

# The best of St. Jerome's

*Ralston Award winners are the sort of people you'd expect to accomplish great and good things*

When Matthew Giroux lists all the things he's been up to at St. Jerome's University, he shrugs them off as "just things I enjoyed doing." This year's Zach Ralston Award winner has lived in residence, has been a prefect, and helps with the University Catholic Community's Sunday night student Mass as a reader or sacristan. He helped coordinate a student trip to the Dominican Republic; this year he served as the student union's chief returning officer and chaired the scholarships and bursaries fundraising committee. He is also the student member of the St. Jerome's presidential search committee.

Matt even serves St. Jerome's in his summer job: running the Conference Centre, an increasingly thriving concern. Though these are all serious ventures, he still says, "I don't take myself too seriously."

After two years of mathematics, he switched faculties and will graduate this spring with an honours science degree. In the fall he'll start teacher training at St. Andrew's College, Glasgow. Studying abroad will satisfy his urge to see the world and "do something out of the ordinary," while preparing for a career that may be in his blood, given that his father, brother, aunt, and uncle either are or have been teachers.

First presented in 1971, the Ralston Award goes to the student who represents the best of St. Jerome's. He or she must be actively involved in the St. Jerome's community, a good student, and a good Christian. In short, the sort of person who might be expected to accomplish great and good things in the future.

Although it was impossible to catch up with each of the 47 winners (before 1975, multiple awards were given), that promise seems to hold true. Despite busy working lives, Ralston grads tend to be deeply involved in their communities.

For example, Stephen Haller, BA '72, has been practising law in Kitchener for 21 years. Among many other connections, he was president of the board of Family and Children's Services, Waterloo Region, and is legal counsel for Citizens Concerned with Crime Against Children.

Robert Lang, BA '72, practised law for 15 years before earning a BEd and becoming a teacher at a Waterloo public high school. He has also headed a raft of local boards, including those of the Notre Dame of St. Agatha Children's Mental Health Centre and the K-W Catholic Youth Organization.

Two more teachers, Kevin Coates, BA '85 and Nan Forler, BA '87, joined forces and talents in marriage. Outside class, Kevin plays with a rhythm and blues group, with Nan sometimes supplying vocals. With another band, Shark Naked, Kevin has released a CD of his songs. In summer, he and Nan run an arts camp for children.

As policy planner with the Regional Municipality of Niagara, Kenneth Forgeron, BES '75, has been working to improve the recreational trails of the region, among other endeavours. As a long-distance cyclist, he enjoys the fruits of his labours. He also enjoys coaching Catholic Youth Organization hockey.

Ralston winners are often high achievers, like Dr. Donna Lamping, BA '76 (PhD Harvard), researcher and senior lecturer in health psychology at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Or Eva Kmiecic, BA '75, a vice-president of the Public Policy Forum, a non-profit organization dedicated to fostering excellence in government. "The job gives me 80-hour weeks, and I love it!" she says. Or Anita Ploj, BA '87, a lawyer with Agriculture Canada and special advisor to the director-general of research for eastern Canada, "helping the branch avoid legal problems before they arise."

The newer grads are hot on their heels. Dan Bortolotti, BA '92, who "always wanted to be in journalism," is happily employed as an Internet freelance writer and senior editor of *Today's Parent*. Dave Donohue, BA '96, is chasing a dream in Toronto, producing and writing films with his group, New Year's Eve Productions.

Nadina Jamison, BA '94, won a prestigious McConnell Fellowship that took her all over the continent to learn fundraising techniques at major universities. While corporate gifts development officer at York University, she also volunteers with several organizations devoted to the advancement of education—including St. Jerome's, where she sits on the Board of Governors.

Not surprisingly, many Ralston winners have stayed closely connected to St. Jerome's. Rob Donelson, BA '81, worked for St. Jerome's for 12 years, ending as director of development. Now he serves as executive director of the St. Mary's Hospital Foundation.

Asked to describe himself, this year's award winner Matt Giroux ducks the question and talks about St. Jerome's instead. "What makes a place a good place? A collection of good people doing good things. That's what St. Jerome's is all about." And he adds, "I hope that doesn't sound too corny!"

*What makes a place a good place? Good people, like this year's Ralston Award winner Matt Giroux.*

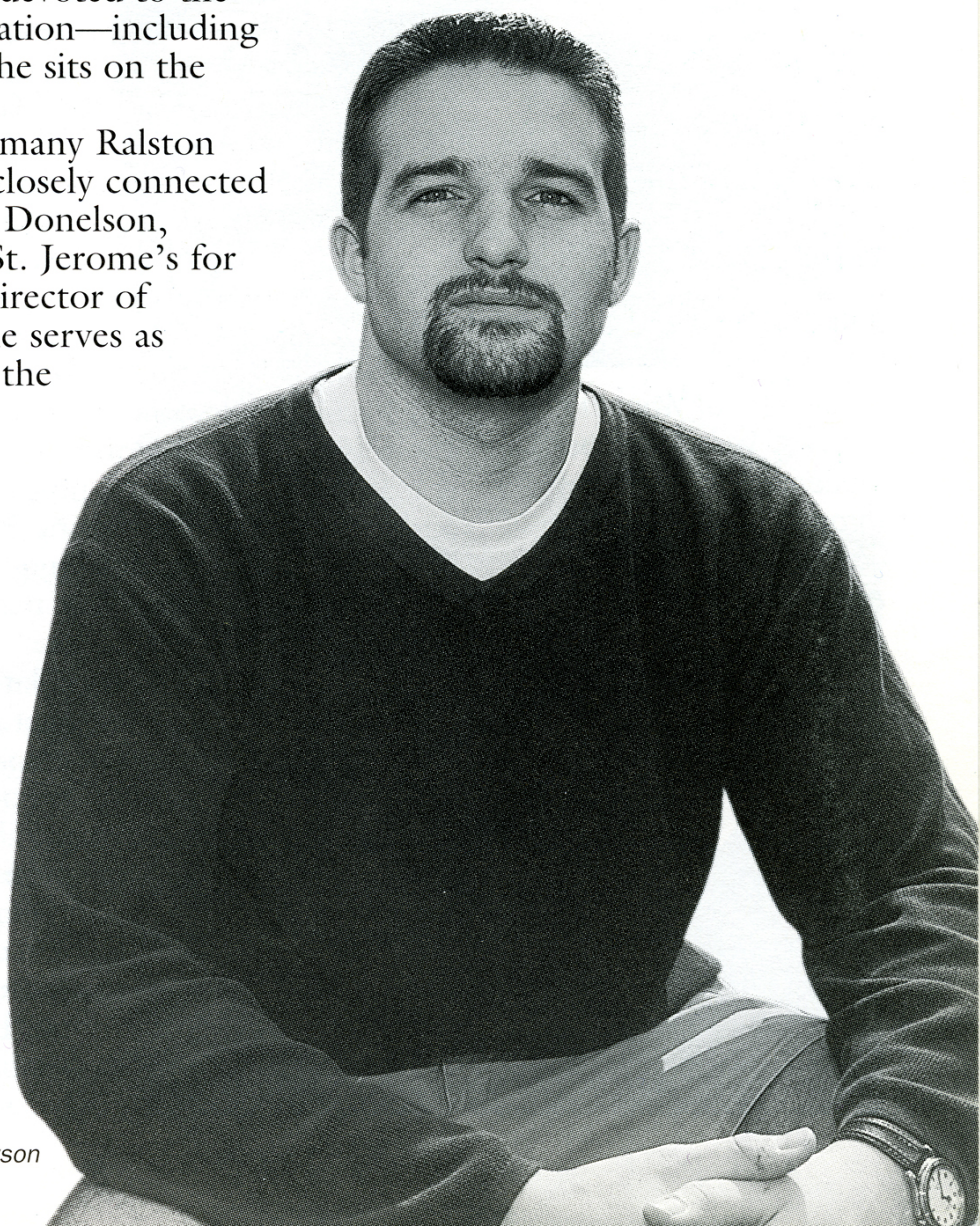


Photo: Ron Hewson