

Aurora students win top honours in International Public Speaking competition



By Jeff Doner

King's Country Day School hosted the 33rd annual International Independent Schools' Public Speaking Competition (IISPSC) this past weekend, with over 150 students from seven countries descending upon the school to participate in the annual event.

Making the event even more of a winner for the school was the fact that three of its students all did very well in the competition.

Country Day's Natalie Ganzhorn, a grade 10 student from Aurora and last year's Canadian National Junior Champion, wowed the judges and crowds throughout the four-day event, which garnered her accolades as the top under-16 speaker, the top Canadian speaker and the top overall speaker of the competition.

"It was really awesome that it was at my own school, because I got to see a lot of my friends and they got to come out and watch me. That was cool because usually the competitions are far away and that's not something that usually happens and my family got to come," she said. "It was really great and it was more comforting to be close to home. It was a great competition."

Ganzhorn, who is hoping someday to be either a lawyer or actor, was also given the opportunity to perform her monologue at the awards ceremony on Sunday night.

The next step for her in public speaking will be heading to Senior Nationals in Winnipeg this February, from which she hopes to qualify for the Worlds in Lithuania.

Lukas Weese, a CDS grade 12 student also from Aurora, made the finals in all three of his categories of radio newscast (first place), after dinner speaking (fourth place) and extemporaneous speaking (third place).

"That was really amazing," he said. "I just missed having the opportunity to go to the world championships, but certainly it's just a great experience and a real honour to represent my school and my country, meet different people from all over the world. It was all in all a great event."

Weese is hoping to someday use his public speaking talents in a career involving pharmaceutical business or broadcasting.

Also participating in the event from CDS was grade 10 student Jai Singh, who also showed well in the competition.

Kersten Wyndham-West, event organizer, CDS teacher and public speaking and debating coach, said the event went off without a

hitch.

‘We’ve had a very successful tournament,’ she said. ‘This has been a mammoth organizational endeavour. It has taken us almost two years to put this together and we’ve had probably 350 people involved in either performing or coaching or judging people in this event, so it’s a lot of planning and a lot of logistics.’

Wyndham-West said it was a collective effort from many in the school, with everyone excited to be able to ‘host the event on home turf.’

She also said the students have shown a great deal of growth in participating in the event.

‘It helps the kids to achieve what they want in life, because they can articulate their ideas really clearly,’ she said.