

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**September 1, 2008**



**Youth Off The Streets marks National Literacy and Numeracy Week by celebrating literacy learning through lending-a-hand.**

On Thursday, September 4, Youth Off The Streets Eden Learning Centre and KU Children’s services will utilise National Literacy and Numeracy Week 2008 to celebrate the achievements of pre-school children and young people who participated in an innovative learning project to promote the development of language and literacy.

Set up as part of the Youth Off The Streets Service Learning curriculum, this innovative literacy project has brought mutual benefit to both pre-school children and young people alike.

Through Service Learning, teenage students at Eden Learning Centre were asked to ‘give-back’ to the community by interacting with young children in a bid to foster a passion for reading and learning.

Leaders in language and literacy education, Professor Brian Cambourne and Dr. Jan Turbill, maintain that a strong basis for learning can be achieved with any child if that child is immersed in productive and rich language from the outset. With this in mind, teachers at Eden Learning Centre devised a program that would see young people work through a series of learning activities with pre-school children to re-discover the importance of language and literacy development in early childhood. Students were able to experience the transfer of these fundamental skills to successful learning as a teenager.

Using the novel *Holes* by Louis Sachar, Young People introduced the children to a fictional character from the book, interviewed the young children and recorded their responses; then working in partnership, the teenagers created stories that were then developed into picture books for the pre-schoolers. The books will be read to the pre-school children by Eden students.

Eden Learning Centre teacher, Karelynn Randall said:

*“Most of our students became disengaged from learning at an early age, missing the opportunity to develop effective reading strategies and denying them the opportunity to establish a real purpose for reading. We identified the value of our young people revisiting early language and literacy strategies with pre-schoolers so that they could experience, first hand, the effectiveness of talking with and reading to young children.*

*By immersing themselves in an early childhood language and literacy model, they have realised their ability to communicate effectively, making positive contributions to the lives of children and providing a model to support parents as first educators in our community.”*

Tracey Wise, Director, Macquarie Fields Pre-school said: “The Lizard Project has provided an opportunity for our children to further their language and literacy skills whilst building stronger relationships with the local community.”

**MEDIA / PHOTO OPPORTUNITY**

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| <b>When</b>  | <b>10:30am – 11:30am Thursday 4th September, 2008 (function 10:30am – 12:30 pm)</b>   |
| <b>Where</b> | KU Children’s Services Macquarie Fields Pre-School, Flame Crescent, Macquarie Fields. 2564  |
| <b>Who</b>   | Dr. Jan Turbill and Professor Brian Cambourne from the University of Wollongong.(UOW)<br>Brian and Jan will launch the Lizard Books and address parents on the value of talking with and reading to their children from an early age.<br>Brian and Jan are leaders in the field of language and literacy acquisition.<br>Father Chris Riley, CEO and Founder, Youth Off The Streets<br>Dr George Lewis – KU Children’s Services is the key evaluator of the ELLI Project (Early Language & Literacy Initiative)<br>Child care workers from KU Services, Teachers from Youth Off The Streets,young people and pre-school children. |

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| <b>What</b> | Young People from Eden Learning Centre -Youth Off The Streets will present the final pieces of the literacy and learning project ( picture books co-authored by pairs of young people and children.) |
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**Some Australian literacy facts:**

- 46 per cent of the Australian population, or 7 million people, have poor or very poor literacy, numeracy and problem solving skills. (*Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006*)
- International student assessments by the OECD in 2006 showed 13 per cent of Australians aged 15 were below the standard at which students were considered to be at risk of not having the basic skills.
- Good literacy is an essential skill for coping with the many demands of life in contemporary Australian society. Tasks ranging from reading the directions on a bottle of medicine, completing a tax return, or accessing information on the Internet, all require a reasonably high level of English literacy. People who are unable to complete such tasks independently are at a considerable disadvantage, especially in a society where the growing share of skilled and knowledge-based jobs in the economy has increased the importance of good literacy skills.

**Youth Off The Streets Mission:**

*Helping disconnected young people to discover greatness within, by engaging, supporting and providing opportunities to encourage and facilitate positive life choices.*

**About Eden Learning Centre:**

***Education Development Empowerment Now***

Eden Learning Centre provides educational support for young people who are either disengaged or at risk of becoming disengaged from mainstream education. Eden aims to empower young people so they can make decisions that will enable a positive change for the future.

**About Youth Off The Streets:**

Youth Off The Streets is a non-denominational community organisation working for young people who are chronically homeless, drug dependent and recovering from abuse. We support these young people as they work to turn their lives around and overcome immense personal traumas such as neglect and physical, psychological and emotional abuse.

Since opening in 1991, Youth Off The Streets has grown from a single food van delivering meals to young homeless people on the streets of Kings Cross to a major youth specific agency providing a wide range of services offering a full continuum of care.

It is our goal that these young people will leave our care drug free, with a high school education, living skills and a full or part time job in hand. **To donate to Youth Off The Streets, please call: 1800 06 22 88 or visit:**

**[www.youthoffthestreets.com.au](http://www.youthoffthestreets.com.au)**

**-ENDS-**

**For more information, about Youth Off The Streets please contact:**

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