

REGINA LEADER POST

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Two Regina citizens nominated for The Everyday Political Citizen project

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Abdikadir Warsame came to Canada as a refugee from Somalia when he just was eight years old.

“I had nothing, my parents had nothing,” said Warsame. Possessed by the sacrifices of his family, he was encouraged to volunteer and do all he could for others. Now, that effort is being recognized.

In fact, two people from Regina have been recognized. Warsame and Tim Otitoju, a volunteer political action representative for Regina Realtors, have been shortlisted for Samara Canada’s Everyday Political Citizen project for their positive contributions to their communities.

Warsame started working at Street Culture Project as a dishwasher when he was 17 years old. Now, the 23-year-old is a mentor/program co-ordinator, and volunteer at Street Culture and the John Howard Society.

He works with at-risk children, making sure they receive the attention and care they need. From getting them to court dates and planning their meals, to waking them up for school and making sure they’ve done their homework, Warsame is an active and positive role model for kids that otherwise might not have one.

"I like the work I do, it's not really work for me. I get to interact with youth and pretty much just hang out with them, take them to the gym. And I kind of can relate to them, I've been through what they're going through just a couple of years ago," said Warsame. "Maybe they could be where I am someday and give back to someone else."

"When I run into kids I've worked with in the past, like two or three years ago, seeing them at a job being employed. Or doing something productive with their lives, like going back to school seeing how they've changed their lives ... it really makes me happy," said Warsame.

Regardless of all Warsame does the nomination came out of the blue. "It's really surprising, I wasn't expecting it," he said.

Despite his humble nature, Warsame has caught the eye of some famous Canadians.

"Abdikadir works everyday to help young people in a tough spot. By demonstrating his leadership he activates theirs — talk about a model for a sustainable democracy," said Rick Mercer, tossing his support behind Warsame.

Shad, rapper and host of CBC's Q, also backed Warsame. "Abdikadir offers his skills and experience in a generous way but also a natural way, as part of relationship and friendship. It shows that civic engagement doesn't have to be complicated."

"I was pretty excited that someone like Shad and Rick Mercer actually knew who I was, and they took to the time to acknowledge me. It was pretty empowering," said Warsame.

The nomination is nice says Otitoju, but that's not what motivates him.

Otitoju advocates for housing policy changes at the federal, provincial, and civic level. He has been lobbying the government to increase the limit of the home buyers plan and to make the plan more inclusive to people going through life changes.

Otitoju, who came to Canada from Nigeria in 1994, remembers his family housing new immigrants until they could find their own homes to live in.

"Being an immigrant myself, I've grown up with the spirit of helping people," said Otitoju, who also helps recent immigrants establish their own businesses.

"You always help people. When I started an immigration consulting company, that was geared towards helping people. And now that I'm in real estate, I feel I've got a lot of background in business," said Otitoju.

"I've seen (the) many successes of different people I've talked to and helped. And now they run successful businesses, and that makes me happy," said Otitoju, adding, "it's not the praise of it, but the success." Samara Canada, is a charity dedicated to reconnecting citizens to politics. It will announce the 2015 recipients of Canada's Everyday Political Citizen award on Dec. 3.