

Adaptability key to historic winner's multiple successes



Colonel Carignan with local children in Afghanistan in 2010

Tuesday, June 04, 2013

Québec, Quebec — Colonel Jennie Carignan has become the first military person to be awarded the coveted Prix Hermès prize since its inception in 1977.

The award is presented every year by Université Laval to select graduates who, through their social and academic engagement, have distinguished themselves in the field of administration.

“I am delighted that they thought of me for this award. I think it’s important for the academic world to reward military careers and the contributions to society that the military makes,” Col Carignan says.



Colonel Jennie Carignan receives the Prix Hermès, the first military person to win the coveted award

Col Carignan believes the award should be seen more as an honour for the Army than for herself. But it is hard to overlook her many personal achievements, some of which the Prix Hermès acknowledges.

Her educational accomplishments alone are impressive. She not only has a Master of Business Administration from Université Laval, she also received a Bachelor of Engineering from the Royal Military College of Canada and graduated from the U.S. Command and General Staff

College and the School of Advanced Military Studies with a Masters in Military Arts and Science.

Her career accomplishments are many and varied. These are just a few:

- In 2009, she became the first woman in Canadian Armed Forces history to command a combat unit when she headed the Task Force Kandahar Engineer Regiment.
- She was presented the Meritorious Service Medal from the Governor General in 2011 for her leadership in Afghanistan.
- She was named among the 100 most influential women in Canada by the Women's Executive Network.
- She is a recipient of the Major-General Hans Schlup Award for excellence in international relations.
- She is currently the Chief of Staff of Land Force Central Area /Joint Task Force Central.

But for Col Carignan, “my greatest achievement is to be able to manage a happy career and a happy family,” a considerable challenge with four children at home. She says the same basic skill is needed to succeed in both environments: adaptability.

“Things rarely go as planned in the military, so you have to adapt. I've learned over my 27-year career that as much as I want to deliver 100% of the time, there just isn't enough time. You have to adjust your thinking. You have to train yourself and your team to be agile.”

The same applies on the home front.

“My oldest is in Grade 12 and he has been in seven different schools. It's hard, but he's adaptable. Kids look to their parents and adopt the same demeanor about change as their parents do.”

While she is pleased to have been selected as a Prix Hermès recipient, she puts the award in perspective:

“I don't work to be awarded, I work because I love my job. I don't focus on the awards that come every once in a while. What makes me happy to go to work in the morning is the opportunity to make a small difference.”

Article by Tracy Gagnon, Army Public Affairs

Photo credit: Université Laval