



Two outstanding Ontarians chosen as Rhodes scholars

5 December 2007, Toronto – Kate Smolina and Wojciech Gryc have been selected as the two Ontario Rhodes scholars-elect for 2008. Worldwide, only 90 Rhodes scholarships are granted each year.

Kate, a fourth-year biomedical science student at University of Guelph, and Wojciech, a recent graduate of University of Toronto, are both 2004 Weston Loran scholars. They are the tenth and eleventh Loran scholars selected as Rhodes scholars since the first Loran scholar graduated fourteen years ago.

"I congratulate Kate and Wojciech on their selection as Rhodes scholars-elect," says Franca Gucciardi, executive director and CEO of the Canadian Merit Scholarship Foundation. "Throughout their undergraduate studies they have demonstrated the qualities that we select Loran scholars for: breadth, commitment to others, entrepreneurial energy and leadership."

A top student academically, Kate is also active in the Guelph campus community, serving as a peer helper at the centre for students with disabilities, as a volunteer with meal exchange and as a member of the 21st century committee. She also serves as vice-president of YOUCAN, a youth-run charitable organization that delivers conflict resolution and negotiation programs.

Wojciech recently graduated from University of Toronto, where he studied mathematics. He is the founder of Five Minutes to Midnight, which he started in his teens to promote human rights and international issues among the world's youth. While at U of T he worked as the lead programmer on www.egotistics.net. He also was a youth consultant for the Canadian Commission for UNESCO and a Canadian delegate at an international youth conference in Prague, Czech Republic. He currently works at IBM's Thomas J. Watson Research Center in Yorktown Heights, NY.

Both Kate and Wojciech took advantage of the \$7,500 in funding provided as part of their Weston Loran Awards to pursue summer experiences that enrich and complement their academic studies. Kate traveled to India, where she spent six weeks in India, living with a host family and helping to build polyhouses, constructed of polyethelene, bamboo sticks and ropes, for local farmers. Wojciech traveled to Nairobi, Kenya, where he and another Five Minutes to Midnight volunteer trained 20 young people working for Shining Hope for the Community. The group published the first issue of its newspaper before the FMM team returned to Canada.

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About the Loran Award

Founded in 1988, The Canadian Merit Scholarship Foundation was the first national organization in Canada to grant scholarships based on a mix of academic achievement, extracurricular activity and leadership potential. In his published account of the founding of CMSF, Dr. Robert Cluett, the founding CEO of CMSF, notes that at the heart of CMSF is the belief that, in granting awards to young people, "breadth, openness to challenge, and willingness to take risk are many more times more important any quantitative measure of promise." It is a belief that we still hold quite strongly today.

CMSF grants Loran Awards, worth up to \$75,000 over four years, to 30 young Canadian students each year. The foundation is supported by donations from corporations, foundations and individuals. Its principal supporter is the W. Garfield Weston Foundation. Primary and major supporters include BMO Capital Markets, through its Equity Through Education initiative, RBC Foundation and the Young Fund at Hamilton Community Foundation.