

Dartmouth teacher garners Everyday Political Citizen of the Year award

STAFF, THE CHRONICLE HERALD
Published on: December 4, 2014

A Dartmouth teacher has won a national award that honours the “unsung heroes” of Canada’s democratic political process.

Tim Halman, who teaches political science and history at Prince Andrew High School, is this year’s Everyday Political Citizen of the Year named by the non-profit organization Samara Canada.

His award was formally announced Wednesday night at a Dartmouth pub.

One of the runners up for the honour was Halifax nurse Patti Melanson. An Edmonton student and volunteer, Nessa Deans, won in the youth category.

Halman and Melanson made the shortlist for the group’s accolade from more than 350 nominees across the country. Samara Canada’s promotional material said it is a non-partisan, charitable outfit trying to reconnect average citizens with politics.

A teacher for 13 years, Halman, 37, teaches pupils in grades 11 and 12 who have taken political science as an elective. That means he has a receptive audience, “for the most part,” he said.

“The (students) know what they’re signing up for,” Halman said before the event started.

His duties include supervising a model parliament — it’s part of the course he teaches — for his young charges, and acting as faculty adviser for a school politics club.

He said he has brought local elected officials and a former politician into his classroom. Halman said students were keen to hear what the guest speakers had to say before posing pertinent questions.

“I’m always looking for those practical outlets for political knowledge.”

According to Samara Canada, this country places in the bottom 20th percentile in western democracies for voter turnout. In Nova Scotia, turnouts have been consistently low in the last few elections, with municipal votes showing a particularly lousy voter count.

Samara Canada developed its award program, launched last year, to “celebrate the unsung heroes of Canadian democracy.”

<http://thechronicleherald.ca/metro/1255482-dartmouth-teacher-garners-everyday-political-citizen-of-the-year-award>

The organization assembled a panel to judge nominees. Winners and other finalists were feted at events in Dartmouth, Toronto, Calgary and Edmonton.

Halman was nominated by Robert Chisholm, New Democrat MP for Dartmouth-Cole Harbour. Chisholm said in his recommendation that the teacher impressed him with his commitment to his students, and with his energy and passion.

That includes time spent on extracurricular activities, said Chisholm.

“His energy is inspiring many young Canadians to take a greater interest in democracy,” he said in his nomination note.