Saint Viator Senior Earns School's Most Prestigious Awards

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Senior Frank Avino accepts the Andrew Johnstone leadership award from the Rev. Robert M. Egan, C.S.V., as Frank and Charlene Johnstone look on. (Photo by Chris Santucci '12)

For only the third time in Saint Viator's history, one graduating senior earned both of the school's most prestigious awards.

At Sunday's graduation, Frank Avino of Arlington Heights received the Erdmann Award --- given to the senior who best represents the values and ideals of Saint Viator High School --- and the Andrew Johnstone Award, which goes to the senior who demonstrates outstanding leadership and spirit.

Both awards were determined by votes from classmates and faculty members, and in the end, the Rev. Robert M. Egan, C.S.V., president, said the results pointed to the same student: Avino, a varsity hockey player and honors student, who has been an active leader in social justice issues.

The Erdmann Award was created in memory of Christopher Erdmann, a member of the Class of 1968, who succumbed to leukemia in the fall of 1967.

"It is given to a senior who exemplifies the spirit of Saint Viator," said Egan, who was a classmate of Erdmann's, "and has made a significant contribution to the students, faculty and entire Saint Viator community."

Besides Avino, nominees included: Katherine Bertolini and Tim Hogaboom, both of Arlington Heights; Valerie Kiebala of Rolling Meadows and Jack Nuelle of Mount Prospect.

The second award reflects the legacy of Andrew Johnstone, senior class president and standout swimmer, who passed away 20 years ago this year. His name lives on among Saint Viator students in the award instituted by the 1991-1992 Inter-Class Council.

"It is awarded to a student who is able to build community at Saint Viator," Egan said, "while exhibiting humility, humor and leadership."

Johnstone's parents, Frank and Charlene, attend graduation every year to personally bestow the award.

"Persevere in life," Frank Johnstone said. "Even in your successes and in your failures, always persevere."

It was a year filled with awards for Avino, who was crowned homecoming king in the fall, and in February received one of three Blackhawks' Alumni Scholarships.

In introducing Avino at the formal scholarship luncheon in March, Blackhawks' analyst Steve Konroyd particularly noted Avino's leadership with the group STAND, or Students Taking Action Now for Darfur.

He told of Avino taking a petition with 400 students' signatures to Sen. Mark Kirk's office to lobby for Congress to take action to stop the atrocities going on in Darfur.

The Rev. Corey Brost, C.S.V., who moderates the student action group, described Avino as a catalyst for his classmates.

"He thinks outside the box," Brost said. "He takes the bull by the horns but never looks for the limelight."

Even at the luncheon, where Avino shared a table with Blackhawks' defenseman Brent Seabrook, he talked about the importance of doing service as part of his high school education.

"I can't think of anything better than to give yourself up for others," Avino said.

That kind of humility and leadership among his peers, earned him the school's highest recognition. He heads to Northwestern University in the fall, where he plans to pursue a degree in mechanical engineering.