Smart move for Mac researchers

BY DANIELLE WONG

Six McMaster University researchers are spending their summer conducting society-changing projects.
They have been given a share of Ontario's new $9.95 million Elevate program, aimed at stopping the brain drain and keeping top talent in the area. More than 80 academics have been awarded fellowships to gain research experience and partner with companies.
We spoke with three of our local bright lights about their work and the applications their projects have for the future.

Peter Bevan
Age: 34
PhD: Medical biophysics (from the University of Toronto); postdoctoral research fellow at McMaster's electrical and computer engineering department
Project: Improving a new MRI and ultrasound imaging platform with Sentinelle Medical Inc., for better breast cancer diagnosis and treatment.
Real-life application: A bloodless biopsy. "This is the first step toward not having to put that needle in in the first place."
Funding: $70,000 a year
Where were you born? London, England. Lived in Montreal, Vancouver and currently in Toronto.
Was this what you wanted to do as a kid? "Growing up, I saw my parents as doctors and I saw them working way too hard for my taste. But then ... I realized I watched my parents being researchers. So even though I tried to escape what they did in medicine by going into physics, I ended up learning without even realizing how to be an academic and how to be a researcher."
Any hobbies? Photography. He is a freelance photographer, having taken photos of the queer community for Toronto magazine, Xtra.
Personal goals? To have his own research group, particularly one that is multi-disciplinary.
If you had a super power, what would it be? X-ray vision. "(My work) is kind of like being able to see in the dark."

Eva Szabo
Age: 33
PhD: Stem cell biology (from the U of T); postdoctoral research fellow at McMaster's Stem Cell Research Institute.
Project: Researching the re-programming process that occurs when skin and adult cells are converted into stem-cell-like cells, taking that knowledge and setting apart blood cells to treat diseases.
Real-life application: Offer proper treatment for blood disorders, such as leukemia. "The ultimate goal would be a cure."
Funding: $55,000 per year
Where were you born? Transylvania, Romania.
What languages do you speak? Hungarian, Romanian and English
Favourite sports? American football and Formula 1. About F1: "It's the adrenaline."
How do you relax? "My ideal day is to go rollerblading, sit on a beach and read a book." That hasn't happened in the last couple years.
Who are your role models? "My parents. Especially my dad. They went through a hard time going through immigration ... and succeeding in their careers. ... I like the fact they were able to have a career and at the same time raise us, which is really hard. It's a struggle that I have - how I'm going to raise my kids."
Are you and your husband thinking about kids? "We're trying to navigate the system so we can find the right time. I don't think there's going to be a right time, so we're just going to do it at some point. Hopefully soon."
What motivates you? "Discovering something new ... Every day we come in and it could be something that day ... (that is) the next biggest thing. That's what motivates me."
Your super power? "Spiderwoman, navigating the web of stem cell research."

Oleksandr Romanko
Age: 33
PhD: Computer science; postdoctoral fellow at McMaster, research associate for Toronto-based, risk-solutions company, Algorithmics
Project: Using mathematical models to develop software and techniques to provide companies with better risk management practices.
Real-life application: Avoiding another global financial crisis.
Funding: $70,000 per year
Where were you born? Ukraine
What languages can you speak? Ukrainian, Russian, Czech and English
What do your friends and family call you? Sasha, the short-form for Oleksandr.
What were you like in high school? "As any kid, I was hooked up to the computer... I was known as a smart, computer guy. But I wouldn't say that I was a star."
What do you do in your free time? Backpacking and hiking through southern Ontario and northern U.S.
Why did you decide to go into this field? "I want to work on creative tasks. I don't want to be bored. That's why I did my research and did my PhD."
Who do you look up to? His postdoctoral supervisor and his Canadian friends. "Because it's difficult to be a friend with someone doing a PhD."
Your super power? Stabilizing society through economic growth.

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