

Tech-savvy teens take it to world stage

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By [Vaimoana Tapaleao](#)

A group of tech-savvy Otago youngsters have earned themselves a trip to an international technology summit in the United States.

Fourteen-year-olds Ofoi Taumoelau, Kataraina Lio and Lars Malungahu will join up to 300 young people from around the world at the biennial Teen Summit in Boston, Massachusetts, where they will design technological projects addressing community issues.

The students – Ofoi and Lars from Otago's Clover Park Middle School and Kataraina of Te Whanau o Tupuranga School – were chosen from more than 200 students who are part of the country's first computer clubhouse: Clubhouse 274.

The Otago-based after-school programme allows youngsters to design and create projects such as video games, mini-documentaries, beat-mixing to record their own music and also deal with robotics and animation programmes.

Ofoi says she is looking forward to the summit and using technology to change people's views of her home.

"Otago's not a bad place. Media [can't] just focus on the negative side – we have heaps of good stories here," the 14-year-old, who enjoys making videos, said.

Hosted by the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network, the six-day Teen Summit begins on August 5 and will include teens from over 21 countries, who will create projects using advanced technologies and creative media, addressing a need within a community.

Clubhouse 274 director Kane Milne said: "There's a strong focus that in whatever we do, it's to help the community. For example, every clubhouse was asked to create a video. One of our members made a video about abuse in the community and how to combat that," he said.

"At the summit, they have to invent something for a social need – like creating a water pump for people in Brazil."

Youngsters attending the summit will visit the Boston Museum of Science, tour the Massachusetts Institute of Technology media labs and meet technical inventors.

Kataraina, who has been chosen to be one of the summit's opening speakers, said she enjoyed making videos and editing.

"I'm really excited, but scared too. Other kids should get involved too because it's cool," she said.

Mr Milne said Clubhouse 274, which started in 2005 with 10 members, had proven to be very popular among local young people.

"A lot of the members thought it was a geeky place, but ... it's not a class or anything, it's about doing stuff that they like.

"Some of them don't know about technology, but they know wrestling, so we say: 'Okay, let's make a video game'," he said.

Ofoi, Kataraina and Lars, who were all chosen for their leadership qualities, will fly to the US on Saturday.



Kataraina Lio (left) and Ofoi Taumoelau, both 14, are keen to use technology to help cast a positive light on Otago. Photo / Dean Purcell

Mr Milne said that giving young people opportunities such as these would allow for greater opportunities in the future. "We have to allow them to play, because playing is learning. It's not undirected – it's not a time-wasting thing. It's about being creative. Technology is just a tool."

This story was found at: http://www.nzherald.co.nz/section/story.cfm?c_id=5&objectid=10523976

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