

In Memoriam - Gillian Wood

Memo from President's Office <MESSAGE-FROM-THE-PRESIDENT@LISTS.DAL.CA>

on behalf of

Tom Traves <Tom.Traves@Dal.Ca>

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To: MESSAGE-FROM-THE-PRESIDENT@LISTS.DAL.CA <MESSAGE-FROM-THE-PRESIDENT@LISTS.DAL.CA>

In Memoriam - Gillian Wood

It is with the heaviest of hearts that I share the news that Gillian Wood, Dalhousie's Assistant Vice-President of Government Relations, has passed away.

Many of you who knew Gillian were aware that she was on leave from the university, focusing on her cancer treatment. I am certain that the warmth, kindness and support the Dal community offered Gillian during her final months inspired and motivated her, and it was greatly appreciated by both her and her family.

To say that Gillian was an essential part of Dalhousie's success in the past decade would be an egregious understatement. She arrived in September 2003 as Dal was primed to begin an era of significant growth: in enrolment, in research funding, in campus development. We knew we could not accomplish our ambitious goals by ourselves: many of our initiatives required support, financial or otherwise, from all levels of government.

As our first Director of Government Relations, and later Assistant Vice-President of Government Relations, Gillian brought a remarkable resume to the table. Prior to joining Dalhousie, she was Vice-President of Corporate Communications Limited (CCL) and led the Government and Community Relations team within CCL's Public Affairs Division. She had worked with many industry and NGO clients in Nova Scotia and the Atlantic region, and had also served at a senior level within the Province of Nova Scotia.

Gillian transformed Dal's relationship with government. Government officials were known to say they looked forward to seeing her name on their agendas: they knew they were about to engage in a passionate, substantial discussion about how collaborating with Dalhousie, as equals, could make significant gains for our city, our province and our country. The relationships Gillian built helped fund groundbreaking research, created new space for our growing student and research communities and built an understanding among our elected officials that post-secondary education is an essential public investment. Even in our uncertain economic climate, the ties that Gillian bound together remain intact - a legacy that will last for years to come.

Thankfully, the world didn't wait until she left us to celebrate that legacy. In December, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) announced that it was establishing the Gillian Wood Award, presented by the Government Relations Officers Network of Canada's Universities to recognize outstanding work in government relations at a post-secondary institution. Gillian was its first recipient. A few weeks ago Gillian also received a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal for her contributions to the public good of her community.

Gillian's house and office always had an open door for everyone and anyone who needed sound advice, a good friend or just a good laugh. She was a dedicated professional who wanted to see everyone at Dalhousie be successful and happy. She made Halifax her home, participating in several community- and business-focused volunteer organizations including the board of the Offshore/Onshore Technology Association of Nova Scotia (OTANS) in 2010-2011. She will be missed by all of us, and our condolences go out to her family: husband Richard, professor in our Department of Mathematics and Statistics; daughters Allison, Lesley and Bronwen; stepson Thomas; grandchildren Dexter and Remy; brother Greg. A memorial celebration of her life will be held. Further details will follow when known.

While Dalhousie feels emptier today without her, our university is so much stronger having known her.

Tom Traves
President