

## Picture this

The youth of today are switched on and ready for action, writes Shaunagh O'Connor

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**Herald Sun**

**In a world full of bad news, telephone complaint lines, scary levels of carbon emissions and natural disasters, it seems wise to grab the good stuff and hang on tight.**

That's what Australia's National Youth Week is all about.

A celebration of the country's young people that runs from Saturday until April 22, the week offers dance parties, performances and discussions.

Those from 12 to 25 years are invited to be proud of their achievements, share ideas, attend events, have a say on issues close to their heart and celebrate their role in the community.

And young Victorians are among those whose actions make the country a little better than it would be without them.

Farah Faiq, 18, is an active member of Victoria's Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues and shares her story of life as an Iraqi refugee and a Muslim working for peace in a diverse community.

The Broadmeadows Secondary College year 11 student has taken a role in CMYI's Building Bridges program that aims to foster relationships between young people from various cultural backgrounds.

She is also helping organise an event this month for hundreds of girls from Broadmeadows and beyond to forge bonds between those born in Australia and those who come from different cultural backgrounds.

"My experiences have made me want to work with people, to show them that you can have hard times, like I have had, but don't give up," Farah says.

"There's always a new chance."

Farah left Iraq almost five years ago for Jordan, where she lived for two years.

"I couldn't go to school there and was pretty depressed hanging around home, so took myself to the library," she says.

Farah's parents are separated. Her father remained in Iraq and she came to Australia with her mother just over two years ago and started learning English intensively.

She is now vice-captain of her school, would love to be school captain next year and speaks to younger students about the notion of harmony and about bullying.

I am really trying to have others realise that I am a Muslim, but that doesn't mean I am a terrorist," Farah says.

"I really want to change this wrong idea. I want people to understand that Muslims do care about peace. I want to work towards peace on earth, and we have to start with simple steps."

Harley Taylor-Marshall also hopes to influence people for the better, but his tools are found in an art studio.

Harley's work can be found hanging in the Ian Potter Centre at Federation Square, part of the National Gallery of Victoria's Top Arts: VCE 2006 exhibition, on until June 3. The show displays more than 60 of the best works by last year's VCE Art and Studio Arts students.

Harley's pencil and inkjet piece was inspired by photos his sister took of Cambodian children.

"What I loved about the pictures was that the children were completely honest," Harley says. "What I loved was that the photos were taken in one of the country's poorest areas, but the children maintained such a positive attitude and seemed so content with what they had."

Daria Sayakhot has carried out more volunteer work in her 21 years than many do in a lifetime. The Victoria University psychology student started volunteering at the age of 15 at Western Hospital, assisting with the care of elderly patients and talking and listening to them.

She has helped the Make-A-Wish foundation, been a YMCA tutor and is now a "big sister" to an eight-year-old in need of a female role model, guidance and fun.

A member of Melbourne's Big Brothers Big Sisters program, Daria underwent intensive training to take on the role, which she began last June.

"You can always balance your life so that volunteering can be a part of it, so if you can give, why not," says Daria, who meets her companion for a couple of hours a week.



**Good will hunting:** Hayley Taylor-Marshall with his pencil and inkjet drawing that is often mistaken for a photograph.

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