

## Algonquin College Alumna Receives Province's Highest Recognition

**Ottawa, Feb. 23, 2004:** Susan Schmaltz, a graduate of Algonquin College's Early Childhood Education (ECE) Program, has won a 2003 Premier's Award in the Applied Arts - Community Services category for her work on behalf of children in both Canada and Guatemala. Mrs. Schmaltz is the fifth Algonquin alumnus in six years to receive a Premier's Award.

"I really am overwhelmed and humbled by this award," said Mrs. Schmaltz. "But I'm also delighted because I believe so strongly in early childhood education. The only way this world is ever going to change is if we educate our children in ways of becoming more loving and peaceful human beings. For me, this award is a validation of the work being done by all early childhood educators."

After graduating from Algonquin College in 1980, Mrs. Schmaltz, was hired to set up the Town of Osgoode's first co-operative nursery school and two years later opened the Children's Garden Nursery School in Pembroke. When Algonquin College began offering ECE at its Pembroke campus, she joined the faculty and helped design several new courses.

A few years later, she accepted a new challenge when the Pembroke and District Association for Community Living asked her to conduct a study on the integration of special needs children into the preschool system. A testament to her insight and skill, in part, all 12 recommendations in her final report were implemented.

In 1993, Mrs. Schmaltz explored yet another new path, opening a clowning business that allowed her to combine early childhood education with a huge dose of fun. The business also inspired her to establish a Caring Clown program to cheer patients at the Pembroke General Hospital.

In 1997, with their children grown, Mrs. Schmaltz and her husband Richard decided to turn their energy to the needs of people in the Third World. It took three years of preparation, but in 2000 they were finally ready to head to Central America. There, at the Dreamer Center in Antigua, Guatemala, Mrs. Schmaltz established three activity-based programs for children ages three to six, and a fourth in a remote mountain village. She also helped train local women in the basic principles of early childhood education. She and her husband also started a feeding program for the homeless of Antigua, delivering lunch to street dwellers.

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-2-

Mrs. Schmaltz is currently negotiating with a charitable foundation in the Netherlands to set up another preschool for some of the 80 children currently being taught by one teacher in a room with a dirt floor. And she is also raising funds for beds and blankets for a homeless shelter in Antigua that will open in 2004.

“Because Susan was a faculty member in the Early Childhood Education program at the Pembroke Campus, it was a natural fit to involve Algonquin College in her program in Guatemala,” said Donna Winacott, ECE Coordinator, Pembroke Campus. “Since 2001, our ECE students have created and sent dozens of games and learning materials to the schools Susan has developed. It’s an honour to be a part of Project Guatemala.”

The Premier's Awards for Graduates of Ontario's Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology acknowledge the important social and economic contribution made by college graduates. Each year, Ontario's 24 colleges are invited to nominate graduates whose career success is related to their college experience and who have made a significant contribution to their community. There are six award categories: Applied Arts - Creative Arts and Design; Applied Arts - Community Services; Business; Health Sciences; Technology; and Recent Graduate.

“I can think of no more deserving recipient for the Community Services Award than Susan Schmaltz,” said Robert Gillett, President of Algonquin College. “Her caring and compassion combined with her energy and enthusiasm have truly made a difference in the lives of so many children in this world. She has indeed gone the extra mile and we are proud to have her as an alumna.”

-30-

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*Note:* Electronic photograph available upon request.

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