

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier University



Jillian Ritsma wins 2007 Outstanding Women of Laurier Award

For Immediate Release

**March 22, 2007
21/07**

**Contact: Peter Baxter
Director, Athletics & Recreation
(519) 884-0710 ext 2216**

WATERLOO – Jillian Ritsma has been named the 2007 Outstanding Woman of Laurier. The third-year kinesiology and physical education student, who balances a busy schedule of basketball, academics and community service, received the award during a luncheon at the Waterloo Inn & Conference Centre today.

“ ‘We are what we repeatedly do,’ ” said Ritsma, quoting the philosopher Aristotle. “I am proud and honoured to be here today to represent the women who ‘are what they repeatedly do.’ ”

“This luncheon today involves more than acknowledgement of our nominees,” she added.

“This event is a chance for the community to take notice of Laurier’s female athletes and role models. It is a chance to observe how far female sport participation has come, and the bright future that lies ahead.”

Ritsma has played for Laurier’s Varsity Women’s Basketball team for three years. She was recognized as the Female Athlete of the Year in each of her five years of high school for her involvement in basketball, hockey and soccer. As a member of the Bluewater Hawks hockey club, her team won the Junior Women’s AA Ontario Provincial Hockey Championships, the highest level of competition for amateur women’s hockey in Ontario.

- more -

Outside of Laurier, Ritsma volunteers with the Go Girls! Mentor program, an initiative offered through Big Brothers and Big Sisters of K-W. The program pairs inactive girls between the ages of 12 and 14 with mentors to build self-esteem and confidence while participating in physical activities.

“Jillian exemplifies the qualities the Outstanding Women of Laurier Award seeks to recognize,” said Peter Baxter, Laurier’s director of athletics and recreation. “She is an accomplished athlete and a stellar student, making her a fantastic role model for young female athletes looking to balance involvement in sports with higher education.”

Laurier launched the Outstanding Women of Laurier Award last year to recognize female students who combine athletic and academic achievement with an active commitment to the development of young athletes through community teaching or coaching. Ritsma received \$1,000 and a gold pendant for her accomplishments before a crowd of more than 450 people.

Thirteen women competed for the prestigious award this year, including two who joined Ritsma as finalists. Kimberley Coros is a fourth-year honours kinesiology and physical education student, who is a student leader and events co-ordinator for both the Men’s and Women’s Varsity Basketball teams and the student trainer for Laurier’s Women’s Lacrosse program. During the summer, she is involved in a soccer camp hosted by the Oshawa Kicks which hones the skills of young female soccer players and encourages teamwork.

Laurissa Kenworthy is a fourth-year honours kinesiology and physical education student who has played on the four-time Ontario Champion Varsity Women’s Ice Hockey team, and was chosen team captain this year. Kenworthy has worked for several years as a counsellor, coach and sports instructor, and recently volunteered as an instructor at the Hockey Canada Skills Camp in Kitchener.

Through the event’s first two years, more than \$100,000 has been raised for an endowment for the Outstanding Women of Laurier Award, which will begin granting awards to multiple female student athletes in 2008.

This year’s event was hosted by Beverly Thomson, co-host of CTV’s Canada AM. Dr. Dana Sinclair, one of North America’s leading sport and performance psychologists delivered the keynote address.