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USB Dispute Centre to launch Delft Schools Peer Mediation Project

The Africa Centre for Dispute Settlement at the University of Stellenbosch Business School (USB) will launch a pioneering peacemaker initiative, the Delft Schools Peer Mediation Project, on 2 April 2009. This project aims to introduce conflict resolution by means of peer mediation in 12 selected primary and high schools in the Delft area, based on a model that includes the participation of the broader community.

This initiative has the support of Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, who is the patron of the Africa Centre for Dispute Settlement of the USB.

The objective is to increase the learners' awareness and knowledge of diversity, gender violence, bullying, crime, conflict and democracy and to provide mechanisms for coping with these issues, by using a structured and participative approach.

Francois Botha, project leader and a former magistrate, says: "It is hoped that this community-based model will contribute towards creating a culture that is characterised by cooperation, reduced conflict, and a spirit of goodwill. This model will, however, only succeed if all the role players involved work closely together, and especially if the schools and the community in Delft join hands to engage enthusiastically with this initiative."

Botha says that five clusters will be formed, consisting of either two or three primary schools, and two high schools. Clusters will comprise two teachers, 40 learners and 10 community support parents. Each cluster will be supported by a cluster leader who will be responsible for on-going training and awareness-raising.

The newly appointed Cluster Leaders will be inducted at the launch function.

The Delft peacemaker initiative will go beyond school fences to reach the streets and homes of the often troubled Delft community, predicts Prof Barney Jordaan, director of the Centre for Dispute Settlement.

He sees the project as citizenship education in action, and believes it will form the foundation of sustainable links between the needs of the learners, teachers and the community.

INVITATION TO THE MEDIA

If you wish to attend this launch, taking place at the University of Stellenbosch Business School on Thursday, 2 April 2009 at 16:00 for 16:30 until 20:00, at The Winery, USB Main Building, Bellville Park Campus, Bellville, contact Clayton Swart on 021 918 4388 or send an email to claytons@usb.ac.za.

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