

## Anti-Poverty Awards for Young Victorians: 2005 Recipients

Here is a short snapshot of the 2005 Award Recipients:

The winner of the overall award was:

- Ms Kimberley Jones. Kim is a probationary psychologist working as a family services practitioner in Healesville. She has developed programs both at Healesville and in similar roles in Western Melbourne – programs that have aimed to develop self esteem and decision making capabilities for children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Programs that Kim developed herself or in which she assisted with development include 'The Seven Weeks of Self' program - a self esteem program for girls in Melbourne's outer east, a similar program for girls at the Western English Language School in Western Melbourne, a drug prevention program in the west, a 'Choices and Challenges' program about alternatives to use of violence, and a 'Journeys' art program – encouraging children to use art to express feelings that may otherwise be suppressed and then presented in anti-social ways.

As occurs for many people, Kim found that her passion for helping people in developing countries was fuelled particularly by having a sponsor child. Kim tells the story of receiving pictures, month after month in grey pencil-sketch form from her sponsor child. An idea came to mind; What about sending a small box of colour pencils to encourage some experimentation? Kim wasn't sure that anything would happen, but then, in the subsequent letter, she opened the letter to find a big, bright red heart, drawn for her. Kim's current trip takes her to Nepal as part of an awareness and fundraising campaign to support twelve orphanages in around Kathmandu. Next year Kim is hoping to involve herself even more deeply in community development in an area of great need. She is planning to travel to Liberia to work in a refugee camp, using some of her skills as a probationary psychologist and with the support services of the Global Volunteer Network organisation, to work with young children in the camp – children for which a sense of self might be the one thing that ensures their survival.

Finalists who received encouragement awards were:

- Mr Alistair Webster: In 2004 Alistair was offered the chance to take over a small community fund that his parents had established some years earlier. The fund had been started but had not been developed and was effectively defunct. In his travels Alistair had noticed patterns of entrenched disadvantage which develop along lines of ethnicity and culture. Consequently he decided to devote his philanthropic efforts to promote systemic change for groups experiencing sustained poverty in local indigenous, migrant and asylum seeker communities. Alistair and his advisory board have done a masterful job of reinventing a defunct fund. They have created a purposeful fund which enabling grassroots programs that make a real difference in the target communities.
- Ms Hayley Peck: Hayley's particular passion with respect to the eradication of poverty is in the area of international humanitarian and aid work. Her interest was developed through high school as she took a pivotal role in international affairs and aid committees, particularly concerned with awareness raising and fundraising for projects of major agencies and organisations. Since then Hayley has travelled extensively and her travels abroad have not only been tourist oriented but have involved her in the life and work of people experiencing significant disadvantage. Her next overseas expedition will be at the start of 2006 when she travels to Eastern Cape in South Africa. She will spend nine months in a rural community working alongside local community support staff as a peer educator. Her work will include development of a baseline survey and needs assessment for the community in which she works, planning and implementation of projects with the support of local and international aid groups and potentially the implementation of ongoing projects which may be supported from Australia.
- Mr Denis Cairney: Denis's application was made, as per the guidelines for the award, as a senior representative of the Ampersand Network Board. Unfortunately Denis is unable to be with us this afternoon due to a prior commitment and is represented by fellow board member Katia Rotar.

Denis, like all members of the Ampersand board, was heavily involved in volunteering as a school student. His volunteer work exposed him to poverty and disadvantage in his own City. In one role he tutored refugee children in St Albans. In another he served meals to those in need of emergency relief on the edge of the City. In yet another he provided one-to-one mentoring for children at camps held for those from some of Victoria's most disadvantaged families. Denis's personal action continues in similar roles to this day and he is the current young citizen of the year for the municipality of Boroondara. However Denis's particular passion has been in encouraging others to engage in actions of social reciprocity. He believes that, by encouraging others to 'get involved' the impact against poverty and related social ills can be maximised. Consequently Denis, and six other young people, who were thinking the same way, have developed the Ampersand Network. The Ampersand Network is an initiative to present volunteer support-work opportunities to tertiary students in a way that is attractive and relevant to them. The network has grown quickly and as the Ampersand website says: Volunteer work inevitably exposes people to some of the most pressing social issues that exist in our communities. The experience of volunteering can provide students with a perspective they might not otherwise gain from uni life, and may help to produce the more broad-minded, socially engaged and compassionate generation of leaders we will require to meet the challenges of the future.

- Ms Alana Smith: Alana is a second year Arts/Law student with a passion for Human Rights and improvement of life conditions in the developing World. It seems appropriate therefore that she should be the chairperson of Vision Generation – or VGen – the youth movement of World Vision. Alana's involvement with VGen began after undertaking a World Vision study tour to India and then being selected as a Youth Ambassador for the organisation, having the chance to share her experience with other people her age and younger. She has been active in awareness raising campaigns, VGen's current fundraising campaign to support vocational training for women in Palestine and the development of VGen in Australia at a federal or whole-of-country level. At the end of this year she will venture to South America for two months of volunteer support work in Quito, Ecuador.