

Scholarly pride

Recognizing a prize-winning community

Last Monday was a special day for me. I was at St. Lawrence College in Kingston for the 12th annual Premier's Awards honouring graduates of Ontario's Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology. I attended as a guest of the Association of Colleges of Arts and Technology of Ontario, and as the nominee for Centennial College.

There were 87 nominations from the province's 24 community colleges for the 2003 awards. That's a record - a first in the history of the awards, which were launched in 1992 to mark the 25th anniversary of Ontario's colleges.

In this celebration of excellence, six graduates of the community college system were honoured for being "worthy examples of the impressive scope and richness of the training and education provided by Ontario's community colleges," as John Farrell, chair of the College Compensation and Appointments Council, put it.

The Premier's Awards 2003 recipients are: Rose Adams, lawyer; Susan Taylor



Jules Elder

My City, My Home

Schmalz, "missionary" in early childhood education; Beverly Thomson, journalist and broadcaster; Dr. Heather Lee Kilty, health sciences professor and social justice activist; Suzanne Marie Demara, founder of a support group for families dealing with child sexual abuse; and Donald Jan Dekker, whose career combines technology and education.

Their stories are inspirational. They have overcome adversity, and point to the training and opportunities provided by our community colleges that helped them achieve their goals.

Adams, a graduate of Georgian College, is a lawyer in Barrie. In accepting her award she spoke of not being able to thank her biological parents, since she never knew them - she was "given up" as a baby and spent years in foster homes. And of the encouragement and support from instructors at Georgian College that led to her success, her decision to enter law school as a mature student and finance her education by cleaning homes and checking coats at a local bar.

Preschools in Guatemala

Schmalz is a graduate of Algonquin College's early childhood education program. She left Pembroke for Guatemala where she opened four preschools and trained local women as early childhood educators. She also provided a lunch program for street dwellers and started a weaving co-operative.

Thomson, a Seneca College grad, is co-host of CTV's Canada AM. She moved from Global TV, where she went public with her battle with breast cancer, and produced a documentary, *Where There is No Fear* on her diagnosis, treatment and the impact on her life, family and career.

Dr. Kilty, an assistant professor at Brock University,



—Picture This ... Photography

PREMIER'S AWARDS ... Standing (l-r): John Farrell, Rose Adams, Suzanne Marie Demara, Dr. Heather Lee Kilty, Mary Anne Chambers. Sitting (l-r): Beverly Thomson, Donald Jan Dekker and Susan Taylor Schmalz.

ly, graduated from Niagara College. She has volunteered for many causes and helped launch several social service organizations. The mother of two adopted children from St. Vincent has published a book, *Refugee, Choice and Drugs*.

Demara is a single mother with three children. She graduated from Sheridan College in 2002 and is looking forward to graduating at the end of this term with a second diploma. She is the founder of Not My Child, which offers support and counselling for families dealing with child sexual abuse.

Dekker is a technology graduate from Northern College, where today he is not only a teacher, but was the college's first academic dean of technology. He has worked in Chile, Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Prior to presenting the Premier's Awards, Mary Anne Chambers, Ontario's Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, aptly said: "Today's recipients demonstrate the full benefits of a college education and the high quality of our graduates."

"All the nominees have extraordinary careers and provide important role models for younger students now making choices about their future education."

One of these younger students is my son, who accompanied me to the awards and heard the moving stories of the recipients. He too - as is my first son - has decided to further his studies at a community college - my alma mater, Centennial. I am pleased.

Elder appears alternate Mondays

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