College student, for receiving a Keeper of the Dream Scholarship awarded by the Oakland University Center for Multicultural Initiatives and local business sponsors. Kirma works part-time in the OUWB Diversity and Inclusion department where he supports and contributes to its initiatives.

He received the scholarship for his efforts to break down cultural stereotypes and provide community service experiences for OU students with the student organization he founded, Organization of Diversity in Health (ODH). On January 19, Kirma will be presented with his scholarship at the Keeper of the Dream Scholarship Awards Celebration which honors the legacy of the late civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and awards up to six scholarships to students, who best demonstrate exceptional leadership qualities to foster a campus and community environment rich in diversity and multiculturalism.

"Through ODH, I have been able to host luncheons that expose students to diverse individuals that have been successful in the health field, begin the "Stop Bullying" Campaign on campus, and create volunteer opportunities for students that expose them to many different groups of people ranging from pediatric patients to those with disabilities," said Kirma, who is also the organization’s president.

Assistant Director for Center for Multicultural Initiatives Nicole Lucio said that Kirma was everything they were looking for in a KOD recipient. She explained that it was clear that the people who wrote recommendation letters recognized his tremendous passion and commitment to community service.

"Joey is amazing. We could tell from the very beginning how important it was for him to improve race relations and break down barriers to create a more inclusive campus," said Lucio.

With Kirma at the helm, ODH has organized events to benefit local children’s charities. One fundraiser involved Barnes and Noble bookseller donating one dollar to the organization’s designated charity for every Instagram message ODH generated during an allotted timeframe. It resulted in 4,600 Instagrams. Last fall, the group assisted Kids Kicking Cancer by taking children, stricken with a form of cancer, trick-or-treating and by participating in a Halloween party afterward.

This year, Kirma plans to launch another student organization with his heritage in mind. It will be a student group with members from the Chaldean community. Additionally, he is preparing to present his research paper on “A Health Profile of Arab Americans in Michigan: A Novel Approach to Using a Hospital Administrative Database” at the 2015 Michigan Academy of Science Arts and Letters (MASAL) conference. The unwavering Kirma fully intends to continue cultivating a campus culture rich in diversity to uphold the mission of Dr. King.