

Kennedy Van der Laan

Press Release

2011 Marian Kennedy Fellowship Goes to Mitt Liv of Swedish Sofia Appelgren

Organization Mitt Liv Links Young, Ambitious Women from Ethnic Minorities to Swedish Entrepreneurs and Leading Business Women

AMSTERDAM, 29 June 2011 – The Marian Kennedy Fellowship of this year goes to Sofia Appelgren, founder of Mitt Liv. This organization focuses on the labor participation of young, ambitious women from ethnic minorities in the big cities of Sweden. By means of a mentor program, Mitt Liv is linking these women to Swedish companies that have made diversity in the workplace one of their key objectives. As a fellow, Sofia Appelgren will receive a grant of €10,000.

The fellowship is an initiative of the Kennedy Van der Laan law firm and is aimed at improving the position of women. Each year the fellowship supports a person or organization that endeavours 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, after she left Kennedy Van der Laan and the legal profession. The co-founder and name-giver of Kennedy Van der Laan has always devoted herself to improving the position of women.

Very stimulating

Fenna van Dijk, associate partner of Kennedy Van der Laan and a member of the Marian Kennedy Fellowship Commission, gives Appelgren high praise. “With her positivism, her enthusiasm and at the same time her businesslike approach, Appelgren makes Mitt Liv a special and effective organization”, says Van Dijk. “She not only teaches the women the skills they need in the labor market, but she also brings them into contact with role models in companies. This is very stimulating for the women who participate.”

Mitt Liv (‘My Life’) was founded by Sofia Appelgren in 2008. With this organization she wants to do something against the increasing segregation in Sweden, where large groups of ethnic minorities do not or hardly have access to the labor market. Many of them have insufficient knowledge of the business sector and no contacts who can introduce them. It is hard to find a job for young women in particular: on average they only find a paid job nine years after having emigrated to Sweden. “With our program, we are able to shorten this period considerably”, says Appelgren.



“The great force of our program lies in the fact that we do not approach women as victims, but work from their power. These women are very motivated and have often had a good education, they simply do not know their way around in the business sector. That is where we come in.”

Appelgren and her fellow workers select young women of ethnic minorities in higher education institutions, universities and departments of employment. A decisive factor is the drive of the women: only very motivated women can participate in the program. Mitt Liv is offering them an extensive program aimed at the building of business networks, personal development and the increase of skills required to get a job, such as presentation and application skills. The women are linked to mentors of big companies who are paying for the partner program. At the moment, Mitt Liv is working, *inter alia*, with Volvo, cosmetics company Mary Kay and law firm Vinge. Mitt Liv started in Göteborg but is now also working from Stockholm and, in the near future, from Malmö. Copenhagen has also shown an interest in the program.

The Marian Kennedy Fellowship

The Marian Kennedy Fellowship is a grant of €10,000. The prize has already been awarded three times before by Kennedy Van der Laan. In 2010, Peninah Nthenya of Safe Spaces in Kenya was the fellow. Safe Spaces makes girls physically more fit through sports, but most of all increases their resistance and autonomy. In 2009, the prize was awarded to Empowering Women in Nepal; in 2008 Wadzanai Katsande from Zimbabwe was awarded the grant for her program for orphan girls.

When electing the fellow, the Marian Kennedy Fellowship is supported by Ashoka, a worldwide organization for social entrepreneurs. 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.

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A high-resolution picture of Sofia Appelgren is available at:
<https://www.yousendit.com/download/MFo1eFVhZy9Fc0x2Wmc9PQ>

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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