

To Serve and Effect:

UPEI student, Megan Miller gets national recognition for volunteer work

By Sarah K. Murphy
NEWS EDITOR

A familiar face can be seen in the millennium issue of Maclean's magazine. Megan Miller, 4th year UPEI biology student, is one of the 100 Canadians to figure on the magazine's list of people to watch out for in coming years.

Miller's presence among these 100 Canadians stems from her dedication to volunteer work in the community. Along with classes, Miller divides her time between the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Youth Volunteer Program, the Abuse Prevention Service (APS), and raising awareness against impaired driving amongst Island youth.

"Some of the people in the magazine were in there because they were 'thinkers,'" says Miller, who feels this public recognition is a contradiction of sorts. "I think that's wonderful. In my case, the way I sort of think about it is, I do volunteer work, and I don't do it to be recognized in things like this."

At the age of 13, Miller's brother Michael was struck by a car and killed as he walked a Charlottetown street.

Although the off-duty RCMP officer who had been driving admitted he had been drinking, the judge still acquitted him, ruling that there was reasonable doubt he was legally impaired.

Although Miller had been involved in several projects before her brother's death, such as working with the hospital volunteering program, further involvement with groups fighting to eliminate impaired driving certainly helped heal some of the wounds.

"It started off I guess in the Students Against Drinking and Driving group I was involved in in high school. I was on the executive there for three years. So I was very active in that sense," explains Miller, adding that she didn't start doing presentations until she left high school. "At that point [when she began presenting] it had been 4 or 5 years after Michael was killed."

"By then, you have somewhat of a chance to let that settle within yourself, and develop your ideas and sort of grow from that experience," added Miller. "I think it would have been very difficult to do [presentations], immediately following the

event [Michael's death]. I don't think I would have been able to do it immediately following."

These presentations turned-out to be a great way to channel Miller's energy.

Until her brother's death, Miller, like many, felt that people her age were invincible, that life stretched out before them and there was little to worry about. But Michael's death shattered those assumptions.

"When a younger person dies, the community, suffers a lot," Miller says. "[A] Situation like that is very difficult for everyone to deal with. So I think that when you realize that things can happen, and you should use the time

that you have to do whatever you can."

Although Miller is dedicated to helping others, she admits that volunteering is not necessarily a selfless act. Using her involvement with the APS, for which Miller is asked to present to a variety of groups in the community, she admits to getting a lot of enjoyment out of these.

"I love getting up in front of people and doing these presentations," she adds. "That there is something good that comes of it is definitely an important part of it but, I don't think you would actually do something [like this] for yourself, or to enjoy yourself."

At a recent APS presentation, when asking

her audience how many [of them] had been abused, Miller was saddened to see every member of the audience raise their hands.

"People don't consider it [emotional maltreatment] a serious issue in a lot of cases, but it can develop into a serious situation," insists Miller, referring to the Columbine tragedy. "I think it is a major societal illness."

"Being able to educate the junior high age group, which is the group that APS concentrates on, is where to begin," says Miller. "They are the next generation of parents. That is where the cycle [of abuse] needs to stop."

The QEH youth

Megan Miller
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