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Healing the body and the soul – Vanier’s Class of 2008 -2009 Valedictorian can do both

For most students, coming to the end of their Cegep studies is a welcome relief; but for those who have taken full advantage of the unique opportunities Cegep offers them, it’s often a bitter sweet farewell. That’s the case for this year’s Nursing graduate, Tiffany Pontes, the first Career Program graduate to have ever been selected as Vanier College Valedictorian. At the June 16th 2009 graduation ceremony, when Tiffany bids goodbye to Vanier, she will be saying goodbye to an unusually rich Cegep experience.

Tiffany Pontes impressed the selection committee with how passionately and articulately she spoke about Vanier, with the breadth of her collegiate experience, and with the range of her extracurricular activities. Indeed, after obtaining her first DEC in Music, Tiffany decided to study in a career program in order to get job credentials. “I realized that music is difficult to succeed at,” she confides. “So because I needed a stable career I turned to Nursing, which turned out to be the three most interesting years of my life.

The most rewarding of Tiffany’s activities was a three-week study mission with other Vanier students to Malawi, in January 2008, to study the effect the HIV/AIDS pandemic on sub-Saharan Africa. “When I came back from this experience I went into Montreal Cegeps and high schools to raise HIV/AIDS awareness among young people.”

During her years at Vanier, Tiffany also attended Regional Nursing Conferences, volunteered as a peer tutor, listened to students’ concerns on the Nursing Mediation and Student Retention Committee, and worked part time at St. Mary’s Hospital. And as if all this weren’t enough, she adds, “With what little time I have to myself, I do what pleases me most: Music. I have my own Soul/R&B band and we perform in fundraising events for causes we believe in.”

“How do I find time to juggle all of these projects?” asks Tiffany. “The answer is simple: I must. Nursing brings me safety, stability, and a sense of purpose. Volunteering allows me to give back what Vanier has given me: patience, and the opportunity to succeed. As well, my hospital work helps me financially and gives me healthcare experience, and the band gives me a sense of sanity and well-being.”

“Vanier has been the bridge between two very different, yet inspiring parts of my life – Music and Nursing, and has supported me through every personal decision I have made. For this, I am grateful.”

