

Two Montrealers have won an award of excellence to recognize their exceptional work in popularizing science with young people.

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(Montreal - Quebec) The Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) will present a medal of honour to Félix Maltais and Jacques Goldstyn, winners of the annual Michael Smith Award, next Monday at 11:15 a.m., in the Pavillon principal, Room M-415, Université de Montréal. This prize recognizes continuous, creative efforts to promote science. Mr. Maltais and Mr. Goldstyn have demonstrated such efforts through the Les Débrouillards movement and magazine, which they founded.

This prestigious award was created in 1994 in honour of Michael Smith, the recipient of the 1993 Nobel Prize whose work led to a breakthrough in genetic research and who regrettably passed away a few weeks ago. The prize recognizes ongoing and significant work in encouraging the general public to learn more about science and engineering.

At the award ceremony, the two winners will display the products of their activities, including their illustrations and books and their interactive science CD-ROM. A spokesperson will also be available to present a review of the Les Débrouillards movement.

Background information:

Félix Maltais and Jacques Goldstyn use a variety of methods to get youngsters interested in disciplines such as engineering, chemistry, physics, biology and astronomy.

"We created Les Débrouillards to fill a need. There were no entertaining activities for children that were related to the sciences. Our goal was to provide a number of different ways to foster their interest in both pure and applied sciences, a bit like a sports club or dance class where they are introduced to hockey or ballet in ways that make it fun for them. We publish educational materials for young people who like to read, and organize group activities for those who prefer a more active approach. Our television shows also give them a taste for science. Jacques Goldstyn's comical drawings are another way of teaching through humour. Using all these methods, we answer children's questions about science, especially science that affects their daily lives," says writer Félix Maltais.

The Les Débrouillards Web site, another component, is a meeting place for children and specialized science interpreters, where young students can broaden their knowledge of science. Children are regularly invited to take part in various virtual experiments at the site. This gets them interested in and curious about the basic concepts of pure and applied science.

The aim of Mr. Maltais and Mr. Goldstyn is to teach science by making it more enjoyable through the added fun of games and a bit of humour. This is why they created the Les Débrouillards magazine, the CD-ROM Scientifix - designed to make scientific terminology accessible- and the various teaching materials they have written and illustrated. A number of partnerships with the francophone media have also resulted from their initiatives.

Individuals who win a Michael Smith Award each receive \$5,000.

NSERC is the primary federal agency investing in people, discovery and innovation. The Council supports both basic university research through research grants and research undertaken in university-industry partnerships, and the training of highly qualified persons in both areas.

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