

# Canadian role-model award winners announced

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OTTAWA - Canwest Global Foundation president Gail Asper was one of the recipients as the University of Ottawa handed out four awards Tuesday night to people it recognizes as world-class role models for students.

Former Ontario attorney general Roy McMurtry, singer-songwriter Roch Voisine, Ford Motor Company director of global marketing Anne Belec and Asper all received the 2008 Distinguished Canadian Leadership Award at a formal dinner at the National Gallery of Canada.

"I was obviously very surprised and very humbled that they would consider me worthy," said Asper. "Especially when you consider (other recipients like) Roy McMurtry and Roch Voisine, who are two people I really, really admire."

The award recognized Asper for her arts advocacy, fundraising and volunteer work, as well as her service on not-for-profit boards.

McMurtry received the award for his career of public service and community involvement, including overseeing an "unparalleled era of law reform," and the role he played in creating the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Voisine's award was for his success performing in English and in French, and for his humanitarian work with UNICEF in Africa.

Belec received the Meritas Tabaret Award for alumni achievement, the university alumni association's highest award. The university says she is considered one of the most influential women in the automobile industry.

"When you think in retrospect of your career and your accomplishments, you don't think you've done so much to warrant an award like that," said Belec. "It's definitely a moment of great pride, particularly because it brings me back home. This is a place that has a lot of significance for me."

Voisine and Belec are both University of Ottawa alumni.

Asper, who has a bachelor of arts and a law degree from the University of Manitoba, says university education isn't something to take for granted, when so many people in the world - especially women - are denied it.

"Remember that this is a gift and it's a privilege, and therefore you have an obligation to not just take up space in this world but to give back," she said.

The Distinguished Canadian Leadership Awards honour people who positively influence Canadian society through their ambition, ongoing efforts and distinguished service in the community.

Last year's recipients were former governor general Adrienne Clarkson; businessman Paul G. Desmarais; former justice Claire L'Heureux-Dube; and current University of Ottawa president Allan Rock.



CREDIT: Jean Levac/Ottawa Citizen

From left to right - Roch Voisine, Anne Belec, Gail Asper, Roy McMurtry and Huguette Labelle, Chancellor of the University of Ottawa. Gail Asper, Roy McMurtry, Roch Voisine and Anne Belec are the recipients of the 2008 Distinguished Canadian Leadership Awards.