

Here is a snapshot of the 2009 Connections UnitingCare Anti-Poverty Award recipients:

The overall Award recipients were:

>> Sarah Elston & Caitlin Grigsby: When working as Board of Directors for Monash University Gippsland Student Union, Sarah and Caitlin recognised the lack of opportunities that existed for students who were facing hardships, particularly women. With that in mind in 2007, Sarah and Caitlin decided to hold an event during Blue Stockings Week; a week that recognises women's rights and achievements through education, with the hope of raising enough money to offer one scholarship to a student. However the event was such a success that the girls were able to award 11 scholarships to the value of \$1000 each.

After the amazing success of this event, The Blue Stockings Association was formed with the support of local Gippsland businesses and general community with the aim of empowering women through education by the granting of educational scholarships.

Scholarships are awarded to women, many of whom are mature aged students, Indigenous women, women who have experienced considerable hardship and challenges in their life and without the support would more likely have to leave their studies. To date, the association has distributed more than \$40,000 in scholarships.

With their award, Sarah and Caitlin are hoping to put it towards making their website more publicly accessible to women in Gippsland and to realise their dream of making the Blue Stockings Association a national initiative in the near future.

Finalists who received Encouragement Awards were:

>> Elliot Costello: Elliot co-founded Y-Gap (Y Generation Against Poverty) a volunteer-based organisation that offers its members the opportunity to join in practical and global initiatives by volunteering their services. In 2008, Elliot led a group of 16 volunteers to Malawi to build four classrooms for one local school that was housing over 6500 students in only 12 classrooms. In January 2009 Elliot and the Y-GAP team travelled to Ghana to re-construct a Safe House for children in need. Along with his work with Y-GAP, Elliot has also been the Youth Representative for World Vision.

>> Daniel Perkins: Daniel co-founded Mayibuye South Africa Organisation working with disadvantaged youth in South Africa. Through dance and theatre, students are taught about the issues that affect them such as drugs, violence and racism and bring their new found knowledge back to their community. Daniel has also worked throughout Southern Asia where he saw first hand the effects poverty had on communities. He spent 7 months with the people of KwaZulu-Natal and next year will move back to South Africa where he will work full time managing Mayibuye's full-time life/skills course that he designed at one of South Africa's Colleges.