Northfield News Honors Three Carleton Alumni

The Northfield News recently honored three members of the Carleton College community as part of “25 on the Rise.” (July 26, 2006). The special supplement to the paper profiled 25 Northfield citizens under the age of 40 committed to making a difference in the community. The select group of honorees includes Brendon Etter ’92, Todd Olson ’97, and Zach Pruitt ’00. In addition to being alumni, the three are also employed by the college.

Etter is the textbook manager at the Carleton bookstore. Along with his wife Ann (Shanks) Etter ’91, he is actively involved in the Northfield Arts Guild, acting and providing technical support for several productions over the last four years. Etter is also a playwright who produced the first-ever Very Short Play Festival held at The Grand earlier this spring. A prodigious writer, he aims to write a play a day and his work can be found on his blog. Patsy Dew, program director at the Northfield Arts Guild, says Etter is “... just so active and does so many things. He has a wonderful amount of creative energy.” Etter considers his involvement with the Northfield Arts Guild “... a great way to integrate with the community.” In addition to writing and acting, Etter has served on committees with the United Way and is a former board member of Northfield Day Care.

Olson is the director of outreach programs and assistant dean of admissions at Carleton. His active participation in the multi-cultural community here on campus extends into the Northfield community. Olson is an advisor to the Cannon Valley Rotaract Club, a mentor in the Northfield Mentoring Coalition’s program “78 Kids Can’t Wait, and previously served as a Northfield Rotarian. “My hope is to make a positive difference in our diverse community. We all have stories to tell and we can learn from each other, if we only take the time to listen,” says Olson. Charlie Cogan, Northfield Rotarian and senior assistant dean of admissions at Carleton, goes on to say, “The biggest strength that Todd has is that he cares about the students.... He not only goes the extra mile, he goes the extra 10 miles and treats (the students) like family.”

Assistant men’s tennis coach at Carleton, Pruitt is also
coordinator for the Northfield Healthy Community Initiative, working to provide Northfield’s youth with a better and healthier community. Pruitt is a man in demand. He volunteers as a mentor for the Connected Kids Mentoring program, serves as an executive council member for the Minnesota Alliance with Youth, is a board member of both the Northfield Union of Youth and the Tennis Opportunity Program, and is a member of the Cannon Valley Rotaract Club. Pruitt told the Northfield News “I am motivated by the belief that positive change is possible and that by working together, we can surprise ourselves by what we can accomplish. I also really like to work with fun, positive people and feel very fortunate to work with so many people like that here in this community.” Susan Sanderson, youth coordinator for the Northfield Public School District, says Pruitt “...wants to make the world a better place, especially for children.”

Written by Jenny Oyallon-Koloski ’08 and Jessica Paxton