On Tuesday March 6, the McMaster Students Union in association with the Student Success Centre, Office of Student Affairs and the YWCA of Hamilton are partnering for an evening of community-building, collaboration and inspiration. The Leadership Summit for Women is a precursor to International Women’s Day, taking place on March 8. This day has been observed since the early 1900s and has since grown to become an official holiday in over 30 countries.

With more women in the boardroom, greater equality in legislative rights, and an increased critical mass of women’s visibility as impresarios of models in every aspect of life, it is easy to believe that women are more influential. And with more women in the workforce, society has begun to realize the many benefits of women’s contributions.

With more women in the boardroom, greater equality in legislative rights, and an increased critical mass of women’s visibility as impresarios of models in every aspect of life, it is easy to believe that women have gained true equality. While great improvements have been made, there is still much work to be done. Women are still not paid equally to that of their male counterparts, women still are not present in equal numbers within business or politics and globally speak up for the women’s education, health and exposure to violence is worse than that of men. The Leadership Summit has been designed with all of these things in mind – aiming to design a dialogue that acknowledges the great advancements, but also recognizes the barriers that women face in their quest to be a corporate CEO or the next Prime Minister.

The Summit will take place in Celebration Hall (located in Kenneth Taylor Hall) and will begin with opening remarks from the organizing team, all of whom have a strong connection to aspiring female leaders. The evening will continue with our introductory keynote speaker, Dawn Doyle is the CEO of the YWCA Hamilton and Dr. Sheila Drum is a former Assistant professor in the Department of English and the Department of Women’s Studies and Feminist Research at Western University. They will be discussing the underrepresentation of women in key decision making roles and leadership positions, both in Canada and within the global context, as well as the value of female role models and mentorship. The panel discussion will focus primarily on the barriers women face in achieving leadership positions, with an emphasis on how to overcome those challenges. This event is part of a global web of rich and diverse local activity aimed to connect women around from around the world. The Summit will also feature a series of vibrant and communal conversations for women around handling criticism and avoiding assumptions, non-profit/social enterprise start-ups, networking, time management and getting elected to student government. We will also be facilitating a discussion on the role women play amongst their female peers, and the ways we can connect and collaborate moving forward.

The evening is designed to welcome female leaders and encourage women to take on non-traditional leadership positions, particularly around decision-making tables and in politics, with the ultimate aim of empowerment. So often, we see women dying away from leadership positions. To provide some context, this is the first year in the history of the McMaster Students Union that there has been more than one female on the MSU Board of Directors. There are not enough women interested in getting elected or sitting at decision-making tables. This Summit is an attempt to identify what challenges women face, and ways those challenges can be overcome, please register for the Summit by going to https://oscarplusmcmaster.ca It would be a pleasure to have you there.

Interested in following the events of the evening? Follow our hashtag on Twitter #womensummit2012 or join our event on Facebook: Leadership Summit for Women.

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Each year the MSU holds an event to honour deserving members of the McMaster community for their outstanding service and dedication to student life. Whether it is through leadership, volunteer service, charitable giving or school spirit, the recipients of these awards represent McMaster’s best and brightest. Some awards, like the Rudy Heinzl Award of Excellence, are decades old and commemorate the amazing dedication and service rendered by some of McMaster’s greatest names of the past. Others, like the MSU Spirit Award, recognize outstanding achievements by campus groups in promoting McMaster pride and demonstrating dedication and enthusiasm to increasing school spirit.

Also available are the MSU Monti Scholarship, awarded for outstanding service to McMaster’s clubs, societies, charities, and campus groups, and the J. Lynn Watson Award, given to the campus group that has made the greatest one-year contribution to charitable giving. Much like the Rudy Heinzl, these awards recognize students, faculty, staff and campus groups that demonstrate a continued commitment to excellence in leadership, chutzpah and charity, and to improving student life at McMaster.

Worthy of special mention is the Honour M Award, the highest honour that the MSU bestows on its students. Presented annually since 1932, the Honour M recognizes student leadership, volunteer service and special achievement in extra-curricular activities. Recipients become part of the Honour M society and have their names added to the growing list of laureates posted on the second floor of the Student Centre.

All the awards – the Honour M, the Rudy Heinzl Award of Excellence, the MSU Monti Scholarship, the J. Lynn Watson Award and the MSU Spirit Award – are granted after careful consideration by committee and presented at Student Recognition Night, scheduled for March 20th of this year.

Nominations are due soon, so check out the awards page on the MSU website http://awards.msumcmaster.ca for more information.