

## Magnificent dozen earn Vanier Scholarships

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By Neale McDevitt

In today's economic morass, getting a raise to match the cost of living is akin to winning a scratch ticket at your local grocery store. More than doubling your annual salary in one fell swoop is like winning the 6/49 jackpot – just ask Jennifer Gordon.

Gordon, a PhD student in the Faculty of Science, was at a conference a few weeks ago when she got a call from one of her thesis co-supervisors to say she was one of 12 McGill up-and-coming scholars who had just been awarded a prestigious Vanier Scholarship in its inaugural distribution.

Worth \$50,000 a year for three years, Vanier Scholarships are awarded by the federal government to attract and retain world-class doctoral students by supporting those who demonstrate a high standard of scholarly achievement in graduate studies in the social sciences and humanities, natural sciences and engineering, and health – as well as leadership skills. While \$45,000 is earmarked for living expenses another \$5,000 is for research.

Needless to say, Gordon, who was living on \$20,000 a year, was ecstatic. “When I got the news, I started screaming and shaking – I couldn't believe it,” said Gordon. “I really didn't think I was in the running.”

Now, instead of having to work as a teaching assistant, Gordon will be able to concentrate on her research exploring the mechanisms that make people suffering from depression three times as likely to develop cardiovascular disease. That and, in her own words, “go out and buy a really spiffy computer.”

For fellow Vanier recipient Anna Polotskaia, a PhD student in the Faculty of Education, the scholarship capped an incredible four-week period during which she also gave birth to her first child, Raphael. “It's been a pretty crazy few weeks,” she said with a laugh. “It will be very hard to beat this month.”

Polotskaia, whose research focuses on the effect Ritalin has on a child's ability to learn, also said the scholarship means more time to devote to her work. “I've been working in the field, but it is really hard to concentrate on my own research,” she said. “This will give me so much more freedom.”

Other McGill recipients include Christopher Ames, Faculty of Arts; Dana Bailey, Faculty of Medicine; Lisa Buchy, Faculty of Medicine; Sylvanne Daniels, Faculty of Medicine; Glen Deleavey, Faculty of Science; Noor Johnson, Faculty of Arts; Serene Joseph, Faculty of Medicine; Thérèse Lennert, Faculty of Medicine; William Paul, Faculty of Science; and Anqi Xu, Faculty of Science.

“This is terrific news,” said Martin Kreiswirth, Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and Associate Provost of Graduate Education. “The breadth and depth of their research – from examining proteins to digging up our human past – is extremely impressive.

“Supporting this work is of vital importance for the production of knowledge and advancement of society. Their innovations should bring great benefit to Canada and the world for years to come.”

Via <http://publications.mcgill.ca/reporter/2009/05/magnificent-dozen-earn-vanier-scholarships/>