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Friend of Health Sciences Award honours influential therapeutic recreation expert

With more than 45 years of experience working and teaching in therapeutic recreation, Dr. Jerome (Jerry) Singleton was the perfect person to advise the University of Lethbridge when it established a therapeutic recreation degree program.



The U of L seconded Singleton from the School of Health and Human Performance, Recreation and Leisure Studies Division at Dalhousie University to help develop the program, a job he accomplished in six months of intense and driven work. In honour of his contribution, the Faculty of Health Sciences is presenting Singleton with this year's Friend of Health Sciences Award.

"I worked with excellent faculty and staff at the U of L, so it was an enjoyable time," says Singleton. "When I heard about previous recipients of this award and that they, on average, gave 20 to 35 years to their respective fields, I said 'This is a great honour to be recognized for six months work with the faculty.' It's outstanding; I was shocked."

Singleton entered the field of therapeutic recreation after having summer jobs where he worked with children with disabilities and found that it aligned with what he wanted to do — give a voice to those individuals who have been marginalized and empower them to reach their optimal level of ability. In the last 30 years, Singleton has worked with people who have dementia and helped train generations of people who now work in the field.

"Inclusion is a gradual process and I think it's getting there," he says. "We have more champions across Canada and there's great leadership through Alberta Therapeutic Recreation Association (ATRA) and the Canadian Therapeutic Recreation Association (CTRA). We're moving in a direction in Canada that the persons who are going to be providing service will have a minimum entry of practice standards."

“Jerry’s contributions to our program are immeasurable,” says Dr. Chris Hosgood, dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences. “We have a first-class therapeutic recreation program thanks to Jerry’s generosity, expertise and dedication.”

Singleton arrived in Lethbridge in January 2015. Preliminary work had been done by Dr. Dayna Daniels, a faculty member, and Tristan Hopper, a PhD student at the University of Alberta. Along with support from faculty and staff in health sciences and at Lethbridge College and the ATRA, Singleton began setting up the program within the guidelines of the Committee of Accreditation of Recreational Therapy Education (CARTE) and the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC).

“It really was an opportunity to give back to the profession, to move the profession forward, but also give us another solid therapeutic recreation program that’s out west,” says Singleton.

The program was designed to meet the requirements for accreditation and graduates are prepared to complete the national certification exam to become a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist. A therapeutic recreation advisory committee was established to provide consistent input. In the first year of the program, Devan McNeill taught three on-campus classes and Hopper provided two distance education classes. When additional faculty members were hired, Drs. Sienna Caspar and Pei-Chun Hsieh, all courses were provided on campus and Zac Crouse was hired to teach many online/blended courses.

“The University of Lethbridge really has a very innovative therapeutic recreation program and it’s because the village of the Faculty of Health Sciences empowered the creation and delivery of this program, with connections to the ATRA and Lethbridge College,” says Singleton.

The award will be presented to Singleton at the Friend of Health Science dinner on Oct. 4 at 6 p.m. in the U of L Students’ Union Ballrooms. Tickets are \$50 each or \$400 for a table of eight and are available online at [Friend of Health Sciences](#).

This news release can be found online at [Health Sciences Award](#).

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Contact

Caroline Zentner, public affairs advisor
403-394-3975 or 403-795-5403 (cell)
caroline.zentner@uleth.ca