

Dal News

Dalhousie shines at Discovery Awards

Celebrating contributions to science

Regis Dudley - November 23, 2011



Don Weaver, chemistry and neuroscience professor, delivers his guest speech at the Discovery Awards. (Steve Kaiser photo)

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From the depths of the Life Science Centre, to the upper floors of the Tupper Medical Building, to the far end of Sexton campus – Dalhousie and discovery have always gone hand-in-hand.

Little wonder, then, that Dalhousie has claimed more accolades at the annual Discovery Awards than any other organization: 17 over the awards' nine-year history. And on November 17, at this year's event celebrating Nova Scotia's brightest minds in science and technology, that trend continued, with two members of the Dalhousie family inducted into the **Discovery Centre Hall of Fame**, one Dalhousie winner and three finalists recognized in two prestigious categories.

A prestigious Hall of Fame

The Discovery Centre Hall of Fame honours current or former Nova Scotians who have made an outstanding lifetime contribution to society through scientific and technological discovery and invention.

The late **Donald Hebb**, former professor emeritus in Dal's Department of Psychology, was recognized for his pioneering work in neuropsychology and his legacy in the discipline of psychology. His research sought to understand the development of neurons into networks and how this contributes to psychological processes such as

learning. His career brought him to places like Montreal, Chicago, Florida and Boston, but he eventually returned to his native Nova Scotia and enriched Dalhousie's Faculty of Science.

Joining Dr. Hebb as a new inductee into the Hall of Fame was **W. Ford Doolittle**, professor emeritus in Dal's Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. As part of his research, Dr. Doolittle compares the evolution of genes and genomes to explore the relationships between the oldest known organisms. His findings have resulted in the high-profile re-evaluation of the so-called "tree of life."

Despite the magnitude of his scientific accomplishments, Dr. Doolittle credits his pupils for his greatest career satisfaction. Upon accepting his award, he stated, "If there's anything I'm proud of it's the continued success of my students."

And the Emerging Professional Award goes to...

Dr. Jill Chorney, assistant professor in the Departments of Anesthesiology and Psychology at Dal and psychologist at the IWK Health Centre took home the Emerging Professional Award, which recognizes post-secondary science and technology students, graduate students, post-doctoral fellows or practicing professionals 35 years of age or under who live and study in Nova Scotia. The recipient of the award demonstrates intellectual achievement, excellence and the potential for ongoing growth and development.

With 35 peer-reviewed publications and having helped attract several million dollars in Canadian and US funding, Dr. Chorney is advancing the care of children with chronic pain. Her research excellence has previously been recognized by an IWK Investigators Award and the Society for Pediatric Psychology Routh Early Career Award.

Upon accepting her award, Dr. Chorney thanked her community, stating, "Dalhousie and the IWK are fantastic places to take care of patients."

Dr. Simon Sherry, clinical psychologist and assistant professor in the Department of Psychology at Dal, was also recognized as one of the award's finalists. His research focuses on the role of perfectionism in mental health issues such as depression and eating disorders. With over 30 peer-reviewed papers, two book chapters and over 18 grants to his name, Dr. Sherry has been recognized as a leading Canadian psychology researcher by the Canadian Psychological Association.

Champions of science

Dalhousie Science Professors Jason Brown and Kevin Hewitt were also recognized at the ceremony as finalists for the Science Champion Award, which celebrates the devotion of working science and technology professionals and teachers in Nova Scotia to the promotion of science and technology to the public.

Dr. Brown, professor in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics with a cross-appointment in the Faculty of Computer Science, was noted for his extensive research, dynamic presentations and popular writings. His passion

for the deep connection between the art and science of music came to a tipping point when he used math and physics to reveal how the Beatles **played the opening chord of A Hard Day's Night**. His findings gained international media coverage and spiraled into many lectures and school presentations.

Dr. Hewitt, associate professor of Physics and Atmospheric Science, was praised for his ability to bring science to life. As an advocate for the promotion of math and science education for Nova Scotian youth of African descent, he brings together university students, faculty, schoolteachers and community leaders to provide math and science enrichment activities to Nova Scotian junior and senior high school students. This program, known as **Imhotep's Legacy Academy**, now serves 75 students across Nova Scotia. As a researcher, Dr. Hewitt has advanced the knowledge of superconductors and the accurate detection of cancer.

Dal science community shows its pride

With three tables of Dal faculty, staff, students and friends at the awards and a well-received guest speaker presentation by **Don Weaver**, professor and Canada Research Chair in Clinical Neuroscience and professor of chemistry at Dal, the Dalhousie aura of support and energy shone.



In the words of Discovery Awards finalist Simon Sherry, “Caring mentors, excellent collaborators, solid infrastructure and world-class students make Dalhousie a great place to play the science game.”



Readers Say

Leigh Beauchamp Day

November 24, 2011 3:09 PM

Congratulations to everyone! The Discovery Awards are truly excellent.

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