

Global exposure *August 19, 2008*

AWRC project part of UN assembly

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A project involving rural girls from Antigonish and Guysborough counties was the topic of a workshop at a recent UN conference.



Wyanne Sandler, Rural Girls Project site facilitator for the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, recently presented at workshops during the Youth Assembly at the United Nations in New York. (Heather MacAdam photo)

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There were about 300 youth in total at the conference.

Sandler said before going to New York she was intimidated by thoughts of presenting at the United Nations.

"But once I got there it felt pretty comfortable. Just to be with other young people and being able to share my own experiences and something that I feel really committed to [was amazing]. It was pretty inspiring to be in that group. Once I got there and actually got to meet people I felt pretty comfortable."

There was a lot of positive feedback and interest following her presentation, Sandler said.

"A lot of people from different places said that the experiences of young women in rural communities in Canada reflect what they see in their communities as well."

Wyanne Sandler, Rural Girls Project site facilitator for the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, travelled to New York to attend the Youth Assembly at the United Nations.

The conference titled Young People Making a Difference included young people from all over the world, Sandler said, who heard from various speakers and participated in workshops around the millennium development goals.

"[It was] young people who are committed to trying to reach the millennium development goals in their own communities."

The millennium development goals are eight international development goals that include reducing extreme poverty, reducing child mortality rates, fighting disease epidemics such as AIDS, and developing a global partnership for development.

Sandler said she became involved in the conference through a project she was involved in as a student at the University of Guelph - Rural Women Making Change.

The project looked at different aspects of rural women's lives, and Sandler's work focused on rural women and girls' everyday experiences.

The facilitators of the Rural Women Making Change project were invited to New York last fall to make a presentation on rural women and poverty at the United Nations headquarters, Sandler said.

"They were invited back to make a presentation at this youth forum," she said. "They decided to focus on one project that they had which was working with rural girls. I'd been involved as a researcher on that project."

Sandler has continued doing that work in Antigonish.

"They wanted to involve me to be able to share that perspective from Nova Scotia."

Through her work locally, Sandler has visited different communities in Antigonish and Guysborough counties and done discussion groups with youth about their experiences growing up in rural areas, challenges they face, experiences with violence and what kinds of supports and services they would like.

She has also worked with various community organizations, groups and service providers to ensure services are getting out to rural communities.

Sandler, along with colleagues Pam Hanington and Carolyn Pletsch, presented at the workshop.

She said the workshop was kind of small, attended by about 30 youth and young professionals.

"That was nice because it was a pretty comfortable environment where we could all have a good discussion. There were lots of questions and people were pretty engaged."

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