

The 'A' Team

Three young guys using their time and smarts to help their communities



Alden Kane

When Sharina Jones, a local paraplegic woman, learned she was pregnant last January, she didn't know how she would take her son around. Enter Alden Kane of West Bloomfield. This 17-year-old senior heard her story during a high-level STEM course at the University of Detroit Jesuit.

He set to work. After 150-200 hours of work with Dr. Darrell Kleinke of U-D Mercy college, Alden's wheelchair-stroller prototype was born – one month after Jones' son was – and even landed him a slot on TEDxDetroit.

"It was a priceless moment, seeing her use it on her wheelchair. It was really the sum of all of my hard work in one moment," Kane says. Now, he's working toward getting his invention approved for mass production and filling out college applications to study aerospace or biomedical engineering.

uofdetroit.org



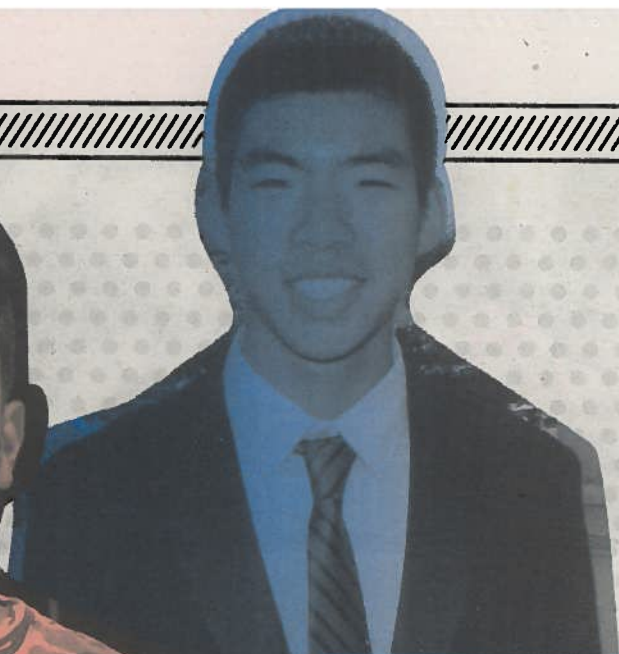
Ali Nasser

Smoking is personal for Ali, 17, of Dearborn: His dad's heart attack was caused by 30-plus years of it. That's fueled his drive to stop his peers from ever starting.

"I really don't want to see kids end up having heart or lung issues when they grow up," says the aspiring neurosurgeon. So, with the help of Teen Grantmaking Initiative – the country's only Arab-American youth philanthropy program, run by local nonprofit ACCESS

– he made a public-service video in which he plays a "dealer" who "makes" cigarettes with gross, actual ingredients like butane, ammonia, acetone and tar.

"I truly believe that most smokers don't even know what they are smoking," says Ali, whose PSA (find it on YouTube) earned him an award at his school, Edsel Ford High. He's also a fundraising organizer for TGI. accesscommunity.org



Alan Sun

He caught our eye when he was named Michigan's Ambassador for National Child Awareness Month in September. But helping kids as a kid is an all-year focus for this 17-year-old jack-of-all-trades from Bloomfield Hills – and it goes way back.

When he was just 9, Alan and his sister founded The Little Stars Foundation, a nonprofit in which the siblings taught kids how to play the violin.

"In elementary school, in our public school district, we didn't have a band or an orchestra. We had a music class but it was only one hour a week," Alan says. "I didn't think that was enough to get the full benefit of music education."

Since then, he has expanded his foundation to include STEM programs. And, in his "ambassador" role, he's getting funds to bring these twin crusades to kids in need.

The busy high school senior also swims and runs at Detroit Country Day School – and plays competitive chess and is a taekwondo master. thelittlestars.org