

Carleton and UOttawa students receive national recognition for science volunteerism

OTTAWA – Let's Talk Science volunteers Marc Chamberland and Natalie Andrews have both been recently recognized among more than 1,800 Let's Talk Science volunteers for their passion for science outreach and innovative approach to getting kids excited about science.

Chamberland, a 26-year-old medical physics PhD student at Carleton University, has been awarded the 2010 Let's Talk Science National Volunteer Award for his innovative and unique approach to science learning and for his dedication to reaching students in under-served communities.

In the past three years, he's visited numerous elementary and high school classrooms in the Ottawa area, as well as in remote communities such as Longlac and Hearst, Ont., and Baffin Island, Nunavut, to demystify science through hands-on activities and demonstrations.

Some of his most well-loved workshops are those he developed to introduce kids to complicated physics concepts, such as the science of flight. Chamberland walks students through the principles of flight, teaches them how to build a "perfect" airplane and then challenges them to build an even better one – with a paper airplane race down the halls to cap off the lesson.

"Put Marc in front of a room full of students and not only do they understand the science, they have fun doing it! How often do teachers encourage students to make and throw paper airplanes? This activity takes something every kid knows and loves, and turns it into a learning experience," says Jen Skanes, Let's Talk Science coordinator at Carleton University.

Chamberland has also explained the concept of force by getting students to play tug-of-war and shown how earthquakes happen by doing a live simulation where students act out seismic waves using liquids and solids.

"I love being with a group of kids, explaining science! It's particularly gratifying when the students' eyes light up with excitement," says Chamberland. "I'm also very proud to have been one of the first four Let's Talk Science volunteers to visit Inuit communities on Baffin Island. Being able to reach out to these very isolated communities was extremely gratifying."

Andrews, a 23-year-old Master's in biochemistry student at the University of Ottawa, has recently been awarded the 2010 Let's Talk Science CIHR-Synapse Award for developing an incredibly successful and innovative health-related activity.

Andrews developed an interactive lab tour of the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute Cancer Centre for local Grade 11 and 12 students so they could learn first-hand what it's like to be a cancer researcher. More than 250 students have already visited the labs and participated in hands-on activities based on the science performed by the centre's researchers.

During the tour, students learn about cancer, the research performed at the cancer centre and different methods of treatment. They then rotate through three stations, where they get to try



hands-on activities including loading and viewing DNA electrophoresis gels, observing live cancer cells through a microscope and collecting protein from those cells. They also get to learn about the transmission of viruses, as there is a research group at the cancer centre that studies HIV/AIDS.

“It wasn’t until university that I discovered what biochemical research actually entailed,” says Andrews. “I figured, why just talk about my research when I could show these students what it’s like to work in a cancer research lab, what it’s like to be a graduate student and why I find it so interesting and rewarding.”

According to Barbara Vanderhyden, PhD, Let’s Talk Science director at the University of Ottawa, Andrews’ lab tour has increased the request for similar tours for groups such as the Rotary Club and breast cancer patients. “While her contributions and effort to organize these tours is nothing short of phenomenal, it is the impact that she is having on both her colleagues and the high school students that is most inspirational,” says Vanderhyden.

-30-

Media Contact:

Krista Habermehl, Communications Officer, Let’s Talk Science
khabermehl@letstalkscience.ca or 1-877-474-4081 ext. 239

ABOUT LET’S TALK SCIENCE

Let’s Talk Science is an award-winning, national, charitable, science outreach organization. We deliver science learning programs and services that turn kids on to science, keep them engaged in learning and develop their potential to become 21st century stewards, innovators and citizens. Through our science outreach program, we engage more than 1,800 enthusiastic post-secondary student volunteers at 30 universities and colleges across Canada to turn more than 100,000 kids on to science, engineering and technology each year.

For more information about Let's Talk Science, please visit letstalkscience.ca.