



Hurst Legacy Award 2025: Alisha Cater

The Hurst Legacy Award was founded in 2019 to honour the incredible work of our founder, Jim “Hurst” Hayhurst. While he passed away in early 2020, his legacy lives on in the Trails Alumni who are benefiting from his creation of Trails over 30 years ago. The Hurst Legacy Award is presented annually to a Trails Alumni who consistently lives the Trails mission. This award proves that we all have the capacity and the responsibility to give back, regardless of our age, background, or abilities.

Alisha Cater

Group: Flaming Wing Falcoz 2007-2011

Facilitator with the Windseekers | Trails Bursary Recipient | AIM Mentor | BA in Law and Society Honours Certificate in Alternative Dispute Resolution Certificate at York University in Family Mediation

“A simple act of kindness, offered with humility and a warm smile, can change a life.”

My journey with Trails began with one such act—a heartfelt conversation between my grandmother and a close family friend, whose daughter was part of the program. She spoke of Trails as a place full of beauty, adventure, and something hard to name but deeply felt. I applied immediately. Not long after, the Program Director visited my home, and I was accepted. That single moment altered the course of my life.

I was just 12—quiet, unsure, and struggling with confidence. Trails opened a door to a different world. It gave me space to grow, to connect with nature, and most importantly, to connect with myself. From the start, it offered something rare: a community that saw me, welcomed me, and encouraged me to find my voice. I met kids from all walks of life. Trails became a sanctuary—a place where we laughed until our stomachs hurt, chased the sun across the field, and huddled in snowy silence at winter cookouts. It gave me a childhood I didn’t know I was missing.

One of the most powerful lessons I learned at Trails was how to face fear. I still remember staring up at the high ropes course, frozen with anxiety. But at Trails, “challenge by choice” meant I could move at my own pace. That first year, I only climbed the ladder. The next year, the tree. Eventually, I crossed the wire. By my final year, I wasn’t just climbing—I was coaching others through it too.

Trails nurtures growth, one courageous step at a time. After four years as a participant, I returned as a Leader-in-Training, then an intern, and eventually a Facilitator. I



found deep meaning in working with younger participants—especially those who reminded me of myself. I wanted them to feel safe, seen, and supported. I spent four years with the Windseekers group and stayed connected while studying at university.

As I stepped into adulthood, I began to understand just how profoundly Trails had shaped me. The tools we were given—like Nonviolent Communication and VOMP—became part of who I was. They helped me navigate difficult conversations, stay grounded in empathy, and build meaningful connections. Through the Trails Bursary, I received more than just financial support—I was paired with a mentor who walked alongside me throughout my post-secondary journey. That steady presence, combined with the bursary’s generosity, gave me both the confidence and the resources to succeed. I went on to earn my BA in Law & Society and became an Ontario Accredited Family Mediator.

My Trails connections opened doors professionally, too. I landed a position in Toronto’s Family Courts, where I worked with people from diverse backgrounds, bringing empathy and presence into every interaction. Today, I support family businesses in managing relationships and building governance structures. But no matter the setting, I carry Trails with me. I honour people’s humanity. I listen deeply. I lead with authenticity.

I still give back to Trails—mentoring, speaking, attending events—because it’s part of who I am. Trails didn’t just shape me. It gave me the tools to keep growing. And the voice to help others do the same.