

Wednesday, November 18, 2009

Annual student awards recognize social and scholarly achievements

By **Katie Land**, news editor

As the most prestigious student honors that Oakland University offers, the annual Alfred G. and Matilda R. Wilson Awards are reserved for the top male and female scholars and leaders, while the Human Relations Award recognizes a student who has made a valuable social impact within the university community.

Last year's honorees were recognized by OU's Board of Trustees on April 1, 2009. Jeffrey McDonald received the Alfred J. Wilson Award, Renee Blackburn received the Matilda R. Wilson Award and Mathew Kelly received the Human Relations Award.

All three students were graduating seniors and had built impressive academic, social and community-service based portfolios. The awards themselves are selected by a committee and require the approval of the vice president for academic affairs and the president.

McDonald's list of accomplishments is long and varied, according to the recommendation submitted to the board. He served as a resident assistant, teaching assistant, president of the Pre-Physical Therapy Club, a member of the Golden Key International Honour Society and an ally for Students, Administrators, Faculty for Equality (S.A.F.E.).

In addition, he participated in an alternative spring break in New York City working at a homeless shelter and soup kitchen, and was a camp counselor for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. McDonald will graduate in May with a degree in physical therapy.

"I feel this accomplishment brought me the greatest satisfaction and it provided me with the opportunity to impact the future of Oakland University in a positive and encouraging manner," McDonald said. "Being a resident assistant has opened my eyes to the world around me and has shown me how important it is to be a positive influence for those around you."

The female Wilson award presented to anthropology major Blackburn also brought with it proof of an active and distinguished college career.

Blackburn has received numerous awards, including the Oakland University Writing Excellence Award, has research published in University of North Texas Journal and received a research grant concentrating on early 20th century Detroit playgrounds. Active in student and community organizations, she participated in the French Club, Anthropology Club, Alpha Lambda Delta Honor Society and more.

"This award was a good way to show the substance of everything I have accomplished," Blackburn said. "Everything I've done was for other people, but this award was for me. It makes me feel like I've done a good job."

Kelly, a music major, spent his college years growing as a student leader and striving to foster unity and understanding among diverse groups.

The Human Relations Award winner and recipient of the 2007 Keeper of the Dream award used his position as a resident assistant and assistant hall director to create social change on his floor. He served as a member of S.A.F.E., the Academic Conduct Committee, the University Conduct Committee and others to become a staple on campus.

"Being the recipient of this award reaffirms that I am doing the right thing in continuing to work in higher education by continuing to break down cultural barriers and promote discussion among different groups of people," Kelly said. "This award truly symbolizes the culmination of my tenure here at OU. I wanted to make a difference, and I can leave knowing that I have."

The students were praised for their achievements by the board. "I feel very safe knowing that our future is in such capable hands," trustee Monica Emerson said.

Nominations for the 2010 Wilson Awards and Human Relations Award must be returned by Monday, Feb. 1, to the Dean of Students Office in the Oakland Center, Room 144.

To apply or to nominate a student, view the application for the Wilson Awards and the Human Relations Award. For more information, visit the Dean of Students Web site at oakland.edu/deanofstudents or call the office at (248) 370-3352.

SUMMARY

The Wilson Awards recognize OU's top male and female scholars and the Human Relations Award recognizes a student who has made a valuable social impact within the university.

Created by Katherine Land - Deleted (land@oakland.edu) on Wednesday, November 18, 2009
Modified by Katherine Land - Deleted (land@oakland.edu) on Wednesday, November 18, 2009
Article Start Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2009