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NH teen gives keynote address at Nestlé Very Best in Youth Awards Ceremony

Dylan Mahalingam, a high school student from Derry, N.H., was a keynote speaker at the Nestlé Very Best in Youth red-carpet awards gala in Los Angeles on July 23.

The event was attended by more than 200 youth, parents, teachers, and executives and held at one of Hilton's largest ballrooms in Universal City/Hollywood.

Mahalingam is well known both in the national and international youth circle as the founder of Lil' MDGs and a youth speaker for the United Nations.

In 2009, Mahalingam was recognized by the Nestlé Foundation as one of 24 very best in youth in America. In 2010, Mahalingam was also selected to be the youngest board member for the Nestlé Foundation. Mahalingam shared his experiences with the Nestlé Foundation, as a UN speaker, as well as his ongoing efforts with expanding a school he built in Kenya, with the crowd.

"I started with the award money that Nestlé granted to help a Maasai community in Loita, Kenya become sustainable. I assumed the role of Chief Strategist, and working with like-minded individuals from all corners of the world, I used Nestlé's support as a springboard to find others to invest money to help build a school in Loita," said Mahalingam. "In less than a year, we raised the funds needed to build Loita Hills Academy. We broke ground in December two thousand and nine, and the school opened its doors to one hundred and fifty six students in January 2010. The school now has an enrollment of 209 students.

"One of our 13-year-old students leaves his house at four a.m. each morning, walks the dangerous fourteen kilometers to and from school, and returns home each night at 9 p.m.," Mahalingam added.

Mahalingam just secured funding from the Internet Society to implement a Solar-Powered Internet Kiosk at this school. He is directly involved with the design of the kiosk and will be in Kenya to facilitate the implementation. The project is expected to be completed by July 2012. Mahalingam is scheduled to be at The White House in August to discuss the Loita Hills Academy initiative in further detail.

Other speakers at the awards celebration included celebrity actor Hill Harper from CSI:NY and Blake Griffin from the LA Clippers.

