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Canadian Foundation for Dietetic Research Awards Researchers of the Future

(Vancouver, June 7, 2007) — The Canadian Foundation for Dietetic Research (CFDR) announced today at the Dietitians of Canada Conference in Vancouver the award recipients in its first Morgan Medal program. The program recognizes students studying to be dietitians for their research projects in dietetics and nutrition.

“We launched the program in memory of and in tribute to Susan Morgan, a former manager of CFDR who passed away two years ago,” says Barb Anderson, Pdt, MAdEd, FDC, CFDR President. “Susan was an ardent supporter of the dietetic profession and of practice-based research. She believed in the importance of fostering and mentoring young researchers. We believe that this program is a fitting tribute to her memory.”

The Morgan medal recognizes students who demonstrate excellence in practice-based research and some of the attributes that were important to Susan: supporting peers; leadership; enthusiasm for, and commitment to, dietetics and nutrition; positive outlook; determination; and an ability to rise to challenges.

“We were very pleased with the applications we received for this year’s program,” says Anderson. “We learned that there are many dedicated young people in dietetics programs across the country – upcoming dietitians who believe in the value of evidence-based food and nutrition knowledge and who are passionate in their research work.”

Four students were awarded regional Morgan Medals and one person, selected from amongst the four regional winners, was presented with the National Morgan Medal at the Dietitians of Canada conference in Vancouver on June 7. The recipients are:

Jessica Sweezie, Quebec, North East and Eastern Ontario Regional Award Winner, and recipient of the National Morgan Medal. Jessica’s application was about her experiences conducting a comprehensive literature review on eating disorders among adolescent females with type 1 diabetes, and including the findings on a PEN pathway, an online resource for dietitians. In her application letter, Jessica writes, “My research became more than just a project but rather a journey. PEN has the potential to be a powerful tool for our profession. This is why I have felt so honoured to be a part of its development.”

The Morgan Medal judging panel commented, “Jessica impressed the judging panel with her description of learning through each step of the project, and about the integration of research in practice, and interrelationships between the two. Most especially, the panel, all of whom were colleagues of Susan Morgan, recognized Susan’s spirit and love of inquiry in Jessica’s description of her experiences entering into practice-based dietetic research.”

Jessica comes from the Southeastern Ontario Dietetic Internship Program in Brockville, Ontario. As the national award winner, she received travel expenses and registration to attend the DC conference.

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Allison Bunney, BC Regional Award Winner. Allison’s project focused on the nutritional impact of grocery store food hampers on food banks and their clients. Her research journey began when she visited a food bank and was touched by the many clients she met. In particular, she says, “there was a young mother with her daughter poking through the ‘day olds’ food bin. I became overwhelmed by the enormity of food insecurity. I vowed then and there that my research project would help to better the lives of those who struggled to eat, and to eat well, on a daily basis.”

Alyssa Rud, Alberta and Territories Regional Award Winner. A dedication to the dietetic profession influenced Alyssa’s choice of research project, in which she investigated the factors influencing the job choices of dietetic interns and recent graduates. As she wrote in her letter of application, “Dietitians are entering into an area of increased growth and many regions are already experiencing a shortage of dietitians; thus, proving the significance of understanding the factors that influence job choice. If we are unable to fill existing positions and new openings client care will suffer; our profession will suffer.” Alyssa is a graduate of the Capital Health Internship Program in Edmonton, Alberta.

Jill Anne McDowall, Atlantic Regional Award Winner. “My dietetic internship research placement facilitated a rediscovery of the excitement for research and instilled an eagerness to make research a pivotal aspect of my future career in dietetics,” says Jill Anne. Her project involved assessing the sports nutrition knowledge of young athletes, then developing and implementing nutrition education sessions for them. In her application letter, Jill Anne wrote that in doing her research project “I felt immediately inspired because I could finally make the connection between the research ... and the application of the results to professional practice.” Jill Anne graduated from the University of Prince Edward Island Integrated Dietetic Internship program.

The Morgan Medal program is an annual program of the Canadian Foundation for Dietetic Research. It demonstrates CFDR’s commitment to encouraging the profession’s researchers of the future – dietitians who will contribute, through their research efforts, to the body of knowledge about food and nutrition, ultimately enhancing the health of Canadians.

The Canadian Foundation for Dietetic Research was created in 1991 by Dietitians of Canada to support applied nutrition and dietetic research. Thanks to the generous support of corporate donors and individual members of Dietitians of Canada, CFDR has awarded research grants annually since 1993. To date, CFDR has funded 78 research teams across the country, awarding more than \$910,000 in grants.