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Child and Youth Care

A Journal for Those Who Work with Children and Youth at Risk and Their Families



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WE CELEBRATE!

1975-2005
Professional practice
in the
life space
of
children
NACCW

Special Edition featuring the NACCW 15th Biennial Conference
"Celebrating Professional Practice in the Life Space of Children."

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Celebrating Professional Practice in the Lifespace of Children

By Merle Allsopp

What we know about the world from the field of science - quantum physics actually - is that the universe is created by us. As participants and observers, we create a reality through what we bring to bear in any one situation. And so the 15th NACCW Biennial Conference will mean very different things to different delegates. The facts are clear: over 50 papers were presented, over 800 people attended, the Cape winter was held at bay and sunshine was abundant, Cape Town's mayor welcomed delegates, the Youth Conference delegates numbered 130, and venerable guests were present.

But what does this all mean for child and youth care? Clearly it will mean different things to different people, and there will be 800 versions of 'Conference 2005'....this is mine!

Of overwhelming significance was the presence of youth at Conference. Their strong articulate voices carried into the hearts and minds of workers eager to comprehend their realities. But surprisingly for me it was the very presence of a national youth delegation that made the difference.

The energy in the auditorium was simply lighter, more vibrant, and so much more laden with a sense of possibility when the young people joined in. It is clearly of mutual benefit to realize the participation rights of young people! Somehow too, the national feel of the youth delegation impacted on me - the sense of optimism and hope so evident in this diverse group of young South Africans contrasted sharply with the memories

of thirty years ago...

There is also something important in the way that the Association goes about organizing conferences. 'Events planning' is a field of occupation in its own right, and so far NACCW regions have managed to arrange and host conference through the contributions made by colleagues in regions.

Delegates are received into conference by a group of volunteers who have contributed days of their lives to the cause of Conference. I always wonder if it is this spirit of generosity, this positive energy that makes NACCW Biennial Conferences different? And is this true too of delegates? Logistical snafus were unfortunately all too common at the chosen venue, but the accommodating nature of child and youth care workers meant that few spirits were dampened.

But what will stay with me from this the 15th NACCW Biennial Conference links directly to the theme of conference - professional practice. People were there to learn and grow in child and youth care. Breakaway sessions were well attended - in fact venues were often packed beyond capacity - and workshops on the whole seemed of a high standard. Presenters were prepared, and the discourse on child and youth care policy, programs and practice was entered into with enthusiasm and intelligence. This conference made me feel that our profession has grown up! In a universe of infinite possibilities, South African child and youth care workers are creating a unique profession to care for our children. ●



Conference Planning Committee

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHILD CARE WORKERS

The National Association of Child Care Workers is an independent, non-profit organisation in South Africa which provides the professional training and infrastructure to promote healthy child and youth development and to improve standards of care and treatment for troubled children and youth at risk in family, community and residential group care settings.

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