

## Public Health Association of Nova Scotia (PHANS)

### PHANS presents first Public Health Champion Award to Debbie Smith

Non-judgemental. Creative and strategic. Humble and respectful of diverse opinions. These are just a few of the ways colleagues describe Debbie Smith, the recipient of the first Public Health Champion Award, an honour intended to recognize excellence in leadership, innovation and commitment to public health in Nova Scotia. “You are only as good as the people around you, and I share this award tonight with many others,” Debbie said during the award ceremony on October 20, 2011.



Marie McCully Collier (PHANS Board President), Debbie Smith (recipient) and Marian MacLellan (Board member)

Debbie’s leadership positions include Executive Director of the South Shore Family Resource Association, member of the Minister of Community Services’ Advisory Committee and Chair of Lunenburg County’s Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Working Group. Debbie has been working in community development and public health for over 30 years with the majority of that time focused on improving outcomes for families and children. Her innovative programming in areas such as injury prevention, prenatal support, embedded health literacy and gender garners accolades across the province.

“People look up to Debbie for her knowledge and insight”, says Paula Saile, Public Health Nurse in Liverpool. “She displays a true understanding of the realities of the people of her community, the barriers they face, their needs, and how to best to address these needs. She is clearly a role model for others.” Debbie’s wisdom and experience in working effectively with marginalized Nova Scotians is sought regularly by government and community colleagues alike. “Debbie has become the voices of these families who are seldom heard and with quiet grace, is able to educate others in a respectful manner,” says family resource centre peers, Michelle Ward and JoAnna LaTulippe-Rochon.

Debbie and her family have fostered 70 youth over 25 years, several of whom had been affected pre-natally by alcohol. Debbie says that over the years, they have taught her to see things as they are, to search for the positive and to build on existing strengths. They continue to provide her with inspiration and determination to press for meaningful prevention practices and supportive interventions.

Debbie’s professional style, philosophy and accomplishments are a testament to the historic social justice roots of public health in Canada. PHANS is very pleased to honour Debbie Smith with the first annual Public Health Champion Award.

October 20, 2011