



'00 Outstanding senior leaders

While it is the responsibility of colleges and universities to prepare students for life experiences, Canisius College stands unparalleled in its mission to prepare leaders. Our students are proof of that.

They, each in his or her own way, have distinguished themselves in academic achievement and community service. The following pages provide only a few illustrations of the many students, from the Class of 2000, who have distinguished themselves as outstanding senior leaders.

Caren Gellin is the epitome of an athlete and a scholar: An All-American swimmer, she holds the highest grade point average of the Canisius College Class of 2000.

Swimming has been a part of Caren's life for as long as she can remember.

"During the summer, my sisters and I would spend the entire day at the town pool, taking lessons in the morning and

then swimming all afternoon," she said. It was at the Town of Tonawanda pool that Caren discovered the Tonawanda Aquettes. The rest, as they say, is history.

Caren was a Tonawanda Aquette for nine years before coming to Canisius and joining the college's synchronized swim team. The team took third place at the U.S. Collegiate Championships this past

March, marking the fourth straight season that the Griffs finished in the top three at the national event. Caren and her four teammates were awarded All-American honors at this year's nationals.

From an early age, Caren also showed an interest in medicine. She excelled in science and laughs when recalling that she was one of only a few of her high school classmates

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interested in performing dissections. The fact that her mother and older sister work in the medical profession reinforced Caren's dream to become a physician.

The pursuit of her dream began when she came to Canisius on a full-tuition Presidential Scholarship. A biology/pre-med/neuroscience major, Caren had the opportunity to work with Dr. Sara R. Morris, assistant professor of biology, on her research of songbird stopover patterns in migration. Dr. Morris

Directional Patterns of Stopover During Spring and Fall Migration on Appledore Island, Maine, at a national conference in Texas.

A familiar face on the Canisius campus, Caren was a role model and mentor to many younger pre-med majors. It was her compassion for her fellow students, her love of learning and her drive for competitive excellence that shaped Caren's natural leadership.

She was valedictorian of her high school class at Holy Angels Academy and continued her exemplary leadership at

Canisius as a member of the Tri Beta Biology Honor Society, Alpha Sigma Nu Jesuit Honor Society and the DiGamma Honor Society.

As a student ambassador,

Caren sang the praises of the college and helped recruit countless students to Canisius.

"I truly believe in Canisius and want others to experience the wonderful sense of community that is shared on campus.

Caren's recruitment efforts did not stop when she went home.

"My younger sister will be attending Canisius in the fall!"

Not only did she excel academically and devote time to the college; Caren played an active role as a leader in the community.

Twice she traveled to the Appalachian Mountains to help the poor. Vive La Casa, Children's Hospital and the National Kidney Foundation also benefited from Caren's generous devotion of time.

During her sophomore year, Caren's exceptional academic record earned her early acceptance into the University at Buffalo's Medical School, where she will begin classes this fall. The culmination of her hard work

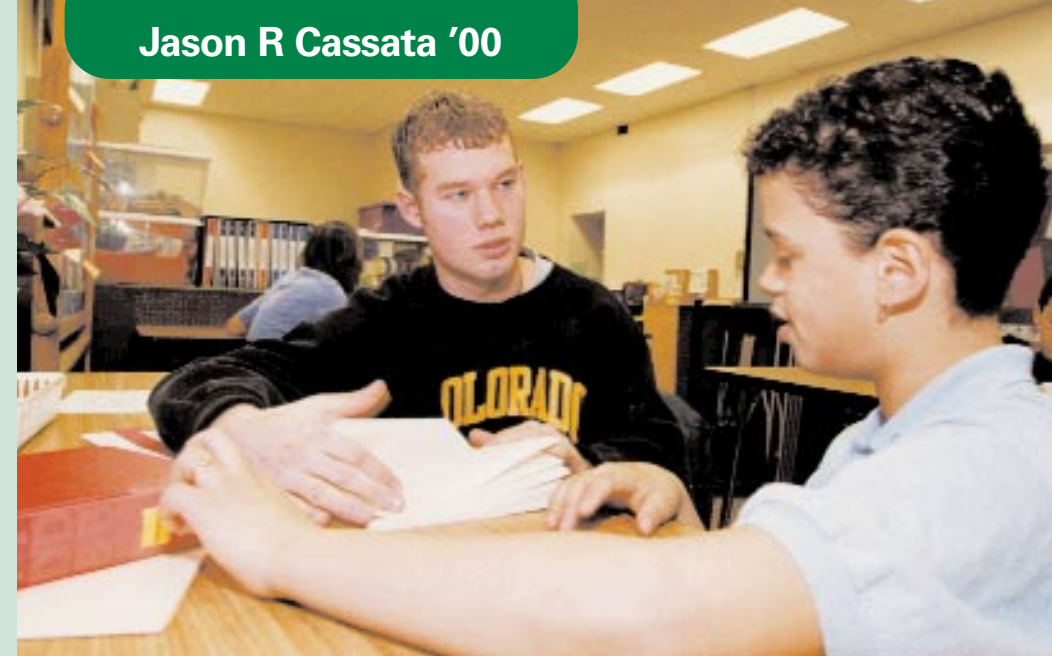
came to fruition in Caren's senior year when she received the Father Francis A. O'Malley, S.J. Award for achieving the highest grade point average in her graduating class – 3.985.

Caren received the O'Malley Award during the college's Academic Honors Convocation, where she also received the Tri Beta Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Biological Sciences and the Excellence in Ecology Research Award.

As Caren looks ahead to the future, she says she feels prepared for medical school.

"My time at Canisius has not only prepared me academically for graduate school, but prepared me for life as well." ■

Jason R Cassata '00



Ask students from the class of 2000 what they remember most about their four years at Canisius and chances are, each would tell a different tale. Most, however, would say they worked hard at their studies.

Multiply that diligence times three and you have a student like Jason R. Cassata. The Canisius senior graduated *magna cum laude* in May with a 3.75 QPA and a degree in criminal justice, political science and Spanish. The discipline needed for his academic studies alone, makes Jason an exemplary student. His dedication to the children in the community distinguishes Jason as a leader.

His ardent interest in criminal justice developed during high school when an astute teacher recognized Jason's passion (as he refers to it) for the law. At her suggestion, he became involved in the Tonawanda Youth Court where high school students participate in role-play to determine the penalties for youth offenders. The experience not only helped Jason decide which area of the law he wanted to pursue, but also revealed to him how he could make a difference through community service.

"When you're talking to the kid who did the crime," said Jason, "you get a real sense that you are making a difference. They see us as 'big kids' who are able to set an example for them."

Even as his academic plate began to fill up during his college years, he continued to be a positive role model for young people. While pursuing his degree in Spanish – a subject Jason considered more of an extra-curricular activity rather than a "class" – he participated in the Canisius HOSTS program (Help One Student to Succeed) at Buffalo's Herman Badillo School. There, he tutored elementary students in reading and speaking the Spanish language. He also traveled to Madrid, Spain to participate in the college's summer Intercamp Program, headed by Dr. Julia Wescott, chair of the Modern Languages Department. As camp counselor, Jason taught English to children, ages eight to sixteen, and was also responsible for their activities and meals outside of class. The experience changed him forever.

"I think the best thing that ever happened to me was going to Spain for the summer to work with the kids. You really start to see yourself through children and I saw how

it helped me grow and mature." Throughout Jason's young life he has gone beyond the call of duty – both academically and socially. Friends and faculty members who know Jason say it is his impressive range of community service that made him a respected leader. If you ask Jason, however, he will say his leadership abilities were nurtured by his own desire to succeed and his daily challenge to overcome Tourette Syndrome.

"I don't think I would be the person I am today if I did not suffer from Tourette Syndrome. Even though it is a mild case, it has required me to work a lot harder than the average student, but it has also influenced me to help others – especially kids."

So, as Jason heads off to law school in the fall, he will take with him the traits of a true scholar and serve as an outstanding example of his *alma mater* – where leaders are made. ■



Jeanette M. Cruz '00

She is a young adult

who values the responsibility of distinguishing herself in the community and among her peers. Family, friends and faculty members describe Jeanette M. Cruz as a natural born leader, but Jeanette is quick to admit her time at Canisius has been instrumental in molding her leadership abilities.

While much of her growth blossomed in the classroom, Jeanette says it was the hands-on-experience she gained while working as a resident assistant in Frisch Hall that helped refine her leadership qualities. Amanda Bingel, director of Frisch Hall, describes Jeanette best, as someone who not only meets the challenges laid out before her, but goes above and beyond everyone's expectations.

"She is respected by staff members and students for her ability to lead quietly," said Amanda of Jeanette. "Her leadership style is not necessarily a vocal one, but it is always a powerful one."

Just as she has shown exemplary leadership

qualities as a resident assistant, Jeanette has employed that same determination and positive attitude in successfully meeting the challenges of her academics. She graduated in May with a 3.37 QPA and plans to incorporate the leadership qualities she acquired at Canisius in the classrooms of the community.

Growing up on the West Side of Buffalo, Jeanette says, all too often she would see young, unmotivated children struggling at home and school. Scenes like that prompted her to pursue a degree in elementary education.

"I want to make a difference in people's lives and in my mind, there's no better way to do that than through an education," explained Jeanette. "I want to teach children at the earliest level – kindergarten – where their minds are being molded and they're eager and excited to go to school. I want to give them the foundation they will carry with them the rest of their lives."

Jeanette became aware of just how challenging a career in elementary education can

be while student teaching during her senior year. Still, she was not discouraged.

"I really try to go in with a positive attitude every morning. Sometimes I come home crying, but I've learned to pick myself up and get through it because the end result is rewarding."

Jeanette's dedication to children and her community began long before her senior year. As an underclassman, she frequently volunteered her afternoons to mentor young, disadvantaged children at Buffalo's African American Youth and Family Center and helped organize Kids Vote through the *Phi Sigma Sigma* sorority. She also participated in fundraising efforts for the National Kidney Foundation and frequently initiated food and clothing drives through Campus Ministry.

"I want to make a difference in people's lives and in my mind, there's no better way to do that than through an education."

Jeanette's commitment to both Canisius and the community make her an ideal representation of the type of leader the Jesuit tradition hopes to teach each of its graduates. She is a role model for her fellow students and for the young people in her community. For those reasons, Jeanette's *alma mater* will keep a close eye on her as this determined young woman makes her way into the world. ■

Michelle-Marie Estell

may only be 22 years old, but already she has lived what some might consider a lifetime. Active in the community and numerous extra-curricular activities, she graduated *magna cum laude* in May, with a dual major in accounting and Spanish. As a young woman, with so many diverse talents, Michelle-Marie proudly declares her parents set a shining example for her.

"My father always stressed education," said Michelle-Marie. "So, from the start, I understood the importance of schooling. My mother was the same way, but by the same token, she wanted me to be a well-rounded person. I think that's where I get my desire to be involved in the community."

Her rigorous academic studies began at Buffalo's City Honors High School when Michelle-Marie's teachers encouraged her to take college level classes. Her exceptional grades in those courses secured her admission into Canisius. With a 3.74 QPA, it is not surprising that the Financial Aid Office awarded her the Dean's Scholarship for each of her four years at Canisius. Her outstanding work in the accounting program also earned Michelle-Marie the department's Barbara Brock Memorial Scholarship, the Joseph Castiglia Scholarship and most recently, the Warren B. Cutting Scholarship, the William C. Gates '62 Scholarship and the Financial Executives Institute Award.

When she is not "crunching numbers" for accounting, Michelle-Marie is finessing her fluency in Spanish. Determined to study abroad during one of her semesters at Canisius, Michelle-Marie enrolled in summer classes so she could dedicate a semester to her overseas studies and still graduate on time. With a little guidance from her professors and a lot of hard work, her determination paid off. Michelle-Marie made the trip to the University of Oviedo in Spain, in the fall of 1998.

"I took several different courses in Spanish while I was there, including art, history, grammar and vocabulary. We spoke Spanish the entire time! I also had the opportunity to travel throughout the country. It was unbelievable. I had no idea I would get so much from that trip," recalled Michelle-Marie.

Part of what makes her such an exemplary leader is the value she puts on being a positive role model, both on campus and off. Rather than spending her Friday nights on the college scene, Michelle-Marie volunteers her time to the youth group at the Linwood Church of Christ.

"I like working with the young people in the group. They look up to you and

that makes you want to be a good role model in their life."

As involved as she is, in her schooling and her community, Michelle-Marie is committed to challenging herself. This summer she is working full-time as an accounting intern at the Mentholatum Company. In the fall, Michelle-Marie will begin work in the 150 hours MBA program to earn her master's degree in accounting.

A proven role model for the children in her youth group and a mentor to her fellow classmates, Michelle-Marie has distinguished herself as a leader at Canisius and in her community – a quality that will guarantee her success in whatever path she chooses. ■



Michelle-Marie Estell '00

Canisius College

is built on the Jesuit ideal of educating students to become men and women for others. Valarie A. Ciotti is a shining example of that Jesuit ideal. An above average student, 'Val' (as her friends in the Sports Medicine Department call her) gives with her heart and hands and inspires others to follow her lead.

During her four years at Canisius, Valarie participated in several campus activities, but she dedicated the majority of her time to her first passion – athletic training.

"If the athlete goes down on the field, we are the ones who respond to it. We make the initial evaluation on the condition and then later set them up in a sports specific rehabilitation program."

The program is intense and requires students to complete a minimum of 800 clinical hours, as part of their certification exam. Valarie, however, was so committed to the program that she easily accumulated 1100 hours while simultaneously balancing her regular academic load. Her hard work and perseverance did not go unrecognized. It earned Valarie the 2000 CEEP Award (Canisius Earning Excellence Program) – a grant that provided her the opportunity to perform athletic training research with Michael Dolan, an associate professor in the Sports Medicine Department. It was through this research that some of Valarie's finest talents were exemplified.

"Part of her CEEP was getting subjects to come in and do some immersion techniques with ankles," said Dr. Peter Koehneke, pro-

fessor of sports medicine & exercises. "She had to be a good talker and convince people of the value of what she was doing and she was very successful in doing that."

Valarie's ability to make people see the value in those things she holds dear to her, stretches far beyond her academics. After learning the Buffalo chapter of Habitat for Humanity was eager to establish a student chapter on campus, Valarie took the lead role in materializing that project.

"I worked with Habitat for Humanity at my high school back home," said Valarie.

"When I found out they were trying to establish a chapter on campus, I wanted to get involved. So, what we've basically done, my roommate and I, is establish a school chapter. Once a month we organize a group of students to do reconstruction work on old homes in the community."

For Valarie, her Habitat work is personally rewarding. So much so, that she spent two spring breaks in the Appalachian Mountains with Campus Ministry, helping families in need.

She is also a member of Circle K, a community service organization, which raised funds to establish the Children's Burn Center

at Children's Hospital.

As evidenced through her extensive involvement in sports medicine and her hands-on Habitat work, Valarie has proven herself capable of performing what can often be an impossible feat – motivating others. Her ability to engage people is, by far, her greatest strength and a quality that will distinguish her as a formidable leader. ■



Valarie A. Ciotti '00

other outstanding students

Maureen Cody wins Javits Fellowship

The U.S. Department of Education awarded Maureen Cody the prestigious Jacob K. Javits Fellowship this spring.

A 2000 graduate of Canisius, Maureen is one of only 50 students across the country to receive the Fellowship, which provides full tuition to a graduate school of her choice and a \$15,000 stipend per year for expenses.

She is the third student from the college to receive a Javits Fellowship since Canisius students began applying to the program in 1996. A Spanish/French major, Maureen plans to teach English as a second language and will attend the University of Pennsylvania to study educational linguistics.

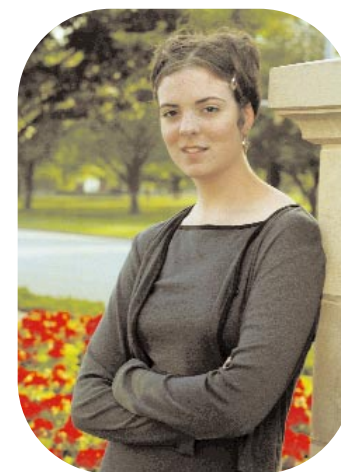


Elizabeth Mangus awarded Fulbright Scholarship

Elizabeth Ann Mangus was one, in a select group of college seniors, to be awarded a Fulbright Scholarship for fall 2000.

An English major, with a minor in art history, Elizabeth will use the scholarship to attend Trent University in Canada where she will continue her research on the cultural appropriation debate concerning Native American and ritual arts.

The Fulbright Program is the U.S. Government's premier scholarship program and provides tuition, fees, travel and research funds for a full academic year. Elizabeth is one of only 22 students in the nation to receive a Fulbright to Canada.



Student Employee of the Year

Hard work and dedication paid off for **Jennifer Sicignano**. The junior economics major was named Student Employee of the Year at a recent luncheon sponsored by the Niagara Frontier College Placement Association.

Jennifer has been a work-study employee in the Residence Life Office since her freshman year; overseeing August check-in for freshmen students, serving as lead work-study during the housing selection process and volunteering her own time to complete office projects.

As student employee of the year, Jennifer received a special plaque and a \$250 check.

Alumni Association honors Distinguished Seniors

The Canisius College Alumni Association presented its Distinguished Senior Award to not one, but two outstanding students, at this year's spring Honors Convocation.

Mark S. Collins was recognized for his exemplary leadership role at the college. The political science/history major is founder and president of the Canisius College chapter of Eta Sigma Phi (Classics Honor Society). He also served as a member of 12 other college organizations, volunteered as a student ambassador and later worked as a tour guide in the college Admissions Office.

Jennifer L. Kasprzak distinguished herself as a leader both at Canisius and in the community. A physical education major, Jennifer served as a lector and eucharistic minister for Campus Ministry. She also worked as a counselor and teacher's assistant for the YMCA and is an accomplished writer, with poetry published in the *National Library of Poetry, Best Poems of the '90s* and the *21st Century Poetry Journal*.