

Let's Talk Science national volunteer awards celebrate dedication of Canadian post-secondary students to science outreach

Curtis McCloskey of University of Ottawa and Rachel Ward-Maxwell of McMaster University take home this year's coveted national volunteer awards

London, Ontario – June 6, 2015 –This week, approximately 80 volunteer coordinators are attending the Let's Talk Science National Outreach Conference to receive specialized training for delivering exciting, free, hands-on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) activities with youth in classrooms and at community events, based at more than 40 universities and colleges across Canada.

Volunteers Curtis McCloskey of University of Ottawa and Rachel Ward-Maxwell of McMaster University took home this year's coveted national volunteer awards, which were presented during a special awards banquet this evening.

The **Let's Talk Science National Volunteer Award** recognizes an outstanding Let's Talk Science Outreach volunteer who is passionate about science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). The recipient is a volunteer committed to enhancing science education through effective communication, innovation in approach and in their activities, and is a positive role model for children and teens.

For the past year, Curtis McCloskey of University of Ottawa has been helping to promote youth engagement in rural and remote communities, reflecting his philosophy that science should be accessible and enjoyed by all students. From mentoring youth and fellow volunteers, Curtis has become as a strong role model and ambassador to post-secondary science education. He also developed a hands-on "Heart Health" activity that gets participants moving while learning about the heart, body and circulation. Curtis' flexible and innovative teaching style encourages students to lead the question-asking, allowing them to develop critical thinking skills and take the learning into their own hands.

He explained, "I hope to become a professor in the near future, while maintaining science outreach efforts with younger generations. This award will most definitely improve my chances at achieving my goals through increased visibility and continued teaching opportunities with the Outreach program." Curtis continued, "The best part of being a Let's Talk Science volunteer is the ability to inspire students to consider a STEM career through exciting hands-on learning - seeing the awe and inspiration in an aspiring scientist's eyes when they learn a new concept or finally comprehend something they've seen or read about."

Runners-up for the 2015 National Volunteer Award include: Maude Perreault of McMaster University, Emma Chaston-Vickers of University of New Brunswick (Fredericton), Timothy Jayme of University of Calgary and Travis Schoepp of University of Alberta.

The **David Colcleugh Leadership Award** recognizes an outstanding Let's Talk Science Outreach site coordinator who has demonstrated exceptional leadership, meaning (s)he has influenced people to create positive change through science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) outreach.

“It’s so rewarding to work with children and share my knowledge and passion for science. I feel it is especially important as a woman of science to act as a mentor to young girls and show them that anyone and everyone can be a scientist,” explained recipient Rachel Ward-Maxell.

This year, Rachel has created three new community events: Science Rendezvous, the Westfield Star Party and the School for Witchcraft and Wizardry Family Science Day, all increasing the number of youth and families reached by Let’s Talk Science STEM learning experiences in the community! Among her other merits, Rachel has also developed a partnership with local libraries expanding the Outreach program into all branches of the Hamilton Public Library.

“Science literacy is essential to the growth of industry, technology and the economy,” she continued. “The greatest impact to the future of science and science literacy in Canada can come from reaching out to today’s youth.”

Runners-up for the David Colcleugh Leadership Award include Erin Macpherson of McMaster University and Sherie Duncan of University of British Columbia

Let’s Talk Science president and founder, Dr. Bonnie Schmidt, remarked, “We’re delighted to recognize this year’s award winners, who form a part of our national team of more than 3,500 volunteers at over 40 post-secondary institutions across Canada. Curtis and Rachel are just two of our amazing role models bring STEM to life by sharing their passion and experiences.”

She added, “Our Outreach volunteers inspire youth to think big, dream and make connections about where STEM can take them when they stay engaged. We’re very proud to celebrate the accomplishments and dedication of exceptional volunteers like Curtis and Rachel who make what we do at Let’s Talk Science possible.”

For more details about the National Volunteer Awards, visit <http://www.letstalkscience.ca/get-involved/volunteer/volunteer-awards>.

About Let’s Talk Science

Let’s Talk Science is an award-winning, national, charitable organization focused on education and outreach to support youth development. The organization creates and delivers unique learning programs and services that engage children, youth and educators in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Let’s Talk Science strives to prepare youth for their future careers and role as citizens in a rapidly changing world. Let’s Talk Science was founded in London, Ontario in 1993. From its office located in London, it serves national audiences. For more information about Let’s Talk Science, visit www.letstalkscience.ca.

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