

VANIER

CÉGEP / COLLEGE

NEWS RELEASE

821 Ste-Croix, Montreal, QC H4L 3X9 Tel: 514.744.7500 Fax: 514.744.7505 info@vaniercollege.qc.ca www.vaniercollege.qc.ca

June 16, 2009

**Nursing's Melodie Hicks named Vanier VIP (Very Important Person)
for the 2008-2009 Graduation Ceremony**

Most VIPs are celebrities. Vanier's VIPs are Very Important People because their dedication to their community and to those around them, make the world a better place. Vanier College is pleased to announce that the first person named as a Vanier Very Important Person for the 2008-2009 Graduation Ceremony is Melodie Hicks of the Vanier Nursing Department. This is the first time the College recognizes significant people at Vanier College and we hope it will become a tradition, inspiring young people and adding to the positive experience of the graduation ceremonies.

Teaching Nursing is a big job. So how does Melodie Hicks manage to do all the things she does? She's not only a nursing teacher, but also a wife, mother, fund raiser, and community health issues organizer. The answer would appear to be through boundless energy, passionate interest, a big heart, and sometimes by getting students, colleagues, family and friends involved in health-related community activities. And what are some of Melodie's passions? HIV/AIDS awareness, treatment and fund raising, mosquito netting to prevent malaria in Africa, and nursing education at Vanier and internationally, to name but a few.



To see Melodie rushing through the halls of Vanier is to see her on the way to or from some life-giving activity - a class, a meeting, or an event - and always with a good-humoured smile, an intelligent purpose, and a commitment, that are inspiring to all around her. Students flock to her office for help of all kinds, knowing they will be welcomed. "Education for Melodie is more than memorizing facts and figures to regurgitate on a test," indicates Rivka Guttman, Coordinator of the Nursing Department. "Education is about learning how to be a citizen of society. Melodie shows students, even with their limited education in nursing, how to care."

One of Melodie's latest passions is malaria prevention in Africa. To that end she organized a Buy-a-net Fundraising dinner at Case Grecque Restaurant in Pierrefonds to celebrate World Malaria Day and raise money and awareness for Malaria prevention. Eighty-three people attended the dinner and silent auction, which raised \$5,000. This money will provide bed-nets for 15 villages in Uganda, protecting close to 4,000 people from malaria. Buy-A-Net is a non-profit organization run by volunteer Canadian nurses. It is endorsed by the Canadian Nursing Association and has representatives in all provinces across Canada. Melodie Hicks and Michelina Catalozzi, from the Vanier Nursing department, are the Quebec ambassadors for Buy-A-Net. Both were invited this spring, to Parliament Hill to attend a special reception on World Malaria Day, hosted by the speaker of the house for all Ambassadors of Buy-A-Net.

Closer to home Melodie's other passion is HIV/AIDS awareness and fundraising. Every September, for the past fourteen years, she has inspired a group of students and staff members from Vanier to join her in the annual Fahra Foundation *Walk for Life* aimed at raising awareness and money for HIV and AIDS in Quebec. Over the years she has raised thousands of dollars for the foundation to support AIDS research. To learn more about AIDS, she joined a group of Vanier students and staff on a January 2008 mission to Malawi, to study firsthand the effects of HIV/AIDS on sub-Saharan Africa. Not content with being an observer, Melodie rolled up her nurse's sleeves and started treating people in the village of Makupo where they were staying. Six weeks later, in early March 2008, she returned to Africa as a Vanier representative at the First Global Forum on Human Resources for Health, held in Uganda.

Never one to stay idle, Melodie is flying back to Malawi later this summer with Vanier Nursing colleague Michelina Cattelozzi, to provide training at the Kamuzu College of Nursing, at the University of Malawi, in Lilongwe.

-30-