

## LIFESTYLE

# Young entrepreneur receives Harry Jerome Award

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When Tamar Huggins, 29, quit a lucrative career in public relations and invested her savings to launch a startup, she took a gamble that paid off.

Her non-profit business Driven Accelerator, which she founded in 2012, helps budding entrepreneurs of colour, newcomers and others gain access to training, mentorship and capital so they can start their own digital technology ventures.

Huggins was the proud recipient of the Young Entrepreneur award by the Black Business and Professional Association Harry Jerome Awards recently.

The Mississauga resident, who grew up in neighbouring Brampton, says helping dozens of young entrepreneurs to translate their business ideas into reality has been satisfying.

The Harry Jerome Awards, named after well-known track and field athlete, are highly coveted.

Huggins, Driven Accelerator's executive director, says what led her to launch the startup was the connection she felt with new entrepreneurs when she worked with them.

"These were people in the ideation stage who either had a good idea or wanted to expand but

weren't sure how to. At this point I didn't know what exactly my role would be, but one day while watching television I came across a program that was about a tech accelerator in California. I knew right then this was what Toronto needed as well."

Driven Accelerator also focuses on running tech programs and workshops on subjects such as coding for youth of colour, newcomers and others that are either unemployed or underemployed. To that end, the company has planned a summer program on coding in Toronto in the coming weeks.

The programs are free for youth, but adults are charged a modest fee, said Huggins.

Winning the Harry Jerome Awards has validated her work, and it did not hit her until she was featured in a well-known Caribbean newspaper.

"Over the past two, three years, I have been featured in every publication across Canada," she said. "My parents, especially my mom, doesn't understand, like most people, what I do for a living but as soon as she saw me featured in the Caribbean paper there were tears in her eyes."

In the two years since Driven Accelerator was launched Huggins figures she has helped at least a dozen startups to get off the ground.

For more information visit [drivenaccelerator.com](http://drivenaccelerator.com).



Tamar Huggins (right) was the recipient of the Young Entrepreneur Award by the Black Business and Professional Association. Presenting is Lena Demarco of Bell Canada.