

Anti-Poverty Awards for Young Victorians: 2006 Recipients

Here is a short snapshot of the 2006 Award Recipients:

The overall award recipients were:

- Ms Katia Rotar. For the past four years Katia has been highly committed to volunteer work that engages young people in being active and outspoken on issues of social and environmental justice. Katia is a founding member of the Ampersand Network, which aims to increase the proportion of young people volunteering in our community. She also spent three Months in Brazil – working with young Afro-Brazilians in fringe communities using dance and theatre to help them grow in their understanding of their African backgrounds and their rights as Brazilian citizens. She also worked to bring two of the young people she worked with to Australia to perform with Indigenous groups in Sydney and in a Latin dance festival in Melbourne (and gave them the chance to travel home via Africa and further explore their African backgrounds)

Next year Katia will continue her focus on youth empowerment when she seeks to live and work as a volunteer in a rural community in South Africa for a year, on a health education program. Katia will work with fellow young South African volunteers and together they will be trained as Peer Educators and mentors, raising awareness about HIV/AIDS and adolescent sexual health among local youth.

Katia says that in a developing community where 55% of the population is under 22 years old, and the HIV infection rate is approaching 24%, communicating life-saving information in a manner that is relevant and youth-friendly is the key to empowering young people to take control of their own lives, which in turn, is absolutely central to the alleviation of poverty on an local and global scale.

- Ms Anita George: Anita has been employed as a lawyer with the Human Rights and Civil Law Section of Victoria Legal Aid for over 2 years. As a human rights lawyer, she practices in several areas of law, specifically mental health law, anti-discrimination, and immigration law working with a significant case-load and with many disadvantaged and marginalized people within the community.

She spent the past 10 months organising an event known as 'ASID'- Asylum Seeker Independence Day - a benefit gig that was held at the East Brunswick Club on Sunday 3 September 2006 to raise funds and awareness in relation to asylum seekers in the community who lodge a protection visa after more than 45 days of arriving in Australia and are consequently placed on a Bridging Visa E with no work rights, access to Medicare or Centrelink benefits. She also works as a professional musician and will be performing at two Make Poverty History gigs in Hobart and the North West of Tasmania as part of Anti-Poverty Week this week.

Finalists who received encouragement awards were:

- Mr Matthew Gould: Matthew's voluntary work and community engagement have only been a recent additions to a decade of heavy involvement in the performing arts with various companies across Melbourne. In just two years of voluntary work, Matthew has progressively increased his skills and shaped his vision on effective means of combating poverty, namely through education and awareness.
In 2004 Matthew started voluntary work with the Sudanese-Australian Integrated Learning Program (SAIL). SAIL provides free English support & community services to the Sudanese refugee community in Melbourne. Matthew began as an English tutor, but in 2005 he took on the role of Saturday Coordinator for Dandenong SAIL. In 2006 Matthew also started voluntary work with the Oaktree Foundation within the Oaktree Interactive team. Matthew has taken a leading role in writing, piloting, and running many interactive workshops in both primary and secondary schools, exposing students to the issues that cause entrenched poverty in society. In 2007 he will

be part of a program that engages new University of Melbourne students during Orientation Week..

- Ms Megan Jackson: Meg has had the opportunity to spend time in places of extreme poverty and grapple with the response we must make as an international community. In India she worked specifically on the contentious laws of sexual assault, presenting her research and proposed Bill to a meeting of State Ministers on behalf of the Lawyers Collective. On her first visit to South Africa she volunteered at a cluster foster home in KwaZuluNatal, caring for children orphaned by HIV/AIDS and violence. Meg has volunteered for the Oaktree Foundation since its inception and is currently its International Communications Coordinator and a board member. This year Meg is directing a new initiative called Global Emerging Leaders. Global Emerging Leaders' which will focus on providing leadership training for young people that is characterised by vision and action. A qualified lawyer, Meg is undertaking her LLM under the supervision of former Federal Human Rights Commissioner Brian Burdekin and will be travelling to Mongolia and Fiji later this year and in 2007 to conduct research on National Human Rights Institutions.
- Ms Anne Adams: Anne's anti-poverty work started in earnest after a trip to Tanzania. She made that trip after seeing an advertisement calling for volunteers in The Big Issue. Since that trip Anne has helped to establish Volunteer Africa, an international charity that sends volunteers to Tanzania for an experience of development. Anne is the Australian Country Coordinator. After a second trip to Tanzania and gaining further understanding of the health care system, Anne was inspired to fundraise and she built two dispensaries that each give access to primary healthcare to 10,000 people. Last year she decided to formalise her fundraising and founded Health Australia and Tanzania (HAT). HAT's purpose is to fundraise for development projects that improve the health outcomes for people in rural Tanzania. HAT is currently working in the Singida region of Tanzania, partnering with a local NGO that implements the projects HAT funds. In HAT's first year it has raised \$21,000 and has approximately 90 members.
- Mr Keirnan Fowler: In January 2007, Keirnan will travel to Uganda as a volunteer for Student Partnership Worldwide. Keirnan will be participating in an environmental education program, which is run in a rural Ugandan village. The 5-month program addresses issues such as sustainable agriculture, soil erosion and deforestation, and will be coordinated in conjunction with Ugandan volunteers. Keirnan has recently completed study in Environmental Engineering and Science at the University of Melbourne. He hopes to be able to use knowledge gained from his studies, on his placement in Uganda. He also has many years experience working with young people as a director of a local youth group and through running youth camps. Keirnan embarks on this journey with the hope that it will broaden his perspectives of other cultures and issues such as poverty and resource use, to enable him to be a more informed and passionate citizen of the global community.