

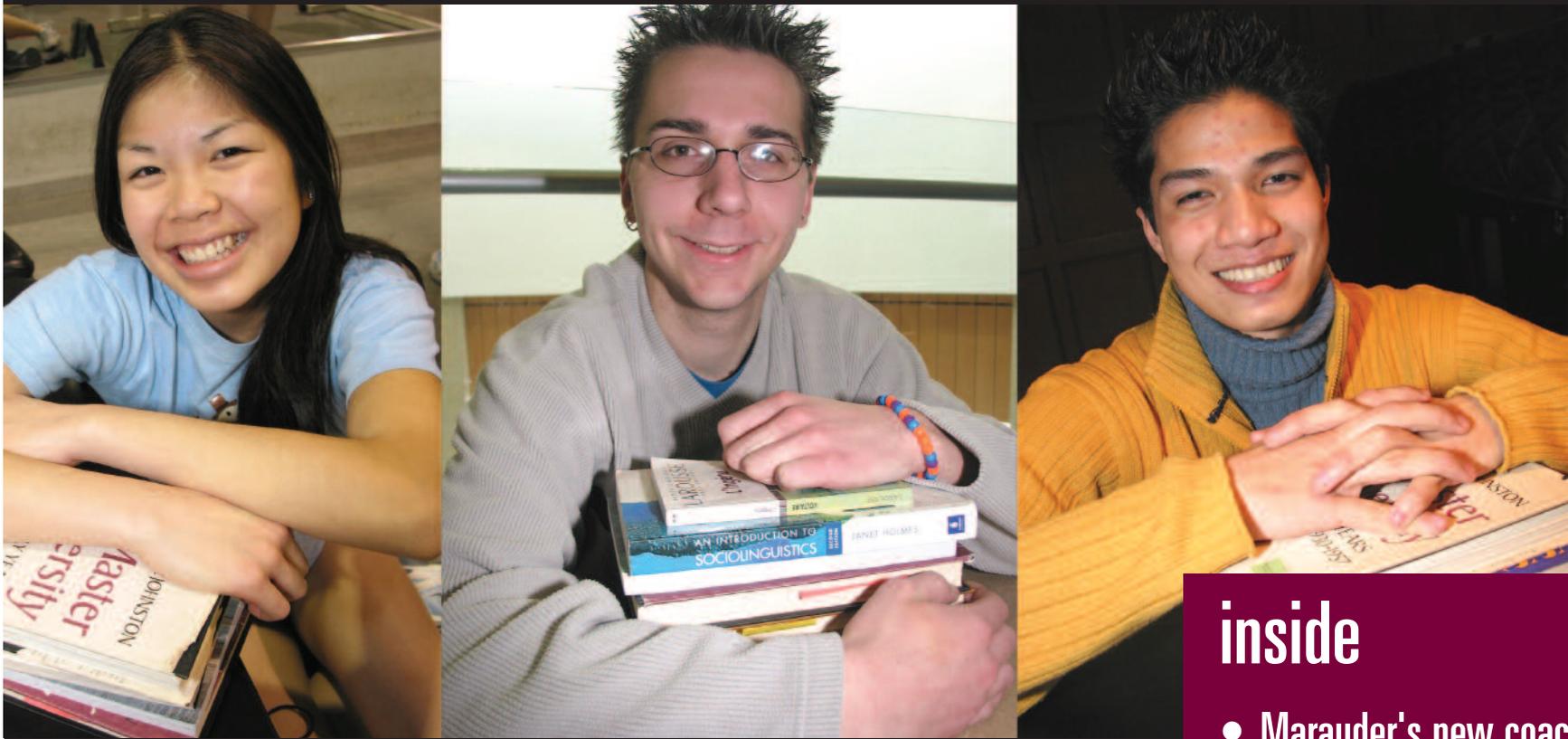
McMaster Review

McMASTER UNIVERSITY'S MONTHLY NEWSMAGAZINE

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Chantall Van Raay



McMaster students (left to right) Stephanie Wong, Matt Schmidt and Nghi Phan get the balance right when it comes to school and community activities.

inside

- Marauder's new coach
- Convocation's "quarterback"
- 90 voices strong

Refined balance

BY LISA CAINES



Top students say hard work and variety is the key to scoring high

Consistently ranking among the top of their class and earning McMaster's most prestigious scholarships and awards requires a lot of hard work and commitment. But McMaster students who received the 5,462 scholarships handed out last year say there's a secret to consistently scoring high in academics: balance.

Karen Johnson, communications officer, Student Financial Aid & Scholarships, says although most scholarships at McMaster are awarded automatically based solely on grades, the students who win them are often those who balance a commitment to school with a dedication to social and community activities.

"At McMaster we try to give every student the opportunity for funding based on need or merit,"

says Johnson. "Nine times out of ten the students who win scholarships tend to be well-rounded, and compelled to lead."

The *Review* spoke with three of McMaster's top scholarship winners to find out what helps them stay focused. Two upper-level students – Stephanie Wong and Matt Schmidt – were recently honoured with a Provost Award for their "perfect 12" or straight A grade average, and Nghi Phan is one of 165 first-year students who received the prestigious President's Award this year, for his entering average that exceeded 95 per cent.

Despite stellar academic performances, all three students manage to stay balanced, focused and engaged in a variety of activities from international development work to writing novels and making music.

Story continues on page 4

Marcello Campanaro to head Marauder football team

Chantall Van Raay



Campanaro was the team's former quarterback and strength conditioning coach.

McMaster quarterback and strength and conditioning coach Marcello Campanaro is the new head coach of the Marauder football program, four-time defending Yates Cup champions.

Campanaro takes over one of the country's most successful university football programs and will guide the Marauders in its quest for continued excellence on the field, in the classroom and in community service.

The McMaster graduate, who completed his bachelor of physical education degree in 1984, worked under Greg Marshall, the head coach of the CFL's Hamilton Tiger-Cats and former McMaster head coach, for the past seven seasons. Campanaro's appointment reflects McMaster's ongoing commitment to the players and coaches who have made the Marauders a national power over the last half-decade. He will assume the reins as head coach and offensive co-ordinator, the same dual-roles held by Marshall during his time on the McMaster sideline.

"I feel the huge expectations, but I had those expectations coming in whether I was the head coach or wasn't the head coach. In that sense, it really doesn't matter because we want to get there. We want to win and that's why I'm here," says Campanaro.

Before accepting his new position at McMaster, Campanaro served as head of physical education and head coach of the Burlington M.M. Robinson Rams for 13 seasons. He led his Rams team to national number one rankings on two occasions (1992 and 1993), appearing in six Halton championship games and capturing three Halton Division I Football titles (1993, 1994 and 2001), along with two Golden Horseshoe Athletic Conference crowns. Campanaro's winning percentage at M.M. Robinson was a stellar 74 per cent (76-27). He coached 35 players who went on to play at Canadian universities (CIS), including 11 at McMaster. Five of his former players have played at NCAA colleges and six were drafted by CFL teams.

Campanaro is a three-time nominee for the CFL/NFL High School Coach of the Year.

Over his seven years on the Marauders coaching staff, Campanaro's commitment, leadership, intelligence and technical skill have inspired the trust and devotion of fellow coaches and players alike.

Greg Marshall says, "coach Campanaro is ready to lead the Marauders. Marcello has demonstrated loyalty and commitment to the program, I know Coach Campanaro will make the team and the University proud."

Campanaro will guide an experienced coaching staff, averaging more than seven years of service to McMaster University including three former CFL players (Jason Riley, Lou Cafazzo and Joe Sardo), and four coaches with ten or more years of coaching experience in the CIS (Mark Forsyth, Jack Frimeth, Carm Genovese and Frank Gesztesi). Joe Sardo will return

for a sixth season as defensive co-ordinator of the Marauders.

"I think people will understand what Greg built was a program and I'm part of that program. And I think people will come here because of the program," says Campanaro.

McMaster defensive line coach, Lou Cafazzo, a nine-year veteran of the CFL and an assistant coach with McMaster for the past seven seasons, believes that Campanaro is the right man to lead the team. Says Cafazzo, "Marcello has the respect and support of the entire coaching staff. He was our choice to succeed Greg as head coach of the Marauders."

Dave Forde, a Marauder team captain, returning fifth-year senior and OUA All-Star, echoes the feelings of the coaching staff on behalf of the players. Forde says, "Coach Campanaro has run the off-season strength and conditioning program since I have been here. He has motivated our team to get bigger and stronger each year. I know personally, he has helped me so much. I can't wait to play for coach next fall."

Thérèse Quigley, director of athletics & recreation at McMaster, recognizes that

Campanaro is known throughout the football community for the strength of his character. "Marcello brings exactly the type of commitment to education, to the student-athletes and to winning that will make the Marauders successful for years to come. I'm proud that we have someone so skilled and someone with so much leadership ability on our current coaching staff. It speaks volumes about the quality of the whole coaching unit. I know Marcello and his coaching staff have the respect of the players and the University administration. He's going to do a great job."

With his experience off the field in education, Campanaro brings the ideal combination of skills to McMaster University where academic excellence is a critical aspect of the mission.

Peter George, McMaster President and Vice-Chancellor, commented, "Marcello will ensure that the student-athletes under his leadership have the advantages of a positive learning environment combined with a winning environment."

One of Campanaro's first decisions at the helm of the Marauder football program was to hire former McMaster quarterback and current McMaster alumni advancement staffer, Ben Chapdelaine, as a full-time assistant coach and recruiting co-ordinator. Chapdelaine graduated from McMaster in 2001 after a stellar five-year career with the Marauders.

He was the 2001 Hec Crighton Award winner as the most outstanding football player in the CIS. He still holds the CIS record for career passing yards with 9,974. Chapdelaine has also provided on-air colour commentary for The Score's broadcasts of CIS football for the past two seasons.

Campus Eye continues on page 6

— ROBERT HILSON

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Convocation's "quarterback"

Dr. Melvin Hawkrigg will continue as University Chancellor

BY LISA CAINES

Granting degrees to McMaster graduates at convocation ceremonies is a lot like football, says Dr. Melvin Hawkrigg, McMaster's Chancellor, honorary degree recipient, alumnus, and a member of the University's sports hall of fame. There's a big crowd watching, you really need a quarterback to direct your next move, and it takes a while to learn the plays.

In six years he's led more than 24,000 students to educational victory in one of the University's oldest and most important roles, and he's about to embark on a third three-year appointment as McMaster's 16th Chancellor.

"I fumbled a bit at that first convocation," he laughs. "In trying to make it personal and chat with each graduate, I listened for their names but usually forgot the degree they were getting. I granted a few degrees that

"CONVOCATION IS THE END OF A LONG HARD FINANCIAL AND ACADEMIC ROAD FOR STUDENTS, AND I TRY TO MAKE THAT MOMENT SPECIAL FOR EVERYONE."

— HAWKRIGG

year that hadn't been thought of, let alone authorized, but everything worked out all right in the end."

Officially, the centuries-old role of chancellor is the titular head of the University, presiding over the ancient convocation ceremony in a massive oak chair that bears a carved representation of an early version of the University Seal. Appointed by the University's senate, it is unique for a chancellor to be selected for a third term.

"I'm pleased to get this third extension," says Hawkrigg. "Both Marilyn and I really enjoy our duties and our opportunity to deal with so many young people, and to represent the University at this level. This opportunity has come at a time in our lives when we can share these duties together."

He and his wife Marilyn, who's affectionately called the "co-chancellor" for her strong show of support for McMaster, attend most campus events together. With five children of their own – all McMaster graduates – they know well the significance of convocation for students and their families.

"Convocation is the end of a long hard financial and academic road for students, and I try to make that moment special for everyone," says Mel. "For many graduates, they're the first person in their family to earn a degree and the whole family has made a lot of sacrifices to get them here. It's a special day when you see that come to an end."

But presiding over convocation isn't as easy as it looks, says Peter George, McMaster President and Vice-Chancellor. There's an art to staying animated



Chancellor Melvin Hawkrigg with wife and "co-chancellor" Marilyn.

and personalizing the experience. "It's not easy sitting there for two hours, but Mel always sustains his interest and enthusiasm, and he engages students, making them feel welcome and appreciated," he says.

The couple has lived in nearby Waterdown for more than four decades, and they say their proximity to the University and their affinity for the students allow them to attend a number of McMaster events. Fiercely supportive of the University and its students, they've assisted with a number of fundraising initiatives and even established two scholarships in the family name, for business and kinesiology students.

"We find young people so interesting, and we really enjoy meeting them," says Marilyn. "Attending the graduation of part-time students is also very gratifying because we remember what it's like to balance between part time studies, a spouse, children, and a career. At every event we attend we're also welcomed further into the community by McMaster's faculty and staff, and we value that opportunity to form lasting relationships with them as well."

When Mel was earning his chartered accountant designation the program was structured as an

apprenticeship. He worked long days as an apprentice during the day and attended classes at night. Newly married and expecting their first child, the couple learned to stretch his \$125 of monthly earnings to carry them through.

"We appreciate what it's like to work long, hard hours," she says. "We've been very lucky, and for us it's paid off in spades."

In addition to convocation duties, the chancellor, or "unpaid friend of the University," sits on the Board of Governors and a number of board and senate committees. But George says the Hawkriggs' strong presence at so many University events has made them a fixture within the McMaster community. Their profile in the alumni and business community as well as their involvement in activities within the Hamilton area have garnered them a number of good friends over the years.

"Mel is a working chancellor. He's committed, he brings presence to the job, and he represents us very well," says George. "He's a wonderful, engaged, warm human being, and as a bonus he came with Marilyn, who has all those same endearing qualities."

Chantall Van Raay

Refined balance con't from page 1

“We have many students who make a difference to life at McMaster because they feel compelled to make a positive impact on others,” says Johnson. “Each person’s story is inspiring, but if you talk to them they’ll insist they live a normal life – that’s the paradigm.”

Stephanie Wong

Stephanie Wong grew up at McMaster, literally. The third-year kinesiology and science student and winner of a number of scholarships spent her early years on the floor of her mother’s office at the University, colouring pictures after day care.

“For me, Mac has always felt like home,” she says. “I love the sense of community, and seeing so many familiar faces just walking across campus.”

Her family has a long association with McMaster. It’s where her parents – both alumni – met, and now her older and younger sisters both attend. Wong launched her academic career with the \$25,000 George and Nora Elwin Scholarship, one of the few McMaster awards that still places significant emphasis on a student’s involvement in the community and extracurricular activities.

But until her picture appeared on the Daily News in January with the 15 other Provost Award winners, most of Wong’s friends had no idea she did so well in school. Like many high-scoring students, she says it’s not something she likes to broadcast.

“I want people to like me for my relationship with

them, not for how well I do in school,” says Wong. “What’s a straight 12 average anyway? It’s just a by-product of working hard and studying.”

Wong believes hard work is essential inside and outside of school. She’s a self-professed Pulse addict, working out on campus five times a week. She also teaches Sunday school, attends a youth group and plays the piano at her church. She spent two years volunteering for “Smiling Over Sickness,” a campus club that visits children at the McMaster Children’s Hospital, and now gives workshops about health issues to students in residence through Campus Health. This term she’s also working on some musical theatre.

“I know I couldn’t do as well in school if I didn’t have these other activities in my life,” says Wong. “It’s so easy to just focus on yourself at school, on your grades, on your future. Serving others brings it back to reality for me. I don’t put too much pressure on myself to get good grades.”

Last summer Wong spent a month working with street kids in Brazil, with 10 other McMaster students. The group helped kids who expressed an interest in leaving the street by setting them up at the group’s base, and providing structure with activities, chores, and school.

“It was a very humbling, eye-opening experience,” she says. “It was one month of selflessness. None of us thought about our own problems because these kids are in need of so much more.”

This year she applied to medical school, but if she’s not accepted she plans to finish her four-year honours degree and pursue a career in the health care field,

such as nursing.

Wong has received a number of scholarships, including the Anna Marie Hibbard Scholarship, Class of ’44 Scholarship, the Edwin Marwin Dalley Memorial Scholarship, the George and Nora Elwin Scholarship, and the University (Senate) Scholarship.

Matt Schmidt

Between science, languages, writing, literature, and international relations work, Matt Schmidt has a lot of passion to go around.

The third-year linguistics and French literature student is an aspiring novelist, a volunteer promoting

“I WANT PEOPLE TO LIKE ME FOR MY RELATIONSHIP WITH THEM, NOT FOR HOW WELL I DO IN SCHOOL.” – STEPHANIE WONG

cross-cultural understanding of the Dominican Republic, and a recent winner of the Provost award for his perfect 12 grade average in his second year of study. The Dundas native says it was the allure of McMaster’s strong sense of community, coupled with the \$15,000 Dr. Harry Lyman Hooker entrance scholarship he was awarded, that clinched his decision to come to McMaster.

“I had the chance to spend some time on campus during my final years of high school because I used McMaster’s libraries for school projects,” says Schmidt. “I knew it was a great school and I felt comfortable here, but for me finances had a lot to do with choosing a university.”

Schmidt originally planned to study science, but at the last minute he changed his application to humanities. The scientific component to linguistics, and the quality of professors in that subject and French literature determined his majors.

Schmidt has spent five years volunteering for a Hamilton-based program called the Dominican Republic Faith Experience, which allows interested individuals to live with families in the Dominican Republic to learn about their lifestyle and culture. He works with other volunteers to ensure visitors have the opportunity to see how the Dominican Republic plays on a global scale by presenting them with issues facing citizens such as cultural relations, medical issues, health care, and sweat shops.

“I think that by travelling and seeing things the way they are, people are better able to humanize situations in a way that they can’t from reading a text book,” says Schmidt. “Meeting people helps us to link their situation with emotion and sentiment. The people I’ve met in the Dominican Republic have a good



Chantall Van Raay

Stephanie Wong

Top students say hard work and variety is the key to scoring high



Chantall Van Raay

Matt Schmidt

sense of community, solidarity and sharing.”

In addition to regular meetings with the Dominican Republic group, Schmidt balances a full course load, two teaching-assistantships for first-year Spanish and Linguistics, and – until this year – regularly volunteered at the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Centre.

“I come to school pretty early in the mornings and I attend all my classes, but I don’t do homework at school – that time is usually for socializing with friends,” says Schmidt. “After high school I didn’t want to worry so much about marks. I was more relaxed about it.”

Schmidt has also been the recipient of the Howard P. Whidden Scholarship, the University (Senate) Scholarship, the French Government

“I THINK THAT BY TRAVELLING AND SEEING THINGS THE WAY THEY ARE, PEOPLE ARE BETTER ABLE TO HUMANIZE SITUATIONS IN A WAY THAT THEY CAN’T FROM READING A TEXT BOOK.” – MATT SCHMIDT

Book Prize, the Edwin Marwin Dalley Memorial Scholarship, the Class of ’44 Scholarship, and the Swiss Minister to Canada Book Prize.

Nghi Phan

Weekly piano lessons were once a nuisance to Nghi Phan. Now that the first-year Bachelor of Health Science student and President’s Award scholarship recipient is a volunteer for Speak Easy, the campus group that pairs international students with conversation partners, he’s grateful his mother insisted he stick with it.

“I hated the piano as a kid, but growing older made me realize how lucky I am,” says Phan. “The international students I meet tell me that in a communist country there are no music lessons because they’re considered a waste of time.”

Phan came to Canada with his mother in 1990, 18 months after defecting from their home country of Vietnam and living in a refugee camp in Kuala Lumpur. They spent eight months in Quebec after a Montreal church agreed to sponsor them, but Phan’s mother later secured a home in Hamilton where she believed her son would have more opportunities by learning English.

“When I first came to Canada I didn’t speak any English or French,” says Phan. “Knowing I was at a disadvantage made me work harder. I wanted to be on the same playing level as others.”

Now he speaks French too, after living with a family in Northern Quebec last year, through a government-sponsored French immersion program.

“There are so many opportunities that students can take advantage of, but they need to seek them out,” says Phan. He plays the piano for his church once each

“I HATED THE PIANO AS A KID, BUT GROWING OLDER MADE ME REALIZE HOW LUCKY I AM.”
– NGHI PHAN

week. On campus, when he’s not volunteering or playing sports (badminton, basketball and volleyball), he’s attending sessions for the Dr. Mary E. Keyes certificate of leadership, or workshops with the Career Planning and Employment Centre.

With a high school grade average exceeding 95 per cent and keeping up with volunteering and extracurricular activities to stay competitive in Ontario’s double cohort class, Phan is accustomed to a fast pace, even in the summers.

Last year he spent four weeks at the University of British Columbia’s Shad Valley program, a four-week residential program for senior high school students that exposes them to university-level engineering, science, mathematics and entrepreneurship. This summer he’s already been hired as a program assistant for McMaster’s Shad Valley program, and he’s touring Europe in the interim.

“I’m more productive when I’m busy,” says Phan. “I need balance, and if I don’t take breaks I don’t absorb information. I couldn’t get through university if I didn’t stay involved.”

Although he had originally planned to study engineering, McMaster’s Bachelor of Health Sciences degree caught his interest. He hopes to earn a Master’s of Business Administration when he graduates, and pursue a career in health administration.

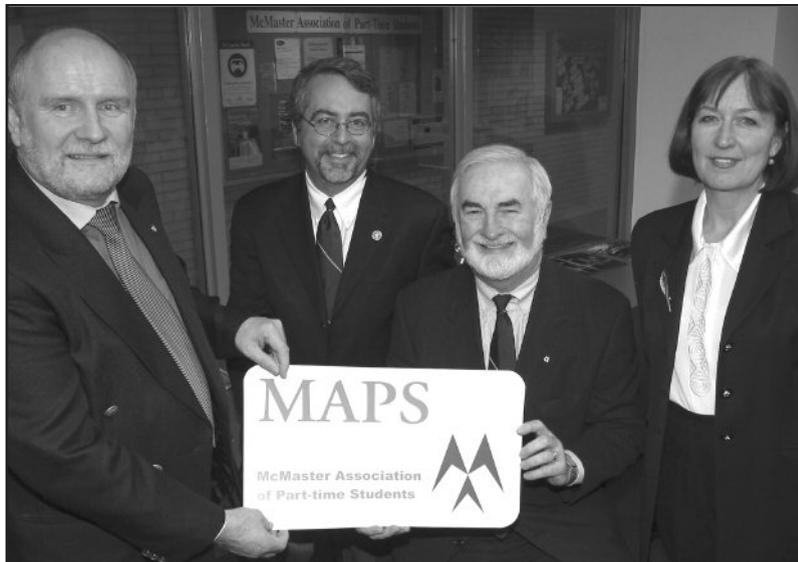


Nghi Phan

Chantall Van Raay

continued from page 2

Chantall Van Raay



In the McMaster Association of Part-time Students' office, a \$250,000 gift is celebrated with, from left, Walter Pohl, MAPS president, Rod Morrison, alumni advancement director, Peter George, McMaster President and Carole Armstrong, vice-president internal, social sciences.

MAPS bridges funding gaps for part-time students

McMaster's Association of Part-time Students (MAPS) is dedicated to helping the University's part-time students cope with the costs of achieving their educational goals.

Last month MAPS president Walter Pohl announced the organization's generous \$250,000 gift to establish The McMaster Association of Part-time Students 25th Anniversary Bursaries.

MAPS is taking advantage of a matching gift opportunity made possible through the second phase of the McMaster Student Opportunity Fund. McMaster created the program in response to a commitment by the Ontario government to match all private sector donations supporting endowed student bursaries.

As a result, MAPS' gift will be matched dollar-for-dollar by the province to create a \$500,000 total endowment. Each year, the investment income generated by the fund will furnish a variable number of bursaries dispersing funds tailored to the individual financial needs of part-time students.

"These bursaries are designed to bridge the gap that currently exists for part-time students in need of financial assistance. They simply are not offered the same access to the provincial and national student assistance program as full-time students are. That's why MAPS is so important. We're working 'full-time' to help McMaster's part-time students," Pohl said.

Part-time students frequently face the same financial barriers to education that full-time students do—however, part-time students (studying at less than 60 per cent of a full course load) are not eligible for the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP), by far the province's most utilized student service.

In most cases, part-time students are also working to support themselves and/or their immediate families. The eligibility criteria for part-time students applying for Canada Student Loans can also be restrictive in terms of the student's income thresholds. As a result, most part-time students are forced to take out high-interest, personal bank loans to finance their education.

MAPS is committed to providing meaningful financial assistance to part-time students. Students currently enrolled in a part-time degree, diploma or certificate program demonstrating financial need will be eligible for The McMaster Association of Part-time Students 25th Anniversary Bursaries.

For more information on how to take advantage of the matching gift opportunity available through the McMaster Student Opportunity Fund, contact the development office at McMaster University at 905-525-9140, ext. 22733.

— CARRIE THOMAS

Community meeting offers solutions to common issues

Approximately 200 people attended a local community meeting on Feb. 10 to discuss the community impact of student housing in west Hamilton.

Hosted at St. Mary's High School, the meeting was jointly organized by the City of Hamilton, the Ainslie Wood Westdale Community Association of Resident Homeowners Inc. (AWWCA), the President's Advisory Committee on Community Relations (PACCR), and the McMaster Students Union (MSU).

This was the second consecutive year that these organizations joined forces for a community meeting to talk about and find solutions to common issues they face. Facilitated breakout sessions were held on property standards and safety, parking and transit, and housing options and alternatives, focusing on how the University, students and community can work together more effectively.

McMaster President Peter George shared with the community how the University is planning for the coming years with Refining Directions. He provided an update on enrolment numbers for next September, campus construction, and other University initiatives. McMaster employees and PACCR committee members addressed these topics further.

Also making remarks at the meeting were Brian McHattie, councillor Ward 1, City of Hamilton; Rob Payne, president of the AWWCA; Neville Boney, MSU president; and Phil Wood, associate vice-president, Student Affairs.

There was considerable discussion about by-laws and enforcement in the neighbourhoods around McMaster University. City by-law enforcement staff and representatives from Hamilton Police Services were in attendance and committed to continuing proactive service improvements in the year ahead.

Increasing requirements for off-campus student housing also was discussed. Some local residents are concerned over single family homes being converted into rental properties. McMaster's Off-Campus Resource Centre will review alternatives with the City of Hamilton and the AWWCA to support the need for safe affordable student housing.

— OFFICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Aboriginal health course first of its kind in Canada

A new course at McMaster University focusing on aboriginal health issues will increase medical students' awareness of the healthcare issues unique to the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada.

The optional course, or elective, is a first of its kind in Canada. It is the result of collaboration between the McMaster Native Students Health Sciences Program and aboriginal and non-aboriginal McMaster medical students, who all have a passion for medical education.

"Most aboriginals access health care from non-aboriginal physicians," said third-year medical student Todd Young, chair of the committee that developed the elective.

The 30 students enrolled in the five-month elective, which began in October 2003, have attended large group sessions, participated in problem-based learning scenarios and written assignments reflecting on their own attitudes and beliefs towards aboriginal issues. In February and March, the students will travel to aboriginal health care facilities and cultural centres to gain clinical experience.

— VERONICA MCGUIRE

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Searching for the source of autism

McMaster child psychiatry expert gains first Canadian chair in field

BY PAUL CHALLEN

At first glance, it looked as if Dr. Peter Szatmari may have taken the “chair” part of his new position a little too literally.

Szatmari, 52, a world-renowned expert on autism and other severe child psychiatric disorders, was named the inaugural holder of the Chedoke Health Chair in Child Psychiatry at McMaster University this month. At the ceremony announcing the endowed chair, Szatmari set a well-worn, red toddler’s rocking chair in front of the podium as an accompaniment to his acceptance speech.

It was far from being just an amusing prop, though. Szatmari explained that the child’s chair, which he acquired for his own kids at the beginning of his medical career, is something he still keeps in his office as a way of reminding himself of his primary focus as a medical teacher, researcher and clinician: helping kids with severe psychiatric disorders and their families to improve their quality of life.

In accepting the Chedoke Health Chair, Szatmari made history as the first chair-holder in child psychiatry in Canada. There are currently 10 similar chairs in the U.S.

Szatmari has a long history of success in Hamilton. He took his undergraduate science and medical degrees from McMaster. Since his residency training both at McMaster and the University of Manchester in England, he has worked at the child and family center at Chedoke, part of Hamilton Health Sciences. Szatmari is a professor in the Faculty of Health Sciences and head of the division of child psychiatry at the University, as well as a member of the Offord Centre for Child Studies.

“Basically, it’s the only job I’ve ever had,” he joked about his longtime Hamilton and McMaster connections. “To be able to continue here is a great thing for me. It has been a wonderful place to work.”

John Kelton, dean and vice-president of the Faculty of Health Sciences said the new endowed chair will anchor a leading researcher.

“The importance of childhood psychiatric illness and its impact on society are considerable and Dr. Szatmari will continue his important research,” he said.

In receiving the chair, Szatmari said that he will continue his life’s work on autism and



Dr. Peter Szatmari with the toddler’s rocking chair he still keeps in his office.

and mood disorders.

Along with his teaching, research, clinical and administrative duties, Szatmari is currently leading an international collaboration investigating the genetics of autism. He is also conducting a longitudinal study of anxiety and mood disorders in adolescents. But Szatmari added that a large part of helping young people facing these conditions lies in changing public perceptions.

“Everyone thinks they know what’s wrong with kids today,” said Szatmari. “Everyone thinks they’ve got the answer. It’s too much television, absentee parents, not enough discipline. Bad parents, bad kids. What they don’t recognize is that there is a need for science and knowledge to understand kids.”

Today, childhood psychiatric disorders are increasingly recognized as an important and often tragic childhood group of illnesses, which can range from mild anxiety or depression to extraordinarily severe and debilitating illnesses such as autism.

Overall, Szatmari said that childhood psychiatric disorders impact and impair as many as 15 percent of Canadian children, as well as taking a severe toll on families. But, because of the ways in which these disorders present themselves to parents, teachers, other adults and peers, recognizing them as serious but treatable conditions often becomes problematic.

“Because we rely on behaviour, history and observation, kids with autism are diagnosed too late or misdiagnosed,” said Szatmari. “If we had a genetic test, we would be able to diagnose autism a lot earlier and get kids into treatment a lot earlier.”

Consequently, this genetic quest to discover the biochemical pathway that leads to psychiatric disorders such as autism is at the heart of Szatmari’s research. He said it’s not inconceivable that this pathway can be reversed and a treatment developed. “It’s like getting the corner piece on a puzzle,” he said. “Once you’ve got the corner piece, a lot of the other pieces can fall into place.”

“The goal is to improve early screening methods. If we can figure out the early signs and intervene, it’s not inconceivable that we could prevent the disorder one day.”

“IF WE HAD A GENETIC TEST, WE WOULD BE ABLE TO DIAGNOSE AUTISM A LOT EARLIER AND GET KIDS INTO TREATMENT A LOT EARLIER.” – DR. SZATMARI

Asperger Syndrome, which is a child neurobiological disorder that manifests itself in ways similar to autism, as well as other severe psychiatric conditions in children, such as anxiety

McMaster's oldest club presents piece in harmony

Final performance is most ambitious in its 100-year history

BY LISA CAINES

At 90 voices strong, the McMaster University Choir is already the professional choir of choice for a number of musical performances, including concerts with the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra. Next month, they'll present a rarely attempted piece of choral orchestral music, Franz Schubert's Mass #6 in E flat, in the most ambitious performance the choir has ever initiated.

Maestro Philip Sarabura says the growth and improvement he's seen in the choir since he joined as its music director and conductor 15 years ago has given it a newfound reputation for quality within the classical music community.

"The choir has grown and matured in terms of mindset and confidence, particularly over the last several years," he says. "This is not a 'community choir.' This group could sing with any major orchestra in the country."

Of the 90 choir members, only a small number – about 10 per cent – are pursuing degrees in music. The rest hail from all facets of the McMaster community, including undergraduate and graduate students studying a variety of disciplines, as well as staff, faculty and alumni. Sarabura says members go through an audition

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– MAESTRO PHILIP SARABURA

process that's become much more selective over the past few years.

"Despite the decline in musical training in the public school system the quality of talent I see at auditions is quite considerable," he says. "Occasionally at auditions I've been turning away people who have had substantial professional training."

Members commit an average of four to five hours per week to rehearsals, and they perform two to three concerts each year. For the first time this year solos in the Schubert Mass will also be performed by choir members, in place of the professional singers who are usually hired to perform with the group.

"This was the right piece of music to introduce soloists in the choir," says Sarabura. "It's a beautiful, romantic piece of music with wonderful harmonies, and tonal language that makes a lot of sense. It's truly one of the great pieces of



Play it again Philip. Members of the McMaster University Choir practice for the season's final performance. From left to right, Philip Sarabura, Catherine Bakker, Chris Patriquin and Laura Banducci.

choral orchestral writing."

The March performance will feature Schubert's Mass in E flat, the last major work he wrote before his death in 1828. It was also said to be his most innovative work, often compared with the music that followed him decades later from other well-known composers including Bruckner and Brahms. Joining the Choir for the performance will be the 35 members of the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra.

Although he tends to stick to classical choral music when selecting pieces, Sarabura says he often mixes up the repertoire with more modern selections, to give longer-term members a variety of types of work.

But whether members choose to stay with the choir for a number of years or join for just one season, Sarabura believes participation in the

group does wonders for their confidence and appreciation of music.

"Performing this type of music, at the McMaster University Choir's level of excellence exposes people to a different emotional mindset," he says. "Members get a tremendous sense of accomplishment because what they're doing has the highest demand, and that's very thrilling."

The McMaster University Choir is the oldest club at the University, dating back to more than a century to its historical beginning as a Baptist College in Toronto.

The choir's last performance of the season is on Saturday, March 20 at 8 p.m. at Westdale United Church in Hamilton.

For ticket information phone (905) 525-9140 ext. 26988 or visit (www.geocities.com/mcmasterchoir).