

## student **spotlight**

BY AUDREY R. BROWKA

# Outstanding Seniors '05

Each year, the Canisius College Alumni Association bestows its Distinguished Senior Award to up to three graduating students. Recipients of this award have set themselves apart through leadership roles and involvement with the college. The students are selected by a committee of people from the college's Alumni Board of Directors, and the offices of Alumni Relations, Student Activities and Student Development. The committee's selections are based on nomination letters from faculty, administrators and staff within the college, as well as academic standings and personal essays written by the nominees.



## PATRICK D. MCNALLY '05

Unlike most of his high school friends who went away to college, Patrick D. McNally '05 chose to attend Canisius, a local college, so that he could continue to coach grammar school basketball. Immediately, the academic experience at Canisius surpassed his expectations. Assignments were demanding and he spent long hours in the library. As a result, he had no interest in extracurricular activities. That all changed when he began working for George M. Martin '42, special counsel to Canisius President Rev. Vincent M. Cooke, S.J.

"Over fund-raising reports in the office and sandwiches at his home, Mr. Martin told me stories from his 60-year relationship with Canisius," recalls McNally, who plans to apply to law school in the fall. "Witnessing his loyalty to *alma mater*, despite lucrative opportunities for wealth and political fame, I realized that Canisius offered unique opportunities for personal growth and leadership."

McNally's conversations with Martin prompted him to experience Canisius more fully. And that he did.

An All-College Honors student, McNally pursued a dual degree in English and history. He graduated in May in the top one percent of his class (3.99 GPA) and the quality of his work was recognized with invitations into Sigma Tau Delta, the national English honor society, and Phi Alpha Theta, the national history honor society. It also left a lasting impression on his professors.

"Patrick's thoughtful contributions to class discussions, his dry wit and his infectious enthusiasm for scholarship stimulated the classroom environment and introduced topics that would otherwise go unexplored by students," says Julie S. Gibert, PhD, associate professor of history.

Outside the classroom, McNally assumed leadership roles that were equally boundless. Under the direction of English Professor Mick Cochrane, PhD, he helped coordinate the college's annual Contemporary Writers Series, managing venue details, speakers' needs and community outreach. In his sophomore year, McNally participated in campus ministry's Project Mexico service trip, during which

students serve at a day camp for children, and at Mother Teresa's home for the physically and mentally disabled. So rewarding was his experience that McNally became a student leader for the project the next two years, responsible for the service trip's overall organization, planning and fund-raising.

A frequent writer for *The Griffin*, McNally also founded and co-edited a new campus literary magazine called *Coffee-Stained Thoughts*. As founding member of the Student Union and Student Activities Assessment Committee, McNally evaluated student activities to ensure they coincided with the college's mission. And he explored ways to expand service-learning opportunities, as a member of that program's advisory committee.

McNally's many service-related efforts resulted in his induction to the DiGamma Honor Society, as well as Alpha Sigma Nu, the national honor society of Jesuit colleges. Most important, the experiences McNally sought out at Canisius fostered relationships with friends and faculty that will last a lifetime – much like those of Mr. George Martin.

## JENNIFER L. HUER '05

Jennifer L. Huer '05 hadn't even attended her first class as a Canisius freshman when she signed up for campus ministry's Alternative Spring Break. She didn't know what to expect but trusted Rev. John P. Bucki, S.J., whom she met during Welcome Weekend, when he said the trip would be an eye-opening and heart-warming experience.

It most certainly was. On the trip to Phelps, KY the following spring, Huer saw the immediate need for assistance and compassion in a community of people, whom she said were "not unlike ourselves; working hard to live a happy, well-balanced life." It was that first trip that led Huer to immerse herself in the campus community and ultimately leave an indelible impression at Canisius.

Over the next few years, she served as a site leader, subcommittee member and acting coordinator of several Alternative Spring Break and Winter Service Week trips. The opportunities not only polished her leadership skills but enabled this religious studies major to explore the different religious faiths, ethnicities and cultures of her fellow stu-

dents, and those whom she serviced. Huer served campus ministry in a variety of other ways, as well. She was a lector, a Eucharistic minister, she sat on the liturgical board, and participated in several service projects on campus and in the neighboring community.

"As a student, Jennifer brought an unparalleled level of vitality and enthusiasm to her work in campus ministry," says Bucki. "She has been a true leader and outstanding representative for Canisius."

Huer's contributions were not limited to campus ministry. For three years, the honor student (3.56 GPA) worked as an ambassador for the Admissions Office. She met with prospective students, provided them with campus tours, and helped high school seniors make an informed decision about where to go to college.

"Nothing made me happier than knowing that students, whom I met as an ambassador, chose Canisius," says Huer. "I was proud to share Canisius, its ideals and values, with other people."

Some of those students Huer met as an ambassador later became her housemates in George M. Martin Hall, where she was a resident assistant (RA) for three consecutive years. The work was challenging but it was a leadership role Huer says she holds very dear.

"I learned a lot about community being an RA in the honors house," says Huer. "It was challenging to maintain a well-balanced, successful community. It took a lot of hard work but in the end the people in the house had a very strong sense of community and friendship."

Huer takes the ideals of community and friendship with her to Agnes Scott College in Atlanta, GA where she is enrolled in the post baccalaureate pre-medical program. In the meantime, Huer is participating in a White House-sponsored summer conference, which educates women about the various ways they can represent their communities.

## JOSHUA M. ZAVITZ '05

Growing up one of seven boys, Joshua M. Zavitz '05 pursued new interests that his siblings had not yet discovered to establish his own individuality. In high school, extra-curricular activities helped cultivate his character but it wasn't until Zavitz came to Canisius that his individuality truly flourished. He says, "It is here, at Canisius, that I learned the importance of being a well-rounded individual."

A pre-med and psychology major, Zavitz was a regular in the lab of Assistant Professor Susan Putnam, PhD, with whom he conducted research on the stress hormone known as cortisol. Zavitz was also one of a select number of students chosen to write for the Encyclopedia of Anthropology. Under the guidance of H. James Bix, PhD, professor of sociology/anthropology and editor of the four-volume work, Zavitz contributed to entries on sickle cell anemia, blood groups, DNA testing and melanin. He also tutored chemistry students. Throughout, Zavitz maintained a 3.84 GPA and managed to balance the demands of being a full-time student, with the full-time demands of being a student-athlete.

"We often make a distinction between academic achievements and other campus involvements," says Marguerite D. Kermis, PhD, director of the college's pre-med program. "I would not do so in Joshua's case. The leadership roles he has taken on, both in and out of class, are a testament to his capability and his character."

Indeed, some of the greatest lessons Zavitz learned at Canisius were not in the classroom but on the ice. As captain of the college's hockey team, Zavitz became a confidant among his fellow players; he helped them find the right balance between academics and athletics; and he recognized the importance of setting a positive example for the younger team players. The "team" is what it was all about, says Zavitz. "There was nothing more gratifying than watching your teammates battle unselfishly on the ice to achieve a common goal."

Off the ice, Zavitz led players in a series of service-related projects including food and charity drives, as well as the college's Student-Athletes for Roswell Park initia-

tive. He spent Sunday afternoons playing soccer with refugees at Viva la Casa. And as a participant in the annual Canisius Community Day, Zavitz frequently rolled up his sleeves to help paint old houses, plant and prune gardens, and pick up garbage littered in surrounding neighborhoods.

"My experiences at Canisius taught me a great deal about myself," says Zavitz "They strengthened my character and taught me the importance of respect, team work and determination. Most important, they taught me to take advantage of every opportunity that arises."

Zavitz will spend the next year at the University of Guelph, Ontario, where he is enrolled in advanced science classes and research work. He then plans to put the post-graduate NCAA scholarship he received to use, in medical school.