

Students find inspiration in local Olympian and fellow alumna



By Jake Courtepatte

Pickering College in Newmarket was ripe with school spirit this month, honouring past and present students alike at an athletic banner-raising ceremony in the school gymnasium.

The annual event celebrates the achievements and championship wins of the previous school year's sports teams.

It was quite a year for the ladies, as the three teams recognized were the Junior Girls volleyball team, fall term soccer team, and spring term soccer team.

The event was highlighted by a guest appearance from Gabrielle Daleman, Olympic figure skater and Pickering College alumna. Daleman spoke to the students about dreams and goals, and how to achieve them.

?Without dreams, you'll never be able to get where you want to be. With dreams you have to set goals, smaller goals that build into bigger ones.?

Local residents Samantha Murphy, Amy Kavanagh, and Izzy Darvay-Canavor were on all three of the championship teams honoured, now in Grade 10. The athletes said Daleman is a well-known name in the halls of Pickering College.

?She's someone to look up to,? said Kavanagh. ?You just think that if you follow her path, you can do the same thing she did.?

Having just turned sixteen a month earlier, Daleman was Canada's youngest representative at the Sochi Olympics. After earning a silver medal at the Canadian Championships in January, Daleman was named to the Olympic team in February.

She competed in the individual figure skating event, where she finished 17th.

Daleman still has a number of ties to the school - many of her formative years were spent at Pickering College, attending the school from kindergarten to grade eight. Her father Michael is a senior school teacher at Pickering, doubles as her figure skating coach, and the family lives on campus.

While on camera in Russia, and with the local community looking on, Daleman smiled and said, ?Hi P.C.!?

?P.C. is like my second family, and I wouldn't be able to skate like I do without them.?

?The morning after I skated in Sochi, my dad said ?you might want to look at your phone'. The pictures from home were so overwhelming, I couldn't breathe. It was just amazing, seeing all the support.?

The speech was met with lots of applause from the student population of around 500.

?It's always key to surround yourself with a good team, and here at Pickering College, you guys have a fabulous team,? Daleman told the crowd of students. ?The teachers who support you, your friends and other classmates?they're key to your success.?

Although Gabrielle now attends Richmond Green Secondary in Richmond Hill, her brother Zachary is a 14-year old student at Pickering with figure skating dreams of his own. With his older sister as a mentor, Pickering College may be welcoming another Daleman as a special guest down the road.