

PRESS RELEASE



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October 15, 2008

Neil Caplan wins the Above and Beyond the Call of Duty Award

There are people who make a difference with a big splash and there are those who quietly inspire, organize and affect their community by sheer dint of steadfastness, intelligence, and character. Such a person is Humanities teacher, Neil Caplan, the recipient of the 2007-2008 *Above and Beyond the Call of Duty Award* (ABCD Award). The last person to seek attention for himself but the first to want it focused on important ideas and issues, Neil Caplan, whose professionalism, work ethic, enormous creativity and profound commitment to teaching impress all who have worked with him, has immeasurably enriched Vanier College.

The *Above and Beyond the Call of Duty Award* (ABCD Award) which has only been given once before at Vanier honours a college employee whose actions and activities not only contribute to the positive well-being of the Vanier community, but also go well beyond what is expected or required within their usual position, functions and responsibilities.

Neil's most impressive accomplishment is the creation fifteen years ago of what is now known as the *Vanier College Kleinmann Family Foundation Annual Cegep Holocaust Symposium*. "It has always struck me," Neil explains, "that people are often moved more by one event than fifteen weeks of classes. The Symposium is a whole series of events that could move students to take action." Neil has attracted speakers from around the world who share their survivors' experience or who help us make sense of the horror of the Holocaust. The work involved in making this event possible has always been done beyond Neil's busy schedule of teaching and coordinating the Humanities Department.

Humanities Department Coordinator, Sophie Jacmin elaborates on Neil's other contributions. "Before Neil was ever involved in organizing events he had a passion for teaching and for learning," she says. "This passion led him to explore pedagogical avenues to reach his students in a deep and meaningful way. Early in his career, Neil adapted the then ground-breaking teaching technique of re-enactment. Through student impersonation of key players in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Neil helped students understand the issues from the inside and creatively come up with potential solutions." Neil also initiated the Trip for Tolerance which brought Vanier students of different denominations to Washington and New York to visit landmarks and learn to understand and appreciate difficult issues. Along with teacher Tricia Bell, Neil has now transformed the essence of that trip into a team-taught humanities course entitled *Building a Better World*. Knowing he would soon retire, Neil acted as advisor for the new course and was present at every class, including field trips to Ottawa on Sundays.

"Most Humanities teachers who came in while Neil was Coordinator have benefited from his generous mentoring," says Sophie Jacmin. "Sending articles that might be of interest to teachers; organizing meetings to discuss teaching, planning courses or student behaviour; suggesting potential guest speakers; dropping by for support during the first few weeks of a teacher's career; all Neil's gestures have shaped our vision of teaching."

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