



Photo by Lindsay Lozon

A Big Heart

ALICE MELCOV

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WHEN THE SOVIET UNION COLLAPSED in 1990, Alice Melcov's engineer parents fled politically unstable Azerbaijan for South Africa, hoping for a better future for their two children. Six years after they settled in Johannesburg, Melcov's father died, sending his nine-year-old daughter into a soul-searching tailspin. By 12, the child born in a churchless Soviet republic was a prayerful Christian, raising funds to help children with AIDS in Johannesburg. When the family relocated to suburban Thornhill, Ont., Melcov carried on her good work. In high school, she set up a chapter of the Stephen Lewis Foundation and mentored immigrants struggling with English. At York, she has tutored at the Student Peer Support Centre and a Jane-Finch community after-school program.

Actively involved with Campus for Christ, the multilingual 20-year-old joined an evangelical mission last summer to Montreal and Paris universities. "I have a big heart for volunteer work," says the Nelson Mandela fan. An introvert who can lose herself in a practical ethics text as much as a Tolstoy epic, she imagined a life in medicine until she sensed the heady power of public policy. "It can make a big impact on the day-to-day life" of citizens, she says, and she may now pursue public-interest law. "If you are privileged, you should help others."