



THE SARATOGA PALIO

Melanie Merola O'Donnell Memorial Race

DATE
7.16.08

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

George O'Donnell, President
518.584.2984
george@mmoscholarship.com

Maria Palmer Maurer, Race Director
917.521.0469
MOMhalfmarathon5k@nyc.rr.com

For Immediate Release

THE MELANIE MEROLA O'DONNELL MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND ANNOUNCES 2008 RECIPIENTS:

Jean M. LaFauci Schutt and Jillian Ruhland

SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY, July 16, 2008—The Melanie Merola O'Donnell Memorial Scholarship Fund, announces that Jean M. LaFauci Schutt, of Falls Church, VA, and Jillian Ruhland of South Wales, NY, are this year's recipients of the fund's annual scholarship.

LaFauci Schutt is a PhD candidate in counseling at George Washington University. Ruhland is enrolled in the Greater Rochester Collaborative Master of Social Work Program.

The scholarship is awarded annually to the applicants who best demonstrate the commitment to assist communities in a manner consistent with Melanie Merola O'Donnell's values of compassion, generosity, respect, and honesty. Applicants are required to be enrolled in graduate-level studies in the mental health field.

LaFauci Schutt holds a bachelor's degree in psychology and dance from George Washington University, and master's degree in psychological counseling from Columbia University. She is a nationally certified counselor and a member of numerous professional organizations, including the American Counseling Association, Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, American Psychological Association, and the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies. LaFauci Schutt is supervisor of the Community Counseling Services Center at George Washington University. She has been a guest lecturer on the topics of trauma and addiction and professional and ethical orientation to counseling, as well as a presenter at numerous professional organizations around the country.

This is a renewed scholarship for Ruhland, who received the inaugural scholarship in 2007. She holds a bachelor's degree in criminology and crime and justice, with a minor in psychology from Le Moyne College. She is a recipient of numerous honors and awards, including dean's list, Alpha Phi Sigma National Criminal Justice Honor Society, Psi Chi National Psychology Honor Society, and Pi Gamma Mu International Honor Society of the Social



THE SARATOGA PALIO

Melanie Merola O'Donnell Memorial Race

Sciences. In addition to her academic background in psychology, Ruhland has worked with the County of Onondaga District Attorney's Office Victim Assistance Program, The Jenna Foundation for Non-Violence, and the Families of Murdered Victims Support Group.

"The board of the Melanie Merola O'Donnell Memorial Scholarship Fund is thrilled to award scholarships to Jean M. LaFauci Schutt and Jillian Ruhland," said George O'Donnell, president of the fund. "Both recipients show a tremendous passion for helping people. We're convinced that they are going to make a real impact on the lives of the people they touch and we're thrilled to be able to support them in doing so."

For more information on the scholarship or to register for The Saratoga Palio: Melanie Merola O'Donnell Memorial Race on September 21 in Saratoga Springs, NY, visit www.thesaratogapalio.com.

####

About Melanie Merola O'Donnell

Melanie Merola O'Donnell lived an inspirational life, and though it was cut short, it was extremely full. Throughout her life, Melanie worked to help people in need. She volunteered with, and later became a staff member of, the National Organization for Victim Assistance, and she was a board member of the Capital Area Crisis Response Team for 8 years. She trained crisis responders for both organizations until 2004. Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Melanie coordinated and managed 28 crisis response teams in New York City and 8 teams in Washington. She also aided crisis responders in Somerset County, PA, following the attacks. She spent several weeks in New York City, helping grieving families who were visiting the site of the attacks and coping with the aftermath. She provided care to individuals affected by natural disasters, plane crashes, school violence, the civil war in Sierra Leone, workplace violence, and homicide. In June 2004, she was honored by CACRT as the first recipient of the Melanie Merola O'Donnell Award for Excellence. At the time of her death, she was enrolled in a doctoral program in clinical psychology at Antioch University New England, in Keene, NH. Amidst Melanie's professional responsibilities and accomplishments, her devotion to her husband, son, mother, father, sister, family, and friends was never compromised.

About the Melanie Merola O'Donnell Memorial Scholarship Fund

The fund was created with the principal purpose of extending Melanie Merola O'Donnell's legacy of helping others through caring and compassionate mental healthcare, with a particular focus on enhancing a sense of community. O'Donnell's family and friends have joined together to celebrate her life with this cause, hoping to identify others who share O'Donnell's commitment to helping those in need, and providing those individuals financial assistance for the pursuit of graduate degrees in a mental health field.

The fund's primary fund-raiser is a half-marathon and 5K run/walk in Saratoga Springs, NY. Over 600 people participated in last year's race, and more are expected in 2008. This year's race on September 21 will loop throughout the historic resort city. For registration and sponsorship information, please visit www.thesaratogapalio.com.



THE SARATOGA PALIO

Melanie Merola O'Donnell Memorial Race

PAGE 2 OF 2