

Rachel Dragas

*Neuroscientist. Actor.
Published Author.
Award-Winning Crisis
Intervention Lead.
Mental Health Advocate.*

Digital Resume & Portfolio
Nineteen years of community service and advocacy. Six
peer-reviewed scientific publications. National film,
television and brand campaigns. And a full-time job holding
the line for people in crisis, right across Canada.

SUBMITTED BY
Rachel Dragas, BSc, MSc
Toronto, Ontario · July 2026

COVER
PORTRAIT

FULL-LENGTH OR BEAUTY SHOT,
VERTICAL
SEND TO SWAP IN

SECTION ONE

At a Glance

Every number below is documented in the pages that follow.

19 YEARS OF CONTINUOUS COMMUNITY SERVICE SINCE 2007	6 PEER-REVIEWED SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS	19 PUBLISHED FEATURE ARTICLES & INTERVIEWS
15 RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS, NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL	18 VOLUNTEER & COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP ROLES	8 AWARDS, FELLOWSHIPS & DISTINCTIONS

WHO I AM

- Platform Lead, Crisis Intervention** at Kids Help Phone in collaboration with the **988 Suicide Crisis Helpline**, Canada's national 24/7 mental health service. I oversee a team of crisis responders and crisis support workers, assess and de-escalate imminent-risk situations, and work with the RCMP, local, provincial and regional police, emergency services, and child protection agencies across the country.
- **Neuroscientist.** MSc Medical Science (Neuroscience) and BSc Neuroscience, University of Toronto. Research at The Hospital for Sick Children and Toronto Western Hospital.
 - **Founder.** Launched *Elemental* magazine, chaired Grad Minds, U of T's graduate mental health body, and served as Conflict Resolution Advisor.
 - **Actor, model, host and correspondent** represented by Hero Artists, with national brand and broadcast credits.
 - **Fifteen years with The Hospital for Sick Children** as a ward volunteer, a clinical researcher, and now a fundraiser for the SickKids Foundation, this pageant's humanitarian cause.

WHY IT MATTERS HERE

A title is a microphone. What matters is what gets said into it.

I have spent my career in rooms where people are at their most vulnerable, and in rooms where the whole country is watching. I know how to move between them, and I know how to carry the message from the first room into the second.

I did not come from an advantageous beginning. Throughout my career I have created roles where none existed.

Most recent recognition: Q1 2026 Celebrate Out Loud Award, presented for embodying KHP's core values: courageous, collaborative, innovative, resilient, and trustworthy.

SECTION TWO

Why I Should Be Ms. Greater Toronto Area

This title represents far more than a crown. It is a platform for impact, and I intend to use every day of it.

I am a neuroscientist, a mental health and crisis intervention lead, an actor, and a published author. I aspire to be a role model to young girls who may see some part of themselves reflected in me, and to demonstrate that no woman is limited by age, circumstance, or societal expectation. Reinvention and purpose are always attainable.

I was born in Toronto to immigrant parents, Serbian and Filipina. I did not come from advantaged beginnings. In high school I was the weird kid who never quite fit one group, pulled toward science and the arts at the same time, and told repeatedly to pick one. I never did. My path has been marked as much by rejection and redirection as by achievement, and that is where I learned to build: most of the initiatives I have led did not exist until I found the gap and made the case for filling it. I founded a magazine because graduate students had nowhere to talk about mental health. I chaired Grad Minds because that conversation needed a seat at the table. I did that inside STEM, a field still overwhelmingly male, while also working as an actor, a field that rarely expects a scientist. A woman does not have to choose one lane to make lasting change.

Competing on a national scale at Miss Universe Canada, and now at Regional Canada Pageants as Ms. Greater Toronto Area, will allow me to stand alongside inspiring women, amplify my humanitarian work in mental health, and challenge long-standing stereotypes about pageantry and about women in STEM.

I also know what this title carries beyond the region. Its holder goes on to represent Regional Canada Pageants at the Royal International Miss Pageant, and that responsibility is one I have spent my career preparing for without knowing it.

At 35, I am living proof that the best chapters are not behind us. They are only beginning.

PORTRAIT OR ON-THE-JOB
PHOTO

HOSTING, ON SET, OR AT
WORK

THE GREATER TORONTO AREA

This region raised me professionally. My research was conducted in its leading hospitals, my degrees earned at its most rigorous university, my work serves its residents and first responders, and my media presence has represented its brands on a national stage.

The GTA is one of the most diverse regions on earth. Representing it means representing all of it, and I have spent nineteen years in the rooms where that diversity actually lives: crisis lines, hospital wards, classrooms, hospices, stadiums, press conferences, and community halls.

We can all create the change we wish to see in this world.

SECTION THREE

Rooted Here. National in Reach.

I am proudly of the Greater Toronto Area. I conducted my research inside its leading hospitals and institutions, and I made waves at its largest university. But almost none of my work has stayed within the GTA. Ms. Greater Toronto Area would be represented by someone who already operates at a national scale, across three different fields, and who brings that reach home.

THE GTA — WHERE IT WAS BUILT

University of Toronto · Master of Science (MSc) and Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Neuroscience. Founded **Elemental** magazine, featuring contributions from faculty, staff, students, community organizations and influential leaders on mental health advocacy, research and awareness.

TORONTO

The Hospital for Sick Children · Clinical Researcher in Ophthalmology and Vision Sciences. Volunteer in Neurosurgery, Neurology, Infectious Disease and General Surgery.

TORONTO

Toronto Western Hospital, UHN · Researcher in the Department of Genetics and Development at the Krembil Research Centre, investigating stem cell therapeutics for spinal cord injury.

TORONTO

Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) · Organized open houses and fundraisers, and coordinated summer camp events and field trips for visually impaired youth and children.

TORONTO

Philip Aziz Centre & Emily's House · Community Support Volunteer in the Visiting Hospice Program, for patients and families facing terminal illness.

TORONTO

Office of the Dean, Faculty of Arts & Science · mental health programming

TORONTO

Toronto FC & MLSE · FIFA World Cup campaign

BMO FIELD

Couture for a Cause (VIP Red Carpet Host), **Rosé Picnic** (Ambassador & Correspondent), **Crown of Hope Charity Gala** (MC and Host), **2026 Living Luxe Design Show** (Ambassador for Elegance Aroma & Correspondent), **2026 International AutoShow** (Media Day Correspondent)

TORONTO

NATIONAL — WHERE IT REACHED

Kids Help Phone & 988 · Platform Lead for the national 24/7 mental health service offering free, bilingual and confidential support to youth and adults across Canada. Working with the RCMP, local police, emergency services and child protection services.

NATIONWIDE

Startup Canada · Government of Canada's \$50M Investment Readiness Program, 20 to 30 national partners

FEDERAL

Hospice Palliative Care Ontario · 4,200 clinicians trained, 515,000 people reached

PROVINCE-WIDE

Scientific research · Ophthalmology and stem cell therapeutics, presented at conferences in California, Utah, Florida and across Canada

INTERNATIONAL

Broadcast & brand · CBC / Sony, NBC Peacock, Apple TV, Google, Genesis, Shoppers, Republic Records

NATIONAL

Miss Universe Canada 2025 · National Finalist

NATIONAL

Project Chimps · sanctuary journalism

GEORGIA, USA

Three domains, not one. Science, screen, and mental health advocacy. I have carried real weight in not one, but all three, at the same time, for over a decade.

Local roots, national reach. I would not be learning how to represent a region on a bigger stage. I have been doing it for years.

Ready to Represent: The International Stage

This title does not stop at the Greater Toronto Area. Its holder goes on to represent Regional Canada Pageants at the **Royal International Miss Pageant**. That is a bigger question than the region alone, and I would like to answer it directly.

I have competed at this level before

National Finalist at Miss Universe Canada 2025. I know the format, the pace, the interview rounds, the rehearsal schedule, and what it feels like to be measured alongside the strongest women in the country. That experience is already in hand.

Representing an organization is my profession

CBC and Sony Pictures, Google, Genesis, Rémy Cointreau, Shoppers Drug Mart, Toronto Pearson International Airport, and Toronto FC with MLSE have each put their brand in my hands on camera. Organizations of that size do not hand their name to someone who is a risk.

I already hold ambassador titles

Ambassador for the Rosé Picnic with the Canadian Film Centre, and for Elegance Aroma at the Living Luxe Design Show. I know what it means to carry an organization's name in a room where nobody is supervising me.

I do not rattle

My full-time job is staying composed while someone's life is on the line, coordinating with police and emergency services in real time. An unexpected question, a live camera, or a schedule that falls apart does not compare. Composure under pressure is not something I would need to develop for this role. It is the qualification.

I have represented Canada internationally before

I presented my research at international conferences in California, Utah and Florida, speaking for my institution and my country in front of the global scientific community. I have travelled, prepared, and delivered on foreign stages already.

My story travels

A neuroscientist who works a national crisis line and hosts on camera is memorable in any country and in any language. On an international stage full of exceptional women, being unforgettable is the whole game, and no one there will be confused about who I am.

This is not a stage I would need to be prepared for. Carrying an organization's name in public is what I already do professionally.

SECTION FIVE

My Humanitarian Platform: The Hospital for Sick Children

The humanitarian component of this title is raising money for the SickKids Foundation. For me that is not a cause I was assigned. It is the building where my whole career started, and I have been going back to it for fifteen years.

Child Life Volunteer

2011 – 2014

Neurosurgery · Trauma · General & Thoracic Surgery · Infectious Diseases

Three years on the wards, working alongside physicians, nurses, social workers and child life specialists. My job was to sit with children through the hardest days of their lives and engage them in therapeutic play so they could cope with being in hospital, and to give their families a moment of ordinary in a place that is anything but.

Clinical Researcher, Department of Ophthalmology

2013 – 2014

The Hospital for Sick Children

Led a cross-sectional prospective study on biomarkers for retinal damage caused by the anti-epileptic drug vigabatrin in a paediatric cohort. Worked directly with complex paediatric patients, performed full-field and multi-focal electroretinograms, and published the findings as a **first-authored peer-reviewed paper** and presented at international conferences so that other clinicians could detect the damage earlier.

Fundraiser, SickKids Foundation

2026

Ms. Greater Toronto Area, Regional Canada Pageants

Fifteen years after I first walked onto those wards as a volunteer, I am raising money for the same hospital. Same children. Same building. A different way to help.

SICKKIDS
PHOTO

VOLUNTEERING, THE HOSPITAL, OR
FUNDRAISING

I held children's hands on those wards before I ever held a microphone. Raising money for SickKids is not a platform I picked. It is where I come from.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Most delegates will fundraise for SickKids because the pageant asks them to, and they will do it sincerely. I would be fundraising for the hospital that trained me, published me, and taught me what care actually looks like at the bedside.

That means I can do more than ask for donations. I can speak about the research, the clinical reality, and the families with genuine authority, and that is what moves a donor from a polite yes to a real one.

Convening Power & Communicating Across Audiences

Some of these people I interviewed. Others I asked to lend their name to initiatives I built, and they said yes. Both take work to reach, and they are not the same thing.

LEADERS WHO BACKED THE WORK

Sophie Grégoire Trudeau Former First Lady of Canada

Interviewed for *Elemental* Magazine on mental health and the power of starting a conversation. Also a partner and supporter of both **Elemental** and **Grad Minds**, the two organizations I founded and chaired at the University of Toronto, respectively.

The Honourable Michael Wilson Former Minister of Finance of Canada · Chairman, Barclays Capital

Interviewed on advancements in university and workplace mental health in Canada, and secured as a collaborative partner for *Elemental*.

Margaret Trudeau Former First Lady of Canada · mental health advocate

Cultivated as a partner during my work in the Office of the Dean, Faculty of Arts & Science, for the inaugural Faculty-wide mental health and professional development conference.

Michael Landsberg TSN journalist · Bell Let's Talk spokesperson

Partner and supporter on initiatives I led at the University of Toronto, including the Open Minds conference and Faculty-wide mental health programming.

Pierre Poilievre Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada · press access, not partnership

Covered his 2026 press conference as a journalist. He took my questions directly on policy and on his public statements. Access earned in the room, on the record, with the country watching.

ONE MESSAGE, EVERY AUDIENCE

- **One person in crisis**, by text, at three in the morning.
- **RCMP, provincial and regional police**, emergency services and child protection agencies, mid-incident.
- **4,200 clinicians**, care coordinators and nurse practitioners, in clinical training.
- **Scientists** at international conferences in California, Utah and Florida.
- **1,000 attendees** in a conference hall.
- **515,000 members of the public** through provincial awareness campaigns.
- **A national television and campaign audience**, on camera and on mic.

The skill is the same one every time: take something complicated and make the person in front of you feel it. I have had to do that for a frightened teenager, a police dispatcher, a room of physicians, and a stadium. Very few people have practised across that entire range.

SECTION SEVEN

Speaking, Hosting & Stage Craft

Public speaking is not a skill I list. It is the through-line of my entire career, in five different registers.

LIVE HOSTING & ON-CAMERA

Host & MC, Crown of Hope Charity Gala · guided the full program, introduced speakers and performers, coordinated live segments	LIVING LUXE
VIP Red Carpet Host, Couture for a Cause · live on-camera interviews with distinguished guests	ROGERS / CAMH
Ambassador & Correspondent, Rosé Picnic · interviews and audience engagement	CFC
Correspondent, Canadian International AutoShow Media Day · interviews with manufacturers, exhibitors and attendees	TORONTO
Journalist, federal party leader press conference · asking informed questions on policy and public statements	2026

CONFERENCE & WORKSHOP

Host, annual Open Minds mental health conference · organized and hosted	1,000+ ATTENDEES
Creator and host, inaugural Faculty-wide mental health conference · University of Toronto	ARTS & SCIENCE
Facilitator, skills-focused workshops on mental health and conflict resolution · for students, staff and faculty	UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
Host, national webinars and partnership convenings · Startup Canada and Hospice Palliative Care Ontario	4,200 TRAINED
Breakout session leader, StemCellTalks · round-table facilitation with high school students	LET'S TALK SCIENCE

SCIENTIFIC & FRONTLINE

- Fifteen research presentations, including four international conferences and an invited oral presentation at the University of Toronto's Department of Ophthalmology and Vision Sciences Annual Research Day.
- Trained to communicate findings to scientific, medical and lay audiences, which are three completely different rooms requiring three completely different deliveries.
- Live crisis communication and de-escalation, where the wrong sentence has consequences and there is no second take.

FORMAL TRAINING

Improv Comedy, Levels A–E, Graduate	THE SECOND CITY
Acting Program, Levels 1–4, Graduate	THE SECOND CITY
On Camera Acting	KAREN IVANY · MICHAEL CARUANA
Conflict Resolution Training	UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Why the improv training matters here: the pageant question you cannot prepare for is the one that decides it. Graduate-level improv is professional training in being interesting, warm and quick with no script, which is exactly the moment a title is won or lost.

Impact, by the Numbers

Advocacy is easy to claim and hard to measure. These are outcomes I was directly responsible for delivering.

\$1.1M PROVINCIAL PROJECT LED TO COMPLETION ONTARIO MINISTRY OF HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE	515,000 PEOPLE REACHED THROUGH PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS	4,200 CLINICIANS, CARE COORDINATORS & NURSE PRACTITIONERS TRAINED ONLINE
\$50M GOVERNMENT OF CANADA INVESTMENT READINESS PROGRAM DELIVERED	20M INTERACTIONS & IMPRESSIONS GENERATED IN UNDER TWO YEARS	1,000+ ATTENDEES AT THE ANNUAL OPEN MINDS MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

WHAT THOSE NUMBERS WERE

- **Hospice Palliative Care Ontario.** Led a \$1.1M Ministry-funded project on advance care planning and health care consent to completion, surpassing every scheduled goal while adapting the strategy through COVID-19. Trained 4,200 clinicians and reached 515,000 Ontarians.
- **Startup Canada.** Ran the Social Impact Program inside the Government of Canada's \$50M Investment Readiness Program, connecting 20 to 30 national partners funding social purpose organizations.
- **Grad Minds, University of Toronto.** Chaired a team of 25 and hosted the annual Open Minds conference, drawing over 1,000 attendees.
- **988 & Kids Help Phone.** Supported the rollout of 9-8-8, Canada's suicide and crisis lifeline, to service users through my role on the platform.



PHOTO FROM WORK OR A CAMPAIGN
CONFERENCE, EVENT, OR ON THE JOB

I support the service a person reaches on the worst day of their life. That is the standard I hold my advocacy to.

Scholastic & Scientific Accomplishment

EDUCATION

Master of Science, Medical Science · Neuroscience specialization · Faculty of Medicine	U OF T · 2018
Bachelor of Science, Neuroscience · double minor, Sociology & Physiology · Faculty of Arts & Science	U OF T · 2013
Graduate Professional Skills Program · including the 10-week Mini-MBA in strategy, consulting, marketing and risk	U OF T · 2017

CLINICAL & LABORATORY RESEARCH

Researcher, Department of Genetics & Development Toronto Western Hospital, University Health Network Investigated the mechanisms and efficacy of mesenchymal stem cells in cervical spinal cord injury, in collaboration with CreATE Fertility Clinic. Improved efficiency and reduced operating costs through novel technique development. Secured authorship on five peer-reviewed publications, presented at international conferences, and served as a peer reviewer applying FDA rules and regulations to manuscript evaluation.	2014 – 2018
Clinical Researcher, Department of Ophthalmology The Hospital for Sick Children Led a cross-sectional prospective study on biomarkers for retinal abnormalities caused by the anti-epileptic drug vigabatrin in a paediatric cohort. Worked directly with a complex paediatric patient population, performed full-field and multi-focal electroretinograms, and published a first-authored peer-reviewed manuscript.	2013 – 2014

ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE

Coordinator, Mental Health Initiatives & Special Projects · Office of the Dean, Faculty of Arts & Science	2018 – 2019
Advisor, Graduate Conflict Resolution Centre · tri-campus	2017 – 2018
Member, Leave of Absence Committee · Faculty of Medicine, adjudicating student medical leaves	2017 – 2019
Member, Krembil Research Trainee Advisory Committee · Toronto Western Hospital	2015 – 2017
Graduate Students' Union Representative · Institute of Medical Science Student Association	2015 – 2016

RESEARCH PRESENTED ON THE NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL STAGE

- **Society for Neuroscience**, California, USA · 2016
- **National Neurotrauma Symposium**, Utah, USA · 2017, and Canada · 2018
- **International Symposium for Neural Regeneration**, California, USA · 2015
- **Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology**, Florida, USA · 2014

Fifteen research presentations in total, including four international conferences and an invited oral presentation at the University of Toronto's Department of Ophthalmology and Vision Sciences Annual Research Day.

Communicating findings to scientific, medical and lay audiences alike. Translation has always been the point.

Published Work

PEER-REVIEWED SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS

Dragas R, Westall CA, Wright T. *Changes in the ERG d-wave with vigabatrin treatment in a pediatric cohort*. Documenta Ophthalmologica. 2014;129(2):97–104. PMID 25008578

Hong J, **Dragas R**, Khazaei M, Ahuja CS, Fehlings MG. *Hepatocyte Growth Factor-Preconditioned Neural Progenitor Cells Attenuate Astrocyte Reactivity and Promote Neurite Outgrowth*. Frontiers in Cellular Neuroscience. 2021;15:741681. PMID 34955750

Uldreaj A, Tzekou A, Mothe AJ, Siddiqui AM, **Dragas R**, Tator CH, Torlakovic EE, Fehlings MG. *Characterization of the Antibody Response after Cervical Spinal Cord Injury*. Journal of Neurotrauma. 2017;34(6):1209–1226. PMID 27775474

Vawda R, Badner A, Hong J, Mikhail M, Lakhani A, **Dragas R**, Xhima K, Barretto T, Librach CL, Fehlings MG. *Early Intravenous Infusion of Mesenchymal Stromal Cells Exerts a Tissue Source Age-Dependent Beneficial Effect on Neurovascular Integrity and Neurobehavioral Recovery After Traumatic Cervical Spinal Cord Injury*. Stem Cells Translational Medicine. 2019;8(7):639–649. PMID 30912623

Vawda R, Badner A, Hong J, Mikhail M, **Dragas R**, Xhima K, Jose A, Fehlings MG. *Harnessing the Secretome of Mesenchymal Stromal Cells for Traumatic Spinal Cord Injury*. Stem Cells and Development. 2020;29(22):1429–1443. PMID 32962528

Badner A, Vawda R, Laliberte A, Hong J, Mikhail M, Jose A, **Dragas R**, Fehlings MG. *Early Intravenous Delivery of Human Brain Stromal Cells Modulates Systemic Inflammation and Leads to Vasoprotection in Traumatic Spinal Cord Injury*. Stem Cells Translational Medicine. 2016;5(8):991–1003. PMID 27245367

FEATURE INTERVIEWS & EDITORIAL — NINETEEN PUBLISHED ARTICLES

Mental Health and the Power of Starting a Conversation: An Interview with Sophie Grégoire Trudeau. Elemental Magazine, 2018.

Advancements in University and Workplace Mental Health in Canada: An Interview with the Honourable Michael Wilson, former Minister of Finance and Chairman of Barclays Capital. Elemental Magazine, 2017.

Food for Thought: Advancing our Understanding of Eating Disorders: An Interview with Dr. Allan Kaplan. Elemental Magazine, 2017.

Making Moves at the Mental Health and Physical Activity Research Centre: An Interview with Dr. Catherine Sabiston. Elemental Magazine, 2018.

Recognizing and treating pediatric sleep disorders: An interview with Dr. Indra Narang. IMS Magazine, 2016. [Plus two further IMS features on vision science, 2016.](#)

Eight feature articles for Project Chimps, 2022–2025, on sanctuary care, veterinary medicine, mentorship, and community, including *The Doctor Is In* and *Remembrance Garden Sculpture: From Concept to Creation*.

Four additional features in Elemental Magazine, 2017–2018, on mental health advisory structures and student resources at the University of Toronto.

Complete bibliography of 25 published works, and 15 national and international research presentations, available on request.

WHY THE WRITING MATTERS

Six of these papers sit behind a paywall in journals most people will never open. The other nineteen were written so that anyone could.

I interviewed a former First Lady of Canada and a former Minister of Finance about mental health because those conversations move stigma in a way a citation cannot. I write about a chimpanzee sanctuary in Georgia for the same reason. Science and advocacy only count once somebody outside the room understands them.

PHOTO OF
PUBLISHED
WORK

A MAGAZINE COVER, AN ARTICLE
SPREAD, OR YOU WITH THE ISSUE

Professional Journey

A career built at the intersection of science, mental health, and public service. Several of these roles did not exist before I proposed them.

2022 – PRESENT

Platform Lead, Crisis Intervention

988 Suicide Crisis Helpline & Kids Help Phone

Canada's national 24/7 free, bilingual, confidential mental health service for youth and adults. I lead on the crisis texting platform alongside clinical operations managers, supervisors, and crisis responders: supervision, coaching, debriefs, onboarding, and quality of service delivery. I monitor and prioritize live platform risk, and work alongside responders to assess and de-escalate imminent-risk situations including suicide, homicide, and crimes in progress, engaging RCMP, provincial and regional police, emergency services, and child and youth protection agencies nationwide. Supported the rollout and optimization of **9-8-8, Canada's suicide and crisis lifeline**, and of Ontario's Good2Talk post-secondary webchat, for service users on the platform.

2022 – 2023

Program Manager, Social Impact

Startup Canada

Led the Social Impact Program, a consortium built with the Government of Canada's **\$50M Investment Readiness Program**, supporting social purpose organizations solving socioeconomic and environmental challenges. Connected 20 to 30 national partners, championed social innovators nationwide, and delivered digital programming, webinars, and campaigns generating **20 million interactions and impressions in under two years**.

2019 – 2021

Project Manager, Advance Care Planning & Health Care Consent

Hospice Palliative Care Ontario

Led a **\$1.1M project funded by Ontario's Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care** to completion, surpassing all scheduled goals and adapting strategy through COVID-19. Trained **4,200 clinicians**, care coordinators and nurse practitioners, and reached **515,000 Ontarians** through public awareness campaigns. Represented the organization with Ontario Health, the Ontario Palliative Care Network, Health Quality Ontario, and the Ontario Medical Association.

2018 – 2019

Coordinator, Mental Health Initiatives & Special Projects

Office of the Dean, Faculty of Arts & Science, University of Toronto

Built mental health programming for the largest and most comprehensive academic division in North America, over 30,000 students, faculty, and staff. Delivered workshops, assembled and led two multi-disciplinary committees, and created an inaugural Faculty-wide mental health conference, securing sponsorship and working with **Margaret Trudeau** and **Michael Landsberg**.

2017 – 2018

Advisor, Graduate Conflict Resolution Centre

University of Toronto

Fully trained advisor providing confidential conflict coaching to graduate students, assessing and de-escalating crisis situations, and leading workshops on communication and dispute resolution.

Community Leadership & Founding Roles

Where I saw a gap, I built the thing that filled it. Each of these was unpaid.

Founder & Editor-in-Chief, *Elemental* Magazine

2017 – 2019

University of Toronto, tri-campus

Launched a print and digital publication with a multidisciplinary focus on emerging research, stories of empowerment, and mental health advocacy in academia. Built and trained an editorial team of **over 20 journalists, editors, designers and photographers**, led content and marketing strategy, secured sponsorship, and developed partnerships with world-renowned mental health researchers and with **Sophie Grégoire Trudeau** and **the Honourable Michael Wilson**.

Chair & Director, Grad Minds

2016 – 2019

University of Toronto

Led the body representing graduate student mental health across the university. Interviewed, trained and oversaw a **core team of 25** plus volunteers, and organized and hosted the annual **Open Minds mental health conference, bringing in over 1,000 attendees**. Secured sponsorship and partnerships with leading researchers and with **Sophie Grégoire Trudeau** and **Michael Landsberg**.

Journalist, Project Chimps

2022 – PRESENT

Blue Ridge, Georgia

Remote journalist on the marketing and communications team of the newest chimpanzee sanctuary in the United States, home to 99 chimpanzees on 230+ acres with nearly 100 more to be moved to permanent sanctuary. Interview staff, experts and board members and write features that build education, awareness and engagement.

Alumna Mentor, University College Career Mentorship Program

2015 – 2022

University of Toronto

Seven years as an elected alumni mentor providing one-to-one career, research and graduate school guidance to third and fourth year undergraduates.

Breakout Session Leader, StemCellTalks Symposium

2015 – 2017

Let's Talk Science & the Stem Cell Network

National stem cell outreach initiative bringing science and practical ethics to high school students. Facilitated round-table discussions on stem cell science, ethics and case studies, building critical thinking and communication skills in students.

Mentor, Collaborative Program in Neuroscience

2016 – 2017

School of Graduate Studies, University of Toronto

One-to-one mentorship for senior undergraduates applying to neuroscience graduate programs, on applications, funding and research opportunities.

COMMUNITY
LEADERSHIP PHOTO

CONFERENCE, MAGAZINE TEAM,
OR MENTORSHIP

I founded a magazine because graduate students had nowhere to talk about their mental health. Then a thousand people showed up to the conference.

Both organizations still run. That is the part I am proudest of. The measure of building something is whether it survives you leaving.

Volunteer Service

Nineteen years of continuous community service, beginning at seventeen.

Events Coordinator, Canadian National Institute for the Blind

2007 – 2013

CNIB, Toronto

Six years organizing open houses and fundraisers for Canadians who are blind or living with vision loss. Collected data from individuals with varying degrees of visual impairment to inform new signage and regulations for GO Transit. Coordinated summer camp events and field trips for visually impaired children, adapting every activity to individual needs.

Child Life Volunteer, The Hospital for Sick Children

2011 – 2014

Neurosurgery, Trauma, General & Thoracic Surgery, Infectious Diseases

Worked with physicians, nurses, social workers and child life specialists to create a nurturing atmosphere for hospitalized children and their families, engaging patients in therapeutic play to help them cope through treatment.

Community Support Volunteer, Visiting Hospice Program

2018

Philip Aziz Centre for Hospice Care & Emily's House, Toronto

Provided compassionate community-based psychosocial support to adults, children and families facing life-limiting and terminal illness.

Mentor, Neuroscience Association for Undergraduate Students

2011 – 2013

University of Toronto

Supported second and third year neuroscience students with course selection, career paths, research opportunities and the transition to university life.

Journalist, Institute of Medical Science Magazine

2015 – 2017

Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto

Interviewed faculty about their research and wrote features placing their work in a broader scientific context, and copy-edited the work of fellow journalists.

Mental Health Intern, Dean's Mental Health Advisory Team

2017

Faculty of Arts & Science, University of Toronto

Selected to help develop Faculty-wide initiatives responding to the University of Toronto's Mental Health Framework Recommendations. Interviewed faculty, staff and students and presented findings to the core committee.

VOLUNTEER
PHOTO

SICKKIDS, CNIB, HOSPICE, OR
OUTREACH

NINETEEN YEARS, UNBROKEN

2007 at CNIB. 2011 at SickKids. 2015 mentoring undergraduates. 2018 in hospice care. 2022 at a chimpanzee sanctuary. 2026 on a red carpet raising money for CAMH, and back at SickKids as a fundraiser.

There has not been a year since I was seventeen where I was not volunteering somewhere.

The through-line: I volunteered on hospital wards before I published in them. I built mental health programming for students before I led it nationally. I hold a microphone at galas so the charity behind the gala gets heard, not just the guest list. Every platform I have been given, I have pointed back at somebody else.

Charity Work & Fundraising

Using the on-camera platform to raise money and awareness for causes, in 2026 alone.

Creator, Producer & Host — FIFA World Cup

JULY 2026

Final Watch Party

Vagabondo Restobar, 310 Front St W · in support of the SickKids Foundation

Conceived, produced and hosted a live fundraising event with the **SickKids Foundation** as a beneficiary and the hospital branded throughout the venue. **\$550 raised to date against a \$150 minimum**, 3.6x the requirement, measured against my own \$1,000 goal. Backed by eight filmed personal endorsements from named figures across six sectors, and two original print pieces put into circulation across the GTA, each carrying a scannable SickKids donation code.

VIP Red Carpet Host, Couture for a Cause

JULY 2026

Rogers Media / CAMH, Yorkville

Welcomed distinguished guests, conducted on-camera interviews, and showcased the fundraiser's mission for the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

Ambassador & Correspondent, Rosé Picnic

JULY 2026

Canadian Film Centre, Toronto

Promoted awareness and support for **Breast Cancer Canada**, the event's charity of choice, through event coverage, interviews with the charity, the founder and partners, and audience engagement.

Host & MC, Crown of Hope Charity Gala

JUNE 2026

Living Luxe Magazine, Toronto

Official host of an evening in support of **Autism in Mind**, a charity working toward an inclusive society with no barriers for children with autism. Guided the program, introduced speakers and performers, coordinated live segments, and helped raise funds and awareness.

Mental health advocacy on the front line

ONGOING

988 & Kids Help Phone

The advocacy is not separate from the job. It is the job.

CHARITY OR GALA RED CARPET, HOSTING, OR WITH THE
PHOTO CHARITY TEAM

CAUSES I HAVE RAISED FOR

- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
- Breast Cancer Canada
- Autism in Mind
- Canadian National Institute for the Blind
- The Hospital for Sick Children
- Project Chimps sanctuary
- Hospice palliative care across Ontario

My Platform

I believe in using visibility for good. I am ready to serve, inspire, and represent with authenticity, intelligence, and heart.

01

Mental Health Awareness

I do this work full time, on Canada's national crisis line, alongside police and emergency services. I am not an advocate who read about it. I am the one who answers the call, and who supported the rollout of 9-8-8 to the people using it. The platform lets me take that conversation into rooms it never reaches.

02

Women in STEM

Two neuroscience degrees, six peer-reviewed papers, fifteen research presentations, and a stage. Girls are told to pick one version of themselves. I want to be visible proof that they do not have to, and that a scientist can also be a woman in a gown.

03

Social & Environmental Responsibility

Through Startup Canada I helped deliver the Government of Canada's \$50M Investment Readiness Program to entrepreneurs solving social and environmental problems. I know what real impact infrastructure looks like from the inside.

WHAT I WOULD DO WITH THE YEAR

- **Bring mental health literacy into GTA schools and workplaces** using my crisis intervention training and certifications, not a script. I have already built and delivered this curriculum at the largest academic division in North America.
- **Run a STEM visibility series for girls**, pairing lab work with the stage to break the stereotype in both directions.
- **Make 9-8-8 a household number** across the region. I support that service every day and most people still do not know it exists.
- **Use every media booking as a donation of airtime** to the charity in the room, as I already do as a correspondent.
- **Show up where the GTA actually is:** hospitals, hospices, community centres, campuses and stadiums, not only ballrooms.

ADVOCACY OR
SPEAKING PHOTO

ON STAGE, WITH A MIC, OR AT A
COMMUNITY EVENT

SECTION FOURTEEN

Media, Modelling & National Brand Work

Represented by Hero Artists. Professionally trained at The Second City in acting and improv comedy, Toronto, Chicago and Hollywood.

TORONTO FC / MLSE NATIONAL CAMPAIGN	CBC / SONY PICTURES DRAGON'S DEN S18	GOOGLE SUSTAINABILITY	GENESIS GV70 ELECTRIFIED
RÉMY COINTREAU THE BOTANIST GIN	SHOPPERS DRUG MART NATIONAL SPOT	TORONTO PEARSON INTL. AIRPORT	REPUBLIC RECORDS MUSIC VIDEO
NBC PEACOCK AN UNEXPECTED KILLER	APPLE TV INJECTORS TORONTO	ROGERS MEDIA / CAMH COUTURE FOR A CAUSE	CANADIAN FILM CENTRE ROSÉ PICNIC

HOST, MC & CORRESPONDENT

Couture for a Cause 2026 · VIP Red
Carpet Correspondent

Crown of Hope Gala · Host & MC

Rosé Picnic 2026 · Ambassador & Correspondent

Living Luxe Design Show · Ambassador

Canadian International AutoShow 2026 ·
Correspondent, Media Day

Most recent: national campaign for **Toronto FC and Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment** built on the line *Where Rivals Unite. All For One.* A campaign about a city that holds every community at once. I had worked MLSE events as live personnel long before I was ever cast in front of their camera.



TORONTO FC · MAPLE LEAF SPORTS & ENTERTAINMENT, 2026

Competition, Awards & Certifications

COMPETITION HISTORY & PLACEMENT

Miss Universe Canada 2025 · national competition	NATIONAL FINALIST
Graduate Management Consulting Association Case Competition · University of Toronto	2ND PLACE
Ms. Greater Toronto Area 2026 · Regional Canada Pageants	DELEGATE

AWARDS, GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS & DISTINCTIONS

Celebrate Out Loud Award · for courage, collaboration, innovation, resilience and trustworthiness	2026
Gordon Cressy Student Leadership Award · University of Toronto	2018
James F. Crothers Family Fellowship in Peripheral Nerve Damage	2016
OSOTF Unilever / Lipton Graduate Fellowship in Neuroscience	2016
School of Graduate Studies Conference Grant · University of Toronto	2015
Gamma Dynacare Medical Laboratories Scholarship · five-time recipient	2015
Governor General's Award	2008

TRAINING & CERTIFICATIONS

2022	Crisis Response Training, Kids Help Phone
2022	Project Management Foundations
2020	COVID-19 Level A Certificate for Film & Video Production, Safe Sets International
2020	COVID-19 & Grief for Healthcare Providers, Canadian Virtual Hospice
2019	Advance Care Planning, Goals of Care & Health Consent, HPCO
2019	SafeTALK Suicide Prevention Training, University of Toronto
2018	Identify, Assist, Refer Mental Health Training, University of Toronto
2017	Conflict Resolution Training, University of Toronto

AWARD OR CROWNING PHOTO CERTIFICATE, MEDAL, OR MUG
FINALS NIGHT

ON COMPETING AGAIN

Miss Universe Canada taught me that the crown is not the outcome. The work you do while people are looking is the outcome. I came back because I know exactly what I would do with the year.

Press & Media Coverage

INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCE	From the Lab to the National Stage: IMS graduate competes in Miss Universe Canada
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO	Rachel Dragas — U of T Alumni feature
MISS UNIVERSE CANADA	2025 National Finalists
MISS UNIVERSE CANADA	Rachel Dragas — Delegate profile
HERO ARTISTS	Talent announcement and campaign features
U OF T GLSE	Graduate Education Retreat — Research and Health Science Education
ELEMENTAL MAGAZINE	Founder & Editor-in-Chief, issues 1 and 2, University of Toronto

PRESS CLIPPING 1SCREENSHOT OR SCAN OF AN ARTICLE

PRESS CLIPPING 2SCREENSHOT OR SCAN OF AN ARTICLE

Note for judges: live links to each article, plus broadcast and campaign reels, are available at racheldragas.com.

Letters of Reference

Two letters of reference are included in support of this submission.

LETTER OF REFERENCE — ONE

Letter to be inserted here.

NAME · TITLE · ORGANIZATION · DATE

LETTER OF REFERENCE — TWO

Letter to be inserted here.

NAME · TITLE · ORGANIZATION · DATE

IN CLOSING

A title is a microphone. Here is what I would say into it.

I have spent nineteen years learning how people work: first as a seventeen-year-old volunteer at CNIB, then on the wards at SickKids, then in a laboratory, then in a hospice, and now on the national crisis line at the worst moment of someone's day. Along the way I learned how to hold a room, and I learned that the two skills are the same skill.

What I would bring to Ms. Greater Toronto Area is not a new interest in service. It is nineteen years of it, with the receipts, and a platform that would finally let the work reach the people who need to hear it.

No woman is limited by age, circumstance, or societal expectation. I would like the chance to prove that out loud, for a year, in the region that made me.

At 35, I am living proof that the best chapters are not behind us. They are only beginning.

CLOSING
PORTRAIT

SIGNATURE IMAGE, ELEGANT, CONFIDENT,
VERTICAL

Rachel Dragas

BSC, MSC · NEUROSCIENTIST · ACTOR · PUBLISHED AUTHOR · AWARD-WINNING CRISIS
INTERVENTION LEAD · MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATE

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Represented by

Hero Artists

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