

VCE Achiever

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Morgan Koegel

A passion for social justice and willingness to help the less fortunate is the reason Morgan Koegel is a VCE Achiever Award recipient. It is her compassion for others that motivates her to help the homeless and disadvantaged in her community. Morgan regularly volunteers at a soup kitchen and delivers leftover bread (donated by the bakery where she works part-time) to homeless shelters and crisis accommodation centres across Melbourne.

For Morgan, these activities are a small way of making a difference to the lives of the marginalised in our society. 'I do this because I have seen the value that something as simple as a smile and a warm meal can have on someone in need. I've got to know many of the men through my volunteering.'

'Whenever I begin to lose confidence or become disillusioned, I need only spend a few hours with them to reaffirm to myself the value of my time.'

At Lauriston Girls' School Morgan has earned the reputation as a person who leads by example. This can be seen in her role as prefect and as a public speaker and her work in raising awareness and funds for causes such as Wildlife Victoria and Amnesty International.

'Having a leadership role means that you need to take responsibility and deal with all the consequences that come with being a leader. However, I like to have fun while I am doing it and show others that you can make a difference.'

Both in and out of school, Morgan works hard to raise awareness and funds for the homeless. She has overseen a canned-food drive and spearheaded the donation and distribution of books. 'If you don't have a home, you don't have a fixed address so you can't join libraries. I helped establish the Benjamin Andrews Footpath Library in Melbourne, which has allowed homeless people to have access to reading material.'

Morgan also organised a casual clothes day that raised enough money to buy hundreds of 'Socks and Jocks' for distribution to three homeless shelters in Melbourne. She even donated the money she received from her Long Tan Leadership and Teamwork Award to this cause. 'These people have the right to exist with dignity and to have access to things that we take for granted, like clean socks and underwear.'

This year Morgan won the Plain English Speaking Award Victorian State Final and regards this as one of her proudest achievements. She recently participated in the National Final and came very close to winning.



Pictured: Morgan Koegel, VCE Achiever

The topic that she spoke passionately about was capital punishment. 'It is an issue that is rarely discussed in Australia, but so many countries in the world still have the death penalty. My aim is to change the mind of at least one person in the audience.'

Morgan credits her mother with teaching her to value everything in life and to appreciate the opportunities she has been given. Armed with this philosophy, Morgan has made a commitment to address the inequalities in our society through her actions as well as words.

Next year Morgan hopes to get into Media and Communications at The University of Melbourne. Her plans after that are to enter politics or become a social worker. She would like to also finish off her career as a teacher because she wants to inspire young people in the way that she has been inspired by her parents and teachers.

The VCE Achiever Award is coordinated by the VCAA to recognise the efforts of VCE students in promoting community involvement in their local school and wider community. VCE Achievers actively participate in such activities as the arts, environmental protection, aged care, hospitality, local council initiatives, fundraising and public speaking. Monthly finalists receive a three-month subscription to the Herald Sun, and in December one overall winner will receive a notepad computer donated by Lenovo Australia. Students in government, Catholic and independent schools may apply for the award in 2009 by using the application form on the VCAA website (Excellence and Awards > VCE Achiever Award).