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WILD CENTER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR HONORED WITH CLARKSON UNIVERSITY'S HIGHEST COMMUNITY SERVICE HONOR: THE BERTRAND H. SNELL AWARD

TUPPER LAKE, NY – Stephanie Ratcliffe, The Wild Center’s Executive Director, received Clarkson University's highest community service honor, the Bertrand H. Snell Award at a dinner hosted by Clarkson President Tony Collins and University trustees on May 11. Wild Center President Nancy Simpkins, and Trustees Lynn Fox, and spouse Bill Fox, President of St. Lawrence University, Rick Godin and spouse Melissa Godin, Paul Alioto and Sally Hart, Director of Philanthropy Hillarie Logan-Dechene and Peter Shrope, Ratcliffe’s husband, also attended the dinner.

The Bertrand H. Snell Award was created by the Clarkson board of trustees in 1981 to recognize individuals of outstanding merit and to honor Snell’s significant contributions to the University, the North Country, and the nation. Snell, the congressman who introduced the original St. Lawrence Seaway legislation in 1917, was a Clarkson trustee for 47 years.

The award recognizes a new generation of leaders who share Snell’s commitment to the North Country and greater community. Recipients are chosen for their professional, business or educational accomplishments, combined with demonstrated integrity and concern for the community. This is only the 14th time in more than 35 years that Clarkson has presented the award.

"Through her role as executive director of The Wild Center, Stephanie Ratcliffe drives innovation, creative problem-solving solutions and forward thinking behind the positive change and growth to our Adirondack-North Country region" said Clarkson President Tony Collins. "Her ceaseless work to make The Wild Center and Tupper Lake a true tourism destination has brought to life the original vision of The Wild Center's founding board members. Clarkson University is proud to honor Stephanie with the Bertrand H. Snell Award."

“We are so proud of Stephanie, and grateful to President Collins and Clarkson’s Board for recognizing her achievements,” said Nancy Simpkins, President of The Wild Center Board of Trustees. “The Wild Center is the success it is due in large part to her vision and creativity. I am delighted to have been present for such a wonderful celebration of Stephanie’s work and The Wild Center.”

Stephanie Ratcliffe has served as Executive Director of The Wild Center in Tupper Lake, N.Y., since 2007, after joining the launch team as director of operations and programs, four years before its 2006 opening.
A transformational leader, Ratcliffe has been at the helm during the creation of The Wild Center’s current exhibits and programs, including all of the interior live exhibits and multimedia presentations. She has been responsible for the majority of major initiatives, including the development of Wild Walk, an award-winning 850-foot-long elevated treetop walkway.

Ratcliffe oversees several initiatives on climate change, including the Youth Climate Program, which was recognized by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy as part of President Obama’s Climate Action Plan, and by international groups such as UNESCO. She also oversaw the production of the award-winning film “A Matter of Degrees,” narrated by Sigourney Weaver, and convened at The Wild Center a national policy conference and two regional conferences on climate change.

She was one of 17 international science museum directors selected to participate in a year-long leadership program funded by the Noyce Foundation. The Noyce Leadership Fellows program seeks to enable chief executives of science centers to deepen their institutions’ involvement with their communities.

Ratcliffe also serves as executive committee secretary and diversity committee chair of the Board of the Association of Science Technology Centers (ASTC) based in Washington, D.C., serving science centers internationally.

Dedicated to the sustainability of Adirondack communities, Ratcliffe understands the many roles that museums can play, including as economic drivers, and has served as a board member of the Adirondack North Country Association since 2004.

Originally from West Virginia, Ratcliffe earned her bachelor of science degree in art marketing and museum management from Appalachian State University and her master of science in teaching/museum education from George Washington University.

She was recruited to join The Wild Center team from her position of senior director for all exhibitions at the Maryland Science Center, where she worked for 13 years. She began her career in museums at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. Prior to her work at the Smithsonian, she also developed exhibits for the Brooklyn Children’s Museum.

Ratcliffe and her husband, Peter Shrope, artist and Town of Brighton supervisor, live in Rainbow Lake, N.Y.

The Bertrand H. Snell Award assures the remembrance of Clarkson’s patron, while it recognizes and honors a new generation of leaders who embrace the institution’s mission and its role in the North Country regional economy. Past recipients of the award include former New York State Lieutenant Governor Robert J. Duffy, former New York State Senator Jim Wright, former Congressman John McHugh, former Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities President Abraham Lackman, former Executive Director of NYSTAR of the New York Foundation for Science, Technology, and Innovation Edward Reinfurt, and Dr. Francis Trudeau, founding president of the Trudeau Institute.

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Photo caption: Clarkson University's highest community service honor, the Bertrand H. Snell Award, was bestowed upon Wild Center Executive Director Stephanie Ratcliffe. Above, Clarkson President Tony Collins (right) presents the award to Ratcliffe.