

Keeping the flame alive

How is the AOC maintaining the Olympic spirit in schools?

The flame may have been extinguished in August, but for the Australian Olympic Committee's (AOC) education team, keeping the Olympic spirit burning bright until 2012 is an ongoing challenge.

While maintaining such high levels of sporting enthusiasm may sound like a daunting task, Frances Cordaro, Manager of Olympic Education for the AOC said by engaging and involving young people, the AOC was nurturing the Olympic aspirations of a whole new generation.

In addition to targeting sub-elite athletes, Frances said the AOC recognised the importance of nurturing Olympic values in all students, from a young age.

Through its BK (Boxing Kangaroo) Zone website the AOC provides a welcome link between primary school-aged children and the Olympians they adore.

"'Chat to a champ' was a fantastic initiative that saw two schools a day linked directly with an Olympian during the Games and the students could prepare questions or just chat to the athletes that were in Beijing, representing their country," Frances said.

"On top of that we had pod casts and messages of support to allow students anywhere in the country a chance to be directly involved."

With a similar philosophy of inclusion, the a.s.p.i.r.e. School Network designed for primary educators, works to instill in young Australians an appreciation of the values, spirit and



Olympian Jo Carter delivers the Live Clean Play Clean message to the NSW Academy of Sport

philosophy of the Olympic movement.

Offering educators access to Olympic-themed resources on-line, a.s.p.i.r.e. is a values-based program which Frances says proved extremely popular in the lead-up to this year's Beijing Olympics.

"a.s.p.i.r.e. uses the Olympic Games as a stimulus for all facets of school life right across the curriculum," Frances said.

"Not only are we using the Olympics to encourage children to actively participate in sport, but we also look at things like sportsmanship, fair play and striving for goals."

Working with a team of content writers AOC staff fine tune material before sending it out to educators for review.

"They provide us with feedback and after we make the necessary changes the resources are

made available through the a.s.p.i.r.e. website."

In the weeks leading up to Beijing, 14,000 teachers from Australia and overseas registered to use the site.

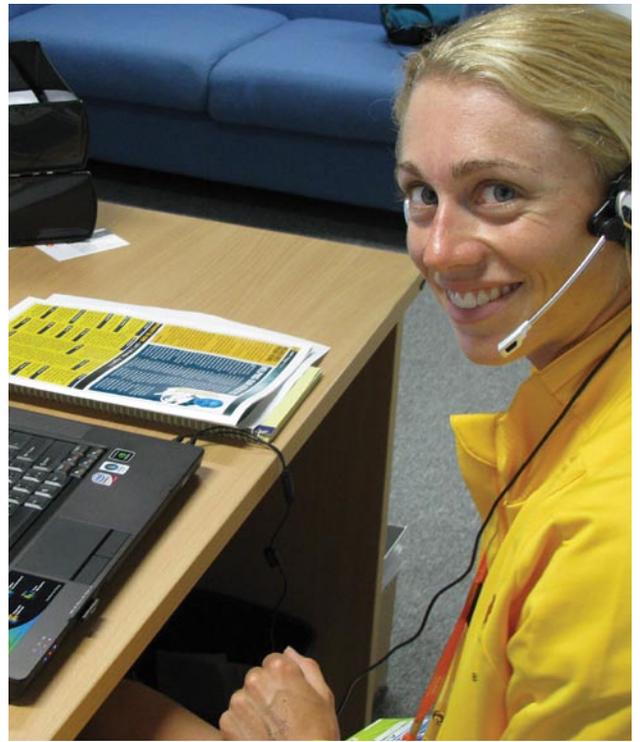
"One of the really popular projects on a.s.p.i.r.e. was the Village Art project where schools were asked to participate by sending in artwork which was used to decorate the athlete's village in Beijing, to make our Australian Olympians feel more at home," Frances said.

Appealing to secondary students is the AOC's Pierre de Coubertin Awards, named after the founder of the modern Olympic Games.

Held each year, the awards recognise senior secondary students who demonstrate values which are consistent with the Olympic Movement through participation in sporting activities.

All secondary government and non-government schools are invited to nominate one recipient from Year 10, 11 or 12. Nominees must participate actively in the school's physical education program with a consistently positive attitude and at some stage during Years 8-12 must have represented the school in either swimming, athletics or cross country and at least two other competitive sports. They must also submit an original artwork which illustrates the student's appreciation of the Olympic movement.

Frances said the highlight of the awards was the opportunity to represent Australia at the International Pierre de Coubertin Youth



Left: Olympian softball player Natalie Ticcume celebrates Olympic Day with St Dominic's Primary, Vic; right: Olympian Amber Halliday in Beijing talks with school students back in Australia during the Games as part the AOC's Chat to a Champ

Forum held every two years.

The AOC's Live Clean, Play Clean program brings the drugs in sport message to young sub-elite athletes and is highly successful, being delivered by Olympians.

"This program is aimed at the students who are already participating at a highly competitive level and have the intention or goal to participate in sport at an elite level," Frances said.

She said athletes like freestyle skiing aerial champion Jacqui Cooper, gymnast Allana Slater and figure skater Jo Carter brought the drug free message home in a way students could relate to.

The program is delivered at national sporting events and to school teams representing Australia at an international level.

Another way the AOC keeps that flame burning is to encourage schools to join in Olympic

Day celebrations each year on 23rd June.

"Some schools make flags of all the different countries and host their own mini-Olympics," Frances said.

"They develop and modify some of the Olympic sports to make them more fun so that you might have ping pong ball throwing for shot put and biscuit relays. One school used M&M's to create the Olympic rings."

Another event to look out for is the Australian Youth Olympic Festival to be held in January 2009; a lasting legacy of Sydney 2000.

"Over 2500 athletes and officials from Australia and overseas compete over five days in 21 sports using the venues of the Sydney Olympics," Frances said.

"The festival is definitely a pathway to the Olympics for many athletes. At the Beijing

Olympics for example, 72 of the athletes had competed at the Olympic festival and 21 of them took medals in Beijing."

Diver Matthew Mitcham, walker Jared Tallent and swimmers Jessicah Schipper and Eamon Sullivan were among those who first dipped their toes into the Olympic arena via the festival.

"It's a really great way for young athletes to get a feel for Olympic competition," Frances said. "Often it's their first encounter with drug testing and it's one of the places we promote the Live Clean, Play Clean message."

Information on the AOC's education programs is available from www.corporateolympics.com.au.

The BK Zone for Primary School students can be found at www.bkzone.com.au.

Non-stop action for school campers

Not-for-profit Lutanda operates three centres in NSW, on the Central Coast, in the Blue Mountains and the Hawkesbury Valley.

Lutanda centres are used by schools, churches, corporate groups, sporting clubs and community groups for all kinds of camps, retreats, conferences and day programs.

Every year Lutanda reaches over 1000 disadvantaged young people through its program of 25 week-long school holiday camps.

Toukley is surrounded by Wyrabalong National Park, Tuggerah Lakes and Soldiers Beach. There are two sites. Both the Lakes and Hargraves sites have their own accommodation,



auditorium and outdoor facilities. It has 270 beds in a mixture of accommodation.

Yarramundi is sited at the bottom of the Blue Mountains, on the banks of the Nepean River.

Facilities include 125-seat hall, meeting rooms and a wide range of recreation and outdoor activities. It has 125 beds in six cabins, a self-contained cabin with six bedrooms and the conference facility that sleeps 12 in four rooms.

Mt Victoria is located in the Blue Mountains. It offers 170 beds in a variety of accommodation including standard rooms, six dormitory cabins, six motel rooms and two self-contained houses.

Contact tel 1300 733 189 or visit www.lutanda.com.au