

Kennedy Van der Laan

Press Release

Kenyan Peninah Nthenya Awarded the Marian Kennedy Fellowship in 2010

Organization Safe Spaces uses sport as a powerful instrument to empower girls in Nairobi slum; the Fellowship is awarded for the third time.

AMSTERDAM, 4 March 2010 – The Marian Kennedy Fellowship of this year goes to Peninah Nthenya of Safe Spaces in Kenya. Safe Spaces not only makes girls physically more fit through basketball, yoga and dance, but also increases their mental resistance and autonomy. Apart from sport, the organization offers information and raises awareness around HIV/AIDS, drugs, sexual violence and other topics that young women are confronted with in the Eastland slum of Nairobi. As a fellow Peninah Nthenya receives a grant of €15,000 for Safe Spaces.

Kennedy Van der Laan announced this on 4 March at an event on the occasion of the approaching International Women's Day. The fellowship is an initiative of the law firm and aims at improving the position of women. Each year the fellowship supports a person or organization that endeavors to improve the position of women in an innovative and sustainable way. The Marian Kennedy Fellowship was established in 2008 as a tribute to Marian Kennedy. The co-founder and name-giver of Kennedy Van der Laan has always devoted herself to the improvement of the position of women.

Machteld Robichon, associate partner at Kennedy Van der Laan and member of The Marian Kennedy Fellowship Committee, says the following about Peninah: "With her achievements and the way in which she did it, she sets a tremendous example to other girls in the slums of Nairobi. We are very happy that we can give Peninah the chance to go on realizing her ambitions".

About Peninah Nthenya and Safe Spaces

Safe Spaces was founded two years ago by Peninah Nthenya, the first woman from the slum who succeeded in graduating from a university. Peninah managed to escape from a life in the slum thanks to her enormous strength of will and perseverance. For example, she would walk 32 kilometers a day to and from her secondary school. She set her mind on obtaining a university scholarship to fulfill that dream as well. For this purpose, she managed to teach herself to play basketball within one month, since students in the university squad are entitled to a scholarship.

Having completed her law studies and having worked at a law firm, in 2008 Peninah Nthenya decided to devote herself fully to helping young women in Eastland. The young organization Safe Spaces will use the grant of The Marian Kennedy Fellowship to give a number of scholarships to young girls. "What I have done, they can do too", Peninah says.

In 2009 already over 200 girls and young women took part in basketball trainings, yoga and dance sessions and weekly group talks. Sport gives them self-confidence. It also makes brothers and

fathers begin to understand that women may be suitable for more than being married off and doing household chores. Among themselves, girls find support, understanding and trust to bring up painful subjects, such as HIV or domestic, sexual and physical violence. A basketball team of Safe Spaces is participating in the competition in Nairobi. In the very first year the team won the championship; crews of long standing were defeated by girls from the slum.

The Marian Kennedy Fellowship

The Marian Kennedy Fellowship is a grant of €15,000 that has been awarded twice before by Kennedy Van der Laan. In 2009, Empowering Women in Nepal (EWN) was the fellow. This organization provides trainings to socially isolated rural women in Nepal. It aims to educate women as guides in the high mountains of Nepal, which job has so far been reserved for men. After their training these women are able to earn an income independently. In 2008 the grant went to Wadzanai Katsande. In memory of her father, she founded the Edward Garwe Trust in order to pull girls in Zimbabwe out of their social isolation, to educate them and to teach them to speak out for themselves through sport. She also involves the local community in this process and teaches them to help the girls instead of disowning them.

The annual grant will be awarded during the already traditional Kennedy Van der Laan networking event around International Women's Day (8 March).

In the past three years, The Marian Kennedy Fellowship was supported in choosing the fellow by Women Win, a social organization that acknowledges the power of sport to make girls and women around the world build their self-confidence and sense of self-worth and strength.

In order to be eligible for the prize, persons or organizations have to fulfill a number of criteria. Projects must have social improvement of the position of women or girls as their goal; they must be durable in nature; they must lead to a demonstrable effect, and be capable of implementation in various regions of the world. You can find more information about 'The Marian Kennedy Fellowship' and the criteria at www.kennedyvanderlaan.nl/mariankennedyfellowship.

End of press release

About Kennedy Van der Laan

Kennedy Van der Laan, founded in 1992, is one of the top-20 law firms in the Netherlands. The firm defends the legal interests of multinationals, businesses operating nationally, start-up companies, government and semi-government bodies and NGOs. The mission of Kennedy Van der Laan is to provide the best possible legal services and expertise to our clients while living our commitment to personal and social responsibility.

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