
Official Launch of the World Education Fellowship International Youth Group

In the last week of April, the World Education Fellowship (WEF) held its 41st International Biennial Conference at Sun City in South Africa. WEF is a UNESCO non-governmental organisation and is open to educators, members of associated professions and all members of the public who have an interest in education at all levels. DCI-Australia member Laura Cusack is the Australian representative for the WEF.

The theme of the conference was "Education Linking the Planet" and part of the conference was dedicated to a youth forum. The main goal of the youth forum exemplified this theme as the youth delegates aimed to exchange visions and ideas on education with fellow youth from across the world including Kenya, Nigeria, Japan, Australia, the United States, the Netherlands, and our host country South Africa. The forum ran for a week and could have continued for long after.

Our first day together was spent getting to know each other and discussing the vision we have for the forum and the educational issues that affect youth in our respective countries. One of the main issues raised by the South African delegates was regarding the effectiveness of current HIV and AIDS education. Sub Saharan Africa has the greatest reported cases of HIV infection in the world.

Issues that had a common theme across many countries including Australia related to access to education, particularly in relation to high school students who live in rural and remote areas who wish to pursue higher education. Many delegates stated that choices in tertiary education are limited unless students are willing and/or able to relocate to metropolitan areas.

One of the aims of the forum was to officially launch the youth group as a section of the World Education Fellowship. The youth group is international and will use the internet as our main means of communication.

Youth from Kenya and the Netherlands are already working together to promote equity and access to education for youth living in the Mathare Valley slum in Kenya. The Mathare Valley slum is home to more than half a million people of whom 60% are youths. Youth living in the Valley are often denied access to education due to cost. It is international projects such as these that the youth group proposes to use as our main platform for realising the aims of the group.

If you would like more information about the WEF youth group, please contact Laura Cusack at laura.cusack@facs.gov.au or visit www.wef.com.au.



NCYLC Wins International Award for Lawstuff

The National Children's & Youth Law Centre website *Lawstuff* (www.lawstuff.org.au) has received a major international internet award. The award was presented to the NCYLC Director, Louis Schetzer in Washington DC in April. *Lawstuff* won second prize in the "Not for Profit" category.

Sponsored by *Cable & Wireless*, the *Childnet Awards* are an international initiative which rewards children and those working with them, who are developing outstanding Internet projects which benefit other children.

This year the Awards attracted a record number of entries - over 200 from 47 countries, worldwide. This year's ten short-listed projects came from Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, The Netherlands, USA and the UK, and included projects by individuals, schools and not-for-profit groups and governments.

Established in 1997, *Lawstuff* provides advice and legal information to all young Australians as well as their parents and advocates and the wider community. It was one of the first legal websites for children and young people and uses cartoons and short stories to encourage young people to ask questions about the law, aiming to empower young people to help themselves with legal issues and make informed decisions.

Childnet were particularly impressed with *Lawstuff*'s commitment to "self advocacy", as children and young people have the freedom to access the relevant information personally, rather than rely on the assistance of an adult. They described *Lawstuff* as "an outstanding example of how a non-profit organisation can make a real impact by exploiting the power of the net."

The full list of categories and winning sites can be seen at:

www.childnet-int.org/awards/press/index.html