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Canadian post-secondary students recognized by Let's Talk Science Awards

London, ON – Let's Talk Science a national, charitable organization that engages children, youth and educators in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) has recognized three outstanding volunteers during its annual national training conference today in London, Ontario. At 40 universities and colleges across Canada, Let's Talk Science volunteers lead exciting hands-on STEM activities with children and youth of all ages in the classroom and at community events.

The **Let's Talk Science National Site Coordinator Award** recognizes excellence through innovation, site development, effective communication and contributions to science outreach and science literacy. Noteworthy contributions of this year's winner, Gabriel Potvin (University of Ottawa), include developing over 100 activities, establishing the "Science is Beautiful" competition and appearing bi-weekly on local television representing Let's Talk Science and promoting fun-filled science activities.

"My work with Let's Talk Science has allowed me to grow not only as an educator, but also as a scientist and engineer. It has reinforced my beliefs regarding the need for scientists and engineers to take a more active role in the national, or worldwide, conversation." Potvin continued, "There is also something quite rewarding about working as a Let's Talk Science coordinator, creating new science outreach initiatives, seeing them implemented and gauging their impact afterwards."

Runners-up included Ann Vandergust, Let's Talk Science coordinator at the University of Guelph and Natasha Holmes, coordinator at The University of British Columbia.

Jovian Tsang of University of Ottawa received the **Let's Talk Science CIHR Synapse Award**, which recognizes an outstanding, innovative, health research-related activity led by a Let's Talk Science Outreach volunteer. Tsang's interactive "Viral Vaccines" activity leads teams of Grade 10 and 11 students through a real-world scenario of a disease outbreak and challenges them as research scientists to invent the most effective vaccine to combat the outbreak.

Tsang explained, "This award emphasizes the need to create more engaging, application-based educational programming for youth that addresses complex health topics. I look forward to seeing my fellow Let's Talk Science volunteers tackling these topics with youth in the most fun and exciting ways possible."

Runners-up included Kaitlin Roke, Maude Perreault, and Keith Poore, all Let's Talk Science volunteers at the University of Guelph.

Sue McKee received the **Let's Talk Science National Volunteer Award** in recognition of outstanding innovation, communication and a commitment to science outreach and education. For 15 years, McKee has been the University of Ottawa's most active science outreach volunteer. Her creativity and versatility as a volunteer has seen her play an integral role in many Let's Talk Science program innovations.

McKee explained, "Receiving this award in my 15th year of volunteering is a wonderful way to celebrate. Although this award is being given to me, in my mind it is recognition of the incredible people that inspire me and support my volunteering." She added, "I love watching the children as they discover something new or I can see that all of a sudden they 'get it' -- but more importantly, they then start asking questions. It is thrilling because this is what drives the process of science."

Runners-up included Let's Talk Science volunteers Aaron Maxwell from McMaster University, Cody O'Brien from Memorial University, Avery Raess from Western University and Aaron Trotman-Grant from Queen's University.

"We are very proud of this year's winners and all of our nominees. While it was a challenging task to choose amongst the high quality nominations, we applaud the recipients and thank our national selection committee for its work. From coast to coast, our outstanding volunteers are absolutely vital to the success of the Let's Talk Science Outreach program and we are thrilled to celebrate their achievements through this awards program," added President and founder Bonnie Schmidt.

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About Let's Talk Science:

Let's Talk Science is an award-winning, national, charitable, science education organization. Through Let's Talk Science Outreach, we engage more than 3,000 enthusiastic post-secondary student volunteers at 40 universities and colleges across Canada to engage more than 175,000 children and youth in science, technology, engineering and math each year. For more information, visit www.letstalkscience.ca.