

Calling Young Writers - Friendship in a global society is the theme of a new writing competition for expat children

One of the hardest things for children of international families who find themselves moving from country to country is leaving their friends behind. But a nomadic lifestyle has many benefits as well. Not only are kids exposed to a variety of cultures at a young age, they also end up with friends all over the world.

So friendship was a natural theme to choose when *The International Herald Tribune*, *DutchNews.nl* and *The XPat Journal* decided to launch their Young Writers Competition for expat children. The competition is a chance for budding young journalists, poets and storytellers to showcase their talents and write about their personal experiences.

“When children move to live in another country, their experiences are very different from those who stay in one place,” says author and creative writing mentor Jo Parfitt, who is one of the judges for the Young Writers Competition. “The constant moving that they have to do becomes second nature, like riding a bike. And the initial pain of being the new kid in town and saying goodbye over and over again can have tremendous value.”

Indeed, all the entries to the competition will become part of the Expat Archive Centre in The Hague, which collects and preserves writings and artefacts which doc-

ument the global social history of expat life. Of course modern communication methods have made it much easier to keep in touch with old friends - children no longer have to labour over writing letters and wait for the post. “One of the first things kids ask about when looking at a new home is whether there is Internet,” says Anke de Vries of expat housing company Your Amsterdam Housing. “They are all busy with Facebook and MSN.”

But as well as keeping in touch with old chums, helping their children to make new friends is a priority for parents.

“I think for most parents the most impor-



Young Writers Competition

The Young Writers Competition is aimed at children between aged 6 to 18 attending international schools in the Netherlands or the bilingual streams in Dutch state schools - but anyone can take part, as long as the entry is in English.

The competition closes on December 31 and the winners will be announced in early February.

Schools and parents as well as those interested in entering the competition, and companies which may like to sponsor the event, can get more details via the website: www.youngwriterscompetition.nl.

tant thing is that your kids find new friends,” says Angela Tweedie who has lived in the Netherlands for two years. “I only truly felt at home once my daughter brought her first friend home to play. To me, it meant we had finally settled in - never mind the unpacked boxes.”

Jo Parfitt says that all these experiences deserve to be “preserved, shared, written down. This competition is just the kind of thing young people need to take that first step towards expressing themselves. The judges and prizes will give them something to work towards, a goal. And I for one can’t wait to see what they come up with.”