



MEDIA RELEASE: Cardus Hosts John Rozema Education Awards

June 9, 2016

BURLINGTON—Cardus President and CEO Michael Van Pelt has announced winners of the first-ever John Rozema Awards for Teacher Excellence at Ontario Independent Christian Schools.

Van Pelt and John Rozema, in partnership with the Christian School Foundation, presented the awards June 9 2016 at a reception in the Royal Botanical Gardens at Burlington, Ontario.

Seven teachers were celebrated for their contributions to the Christian vision of their schools and to the flourishing of the community.

Kasia Konstanty, Eric Brink, Richie VanderWier, Jonathan Devries, and Harry Blyleven, from **Hamilton District Christian High School**, were presented the group award.

Lisa Elkema, of **Laurentian Hills Christian School**, won the elementary teaching award.

David Robinson, of **Toronto District Christian High School**, took home the secondary school award.

“The quality of all the nominees, the strength of the candidates on the shortlist, and the superb professionalism of the winners all attest to a very bright future for top quality Christian education,” Van Pelt said following the awards. “As a Canadian think tank dedicated to renewing North American social architecture, Cardus is delighted to be a partner in a process that both rewards and showcases the best of what Christian schools can offer students, the education system, and the wider community.”

Dr. Beth Green, program director for Cardus Education, emphasized the uniqueness of the John Rozema Award in using rigorous data assessment to identify the winners from the teachers nominated by their respective schools.

“I’m proud our standards are so exacting,” Dr. Green said in her remarks at the awards ceremony. “To lend Cardus’s and John Rozema’s name to this shortlist is to identify with a group of educators, to point to them and say: ‘Imitate these teachers, they are going to keep growing, they are going to keep pursuing education that is excellent and that will support the next generation in Canada to flourish.’”

Of the five group winners from Hamilton District Christian High School, principal Nathan Siebenga noted they “exploded the grade 9 timetable to deliver an innovative design block course that worked across curriculum disciplines . . . and stretch beyond what many would consider a ‘normal’ classroom.”

To win the Elementary Award, Lisa Elkema made careful use of data and assessment to stimulate her young students to present urban planning ideas to city councillors, partner with adults in the local community in an analysis of dystopian literature, and write editorials critiquing local and global responses to natural disasters.

In the Secondary Award category, David Robinson's leadership let his students experience education beyond the classroom walls, and even beyond the hallways and doors of the school. The students built and installed sound proofing panels for the school building, designed Lego robots and ventured into Algonquin Park to deepen their learning experiences.

The awards are named for and sponsored by Sarnia business leader John Rozema, esteemed for his commitment to both local and global issues, and for his support of institutions such as Sarnia Christian School.

"I'm happy to be associated with recognizing this level of excellence in teaching," John Rozema said. "I'm delighted to join Cardus in celebrating the high calibre work being done in Ontario's Christian schools.

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