

ANTI-POVERTY AWARDS ANNOUNCED

YOUNG VICTORIANS LEADING THE WAY

Connections UnitingCare, one of Victoria's largest welfare agencies and the largest UnitingCare agency in Victoria has announced the recipients of unique awards that recognise young Victorians working to eradicate poverty. A group of prominent Victorians will present the 2008 Anti-Poverty Awards for Young Victorians in a special ceremony in Mount Waverley.

The Anti-Poverty Awards began in 2004 with the aim to seek out young people who are, by themselves or as the senior representative of a team, making a significant contribution to the eradication of poverty.

'These Anti-Poverty Awards for young Victorians are a great way for Connections and collaborating Uniting Church agencies to bring young people to prominence, who are making a difference in their community,' said Adrian Pyle, Chairperson of Connections.

This year's winner Abdulkadir Osman Muse, came to Australia with his family as a Somali refugee after the civil war and gained status to live in Australia under the refugee humanitarian program. He has since spent his time actively planning and delivering programs that directly target young Africans in the areas of education and social engagement, as well as advocating through the United Nations for Somalia to sign the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

'Abdul's story is one of hardship and inspiration. The passion in which he spoke of his new homeland and his desire to help the people of his birthplace, to which he feels a strong connection, deeply inspired and moved the awards committee,' Adrian said.

With his award, Abdul is hoping to further his skills and training in the Human Rights Courses and bring this insight back to the community. Two other nominees, who are receiving an Encouragement Award, are also hoping that the Anti-Poverty Awards will help them to further their initiatives in the wider community.

Emil Kogan a young entrepreneur has founded the Embrace Education a group helping culturally and linguistically diverse students and Fiona Stenning who has organised the Uthando Project at her school. Fiona, an MLC student, is helping children in Kwa Zulu Natal whose parents are affected by HIV/AIDS. This project entailed members of Fiona's school and local Uniting Church making dolls that are donated to children.

Being chosen as the recipient of the Anti-Poverty Awards allows participants to have a tailored anti-poverty, self development experience. One past participant Katia Rotar, travelled and worked in South African raising awareness of HIV/AIDS and adolescent sexual health will also be present to discuss her experience.

Connections is a proud supporter of these awards as it further strengthens the organisation's position as a strong community participant. Working in one of the fastest growth corridors in Victoria, the south-east, Connections is simultaneously opening its new office in Mount Waverley.

PHOTO & INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITY – 11am, Friday 12 December, 31 Hardner Road, Mount Waverley.

Media: Connections Chairperson, Adrian Pyle is available for interview. Contact Connections Communications and Fundraising Manager, Matt Clear on 03 9271 0800 or 0403 229 094 or matt.clear@connections.org.au

Connections is a community welfare agency of the Uniting Church's UnitingCare network in Australia providing a range of innovative and early intervention programs that support vulnerable children, young people and their families giving them a better chance in life now and in the future.

More information at www.connections.org.au