

RRR NETWORK NEWS

For rural, remote and regional women in Western Australia



autumn:05

EDITION 31 ISSN 1445-7210



Gingin Horticulturalist Wins 2005 RIRDC Rural Women's Award

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TELSTRA WINNER SETTING
HIGH STANDARDS

VOLUNTEERING
- THE WARNUM EXPERIENCE
IT'S OK TO ASK FOR HELP
IT'S YOUR COUNCIL - BE COUNTED!



Department of Agriculture
Department of Local Government and Regional Development

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FROM LEFT, CHERYL GWILLIAM, DIRECTOR-GENERAL DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT, GABRIELLE COUPLAND, CHAIR PARTNERS IN GRAIN, NIKKI EGGINTON, CHAIR RRR NETWORK AND JUDITH PARKER, DIRECTOR INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN AT THE RIRDC AWARD PRESENTATION.

From the Chair

The Reference Group for the RRR Network met recently for our first face to face meeting. The two day meeting was a great opportunity for the reference group to get to know each other and welcome our new members Toni Gelmi (Kalgoorlie), Raelene Hall (Meekatharra), Michele Pucci (Kununurra), Gemma Rafferty (Jurien Bay), Clare Richards (Broome) and Adrienne Yzerman (Wandering). The Reference Group is a diverse group of women from around the state. The meeting was very successful with the group working on areas of concern and how the Network can highlight the issues in the coming year.

With the commencement of the new Reference Group we were sad to say goodbye to past members. We are grateful for all these women have done to advance the RRR Network over the past few years. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Elizabeth Hoek, Alex Malloch, Robyn Nicholas, Suzanne Rigney, Georgina Taylor and Jan Trenorden for generously giving their time, energy and skills to ensure the continuity of the RRR Network.

The success of Network News is a result of women throughout WA sending in their stories and contributions for the magazine. Women often think their stories are not interesting or important, which is far from the truth. I am regularly approached by readers of Network News saying that what they enjoy about the magazine is the range of stories from women.

Last month I met a wonderful lady, Joan Major who, although she may think she has led a very ordinary life, has the most inspiring story to tell (page 20). I would like to take this opportunity to invite our readers to send in their stories. We may not all be able to write a book but Network News gives women the forum to tell their stories.

February was a busy month for the RRR Network with the RIRDC Rural Women's Awards and the Women on Boards events in Perth. Congratulations to our rural winners, Maureen Dobra and Deborah Oberon for the RIRDC Awards (pages 3–5) and Cathryn Wood on winning the Telstra Women's Business Owner Award late last year (page 9).

I hope you enjoy reading this edition and we look forward to reading your stories in future editions.

Yours in RRR

Nikki

Nikki Egginton



GINGIN



MAUREEN DOBRA ACCEPTS THE AWARD AT THE PRESENTATION FUNCTION.

Maureen Dobra WA Rural Woman of the Year 2005

RIRDC Rural Women's Award 2005 – supporting women with a vision for the future sustainability of agriculture, including forestry, fisheries, natural resource management and related service industries

Maureen Dobra, a lady passionate about the horticultural industry, received the 2005 RIRDC Rural Women's Award with great excitement and humility. She has had a personal commitment to her industry for over thirty years market gardening lettuce, carrots and onions for the export market and successfully growing gourmet vegetables for the Western Australian market.

Maureen is a partner with her husband, Barry and her son, Kevan on their vegetable farm in Gingin north of Perth for the past 16 years.

In 1998, she inherited "The Loose Leaf Lettuce Company" from her daughters when they left home to travel the world. The Loose Lettuce Leaf Company was formed when one of Maureen's customers wanted some little lettuce leaves. Her daughter, Deanne, saw a viable business proposition and encouraged her sister, Simone, to join her. After two years of striving and building up a reputation the girls decided to travel and Maureen and her partners "inherited" The Loose Leaf Lettuce Company.



MAUREEN WITH HER SON KEVAN (LEFT), GRANDSON ETHAN AND HUSBAND BARRY DOBRA ON THE FARM AT GINGIN. PHOTO BY MARKET CITY NEWS.

From the early '90's the gourmet lettuce phenomenon escalated. Since "inheriting" the Company from her daughters, Maureen's company now grows and produces a variety of salads and employs 30 local people, as well as up to 10 visiting backpackers. Through a change in marketing and packaging, the sales of her salads skyrocketed. So much so, that she has had a yearly increase of 30-40% in her business. Her business is focussed towards the cafe, hotel and restaurant markets.

Maureen practices total quality management, allowing her staff to have daily input into the business management and procedures.

Maureen practices total quality management, allowing her staff to have daily input into the business management and procedures. Through input of the staff, Maureen's company has achieved Freshcare Quality Assurance accreditation and recognition as Farmsafe.

Maureen takes a great deal of pride in the employment opportunities

they have created for women with families with the introduction of flexible working hours and the support they are able to give to the local community in Gingin.

As well as being involved in her business, Maureen is Chairperson of the Gingin Telecentre. She also serves on the West Australian Vegetable Growing Network Committee and the Ausveg Committee. Last year, Maureen participated in the Structured Workplace Learning Program with the Gingin District High School and has since employed a young female trainee.

Maureen is very passionate and very proud of how far her company has progressed. From initially being a family business to today's growth, it was very hard for Maureen to let go of the day to day reigns. But today, being in a management position, she is able to delegate, encourage, and develop new ideas for the company and staff. She is also able to network with others in the horticultural industry and also those in different agricultural industries.

Maureen's business is recognised as one of Western Australia's leading growers and suppliers of salads. Maureen is looking at opportunities to expand into the export market attending a food expo in Dubai in late February.



RIRDC Awards 2005

Now in its sixth year, the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) Rural Women's Award continues to play a pivotal role in the revitalisation of rural Australia. This is achieved by capitalising on the talents and skills of rural women and encouraging greater diversity in its leadership and management. The winner receives a bursary of \$15,000 and the opportunity to attend the Rural Women's Corporate Governance course in Canberra. The runner up receives a bursary of \$5,000.

Rural women are encouraged to consider applying for the 2006 RIRDC Rural Women's Award in mid 2005.

*Christine Thompson
Coordinator
RIRDC Rural Women's Award WA*

It has been a hard road for the past nine years but the dividends are starting to come in. Despite the difficulties, Deborah Oberon, Director of Elemental Skin Care hasn't been able to let go of her dream to succeed in developing and promoting organic skin care products.

Deborah, who lives with her partner and three sons in Denmark, has faced many obstacles and challenges but her commitment, drive and determination has seen her come from a small cottage industry to securing several export contracts to Asia and Japan in the last few months.

"There have been many struggles and I know that there are more to come, but having achieved NASAA (National Association for Sustainable Agriculture in Australia) accreditation and several export contracts, finally things are starting to really move," said Deborah.

"The organic accreditation has been the key as Elemental is now one of two certified organic skin care ranges in Australia and there are less than 10 worldwide.



Deborah Oberon, Runner-up Rural Women's Award 2005



DEBORAH OBERON WITH SOME OF HER PRODUCTS

"Being located in Australia and, in particular Denmark, with its natural attributes including fresh rain water, Elemental is well positioned to further enhance Australia's internationally renowned clean, green image," Deborah said.

Deborah's passion is to create a business that is firmly grounded in an ethical framework.

"My vision has been to create a range of skin care products that are entirely natural and certified organic and to market them at a price that is reflective and related to the cost of their production," she said.

Currently, Elemental offers 18 products that are certified organic with the remaining 10 containing more than 70 per cent organic content. The product range includes creams and lotions for men, women and babies and include moisturisers, massage oils, after-shave creams, nappy creams, and an insect repellent.

All raw ingredients including essential oils, carrier oils and floral hydrosols are sourced from certified producers, with the majority being sourced from Australian producers.

Deborah hopes that as her business grows, she will act as a catalyst to encourage more organic and biodynamic producers, particularly in her region, to expand.

"World-wide the organic markets are growing exponentially and the Asian markets are no exception. I am keen to demonstrate with my business, what a fantastic opportunity and marketing edge organic certification can provide," she said.

Deborah plans to use the \$5,000 bursary to travel to Asia to consolidate contracts, to expand her quality control program, develop new products and to visit regional centers to talk to rural women interested in developing rural based businesses and accessing export markets.

For more information, go to www.elemental.com.au

RIRDC Rural Women's Award 2005 Finalists



Cathie Bowen

Cathy has been involved in the field of Succession Planning for thirteen years and believes that in terms of sustainability succession is the most important issue farming families must face.

A fourth generation farmer in her own right, Cathie married into a fifth generation farming family and has four children. She believes that succession is often overlooked in the farming industry with devastating effects. Succession can make or break a family business and for many families ends in bitterness, broken dreams and disillusioned people who relocate from rural areas, usually to the city, taking with them their knowledge, skills and experience.

"Sustainability of farming is not something that should address just the resource aspect of management. People need to know they have a future before they invest their younger years in the family business," said Cathie.

The importance of families learning how to handle their own succession planning long before things reach crisis point remains her long term objective.

Cathy's vision is to help to keep people in their industries and help sustain the viability of the rural sector in Western Australia by creating a programme of learning which will engage families and family business enterprises in addressing the issue of succession planning.

"My goal is to remain working in this field and importantly to finish my research so that I can move on with plans to develop a management package that all families in business together can access," Cathie says.



Caroline Telfer

Caroline Telfer is passionate about portraying family farming and rural communities in a positive light.

Caroline farms with her husband and three daughters near Darkan, in the south west of Western Australia. She is involved in the wool and beef industries, and participates in industry leading farming practices.

An awarded photographer, Caroline is currently completing a project documenting the participation of older farmers in agriculture. She has been photographing farmers over the age of sixty on their farms and talking to them about their experiences on the farm, and the reasons why they are staying on, many years after they could have considered retirement.

"Older farmers, both men and women, tell first hand why they stick to farming – it's about the pride they have in their achievements, the satisfaction they feel in seeing the next generation succeeding, and the need they have to be there on the farm in the thick of it," she said.

Caroline is inspired by the farming lifestyle. She believes that rural communities are based very strongly on families, and that family farms are a positive and rewarding kind of farming, as opposed to corporate farming. Positive family relationships are supportive for men, rewarding for women, and nurturing for children who grow up in them.

"My vision is for family farming to remain a strong and sustainable tradition. I want to create a positive image of rural women of their place in the family farming business and the community in which they live," said Caroline.



Janette O'Keefe

Janette O'Keefe is a veterinarian who is passionately concerned about the ever-increasing rate in declining rural veterinary services. Through personal experience and her practice, Janette has seen an erosion of veterinary services that are integral to the agricultural sector.

"This is not readily recognised, as it is largely a service that is taken for granted and at times not valued highly enough until it is no longer available," she said.

With the past exceptional circumstances and the recovery phase the rural sector is now facing, Janette believes it is even more vital to re-evaluate the way veterinary services are delivered in the rural and remote farming areas. More than ever now, it is important for the future of the rural sector that there is a long term commitment by both the farming and veterinary profession to challenging the traditional way of service delivery and the way it is perceived.

"I hope to at least initiate change that leads to a cost effective and sustainable farming sector with effective service delivery."

"Now is the time to think about the long term effects the loss of these services and experienced veterinarians from the rural landscape will have in the short, medium and especially the long term future both locally and nationally," said Janette.

"I hope to play a small part in initiating this change."



RRR NETWORK NEWS

Network News is published quarterly by the RRR Network to share stories and photographs from and about women living in rural, remote and regional Western Australia.

The RRR Network was established in 1996 to bring together women in rural, remote and regional Western Australia to recognise, promote and expand the contribution they make to their communities. The Network is a joint project of the State Government's Department of Agriculture and Department of Local Government & Regional Development.

RRR Network News helps us to share our experiences, information and inspiration with each other. We'd love to hear your story too. Contributions are welcome by e-mail (rrr@dlgrd.wa.gov.au) or by mail.

Circulation for this edition is 8,500. The magazine is distributed free to regional subscribers throughout Western Australia and organisations in Australia and overseas.

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NEXT EDITION

Deadline for copy for Winter edition of RRR Network News is Friday 29 April 2005. The next edition is due at the beginning of June 2005.

HOW TO SUBSCRIBE

See subscription form on the back page or contact RRR Network office.

ISSN 1445-7210

COVER PHOTO: Winner of the 2005 RIRDC Rural Women's Award, Maureen Dobra from Gingin with runner up Deborah Oberon from Denmark.

Across My Desk

Thank you to all our readers who have contributed to the Network News for this edition. Congratulations to all our rural winners in this edition.

Congratulations to our young reader, Kaitlyn Hogan (8) who won our drawing competition with a picture of Billy, her Labrador puppy. Kaitlyn receives a copy of Betty Turton's book, 'Lazy Colleen'.

There was an amazing response to the Women on Boards events in February with over 55 rural women participating in both the Corporate Governance workshop and the networking event (see page 7). Further events are being planned for later this year.

Look out for our new website in April. We plan to launch the website in June with some online activities and look forward to our readers joining us online. More information in the June edition.

For those wanting to follow Viti Simmons journey, the website is www.afascinatingjourney.com.au.

Please continue to send in your stories, websites, my view photos and information. High resolution digital photos and electronic articles are gratefully accepted. Please send to cthompson@agric.wa.gov.au or to PO Box 311 Wagin 6315.

Christine Thompson
Editor/Coordinator

Items of Interest

New Arts Funding Opportunity for Regional Communities

A total of \$157,000 is available for regional communities to access professional artists and created projects in 2005. Contact the Regional Arts Fund Project Officer at Country Arts WA on 9481 0077 or toll free 1800 811 883. Guidelines and application forms are available on the Country Arts WA website www.countryartswa.asn.au.

Grants Central – Updated Lotteries Grants Website

www.lotterywest.wa.gov.au/grants. Offers grant applicants, recipients and other interested web travellers an increased range of grant related information. To receive the latest news and information from Lotterywest on a regular basis subscribe to GrantED.

Grandfamilies: A Resource Guide in Western Australia

Practical guide to support grandparents who are raising their grand children covered information on finances, support, parenting, legal issues and sources of advice and help. A free copy is of the guide is available from the Seniors Telephone Information Service on 1800 671 233 or online at www.community.wa.gov.au.

Rural Wellbeing and Resilience Survey

Helen Byles-Drage is engaged in a study of rural wellbeing and resilience, with particular focus on people who have at some time moved to a rural area to live. Helen wants to

hear from people living within the Great Southern of WA. To take part in this survey phone Helen on 0417 984 577 or go to www.csu.edu.au/research/crsr/survey/

WA Farmers Rural Women's Luncheon – March 2005

Aimed at encouraging women to take up the opportunity to become involved in industry decision making, on Tuesday 29 March 2005 in Perth. For more information contact WA Farmers Office on (08) 9325 2933.

2005 Arts Competitions and Festivals in Western Australia

The 2005 list of art competitions and festivals in Western Australia is now available online. This calendar of events includes open competitions, art competitions in association with agricultural shows and festivals. Queries or updates to Katherine Browne-Cooper on (08) 9224 7376 or kathb@artswa.dca.wa.gov.au www.dca.wa.gov.au/images/alldocuments/planandpolicy/arts%20competitions%202005-21.pdf

Get Going! Moving Kids Safely on Farms Booklet

WA Famsafe Alliance (inc) have booklets available for distribution. The booklet identifies the risks for children on farms and strategies for preventing accidents. For more information contact Mavis Pring on (08) 9359 4118 or go to www.farmsafe.org.au

WOB get runs on the board



RHONDA PARKER ADDRESSING BOARD ASPIRANTS AT THE GOVERNMENT HOUSE BALLROOM EVENT

By Gemma Rafferty

The future looks rosy for the future placement of women on boards and committees in Western Australia given the response to the recent Women on Boards events.

The Women on Boards (WOB) Networking Evening with Mentor Directors held in Perth in February was the most successful event held in Australia with over 270 women attendees all aspiring to position themselves on to boards.



FROM LEFT: KERRY SANDERSON, AWB LTD BOARD DIRECTOR AND WOB MENTOR DIRECTOR, GABRIELLE COUPLAND, CHAIR PARTNERS IN GRAIN, MARGARET HALL, QUAIRADING AND SARAH MILLER, BEVERLEY, MEMBERS PARTNERS IN GRAIN, RUTH YOUNG AWB AND MELISSA PRICE, GENERAL COUNSEL CBH.

Of these women, over 55 were rural women who had also attended a seminar on Corporate Governance in the lead up to the main event at Government House Ballroom.

It may sound silly but despite being on committees and groups since my teenage years I had never asked myself why women weren't on the boards of large corporations. It is for this exact reason that Women on Boards was created. Their aim is to improve the gender balance on Australian company boards. Currently women only make up 7% of board members.

The buzz created by the 270 women including 30 mentor directors, both men and women, in the

Government House Ballroom was amazing. The Networking evenings are organised so you have the opportunity to meet at least two different mentor directors and the opportunity to start creating important networks.

Our mentor was Kerry Sanderson, Fremantle Port Authority CEO and AWB board member. Kerry shared with us what it was like to be a board director. She said the most important thing was that you have to believe that you have the talent and capability which will make a difference on a board. Kerry believes there are three types of board members – the dreamer, the financial whiz and the person who will draw a line in the sand and ask the hard questions.

After moving to the second table I had the opportunity of sitting next to Rhonda Parker, Chief Executive Officer of the Positive Ageing Foundation of Australia. She pointed out that it's important to set a goal, work out your strategy, examine your skills set and have the stamina to keep going. It was interesting to note that Rhonda felt that simply being a woman wasn't a good enough reason to be on a board. She suggested that we use the old boys' network to get ahead.

One of the most important things I learnt was that it really doesn't matter if you are on the local P&C or the Wesfarmers Board the principles of corporate governance apply to all boards and committees.

The Perth WOB Steering Committee members are working on more events so look out for more opportunities throughout the year. Thank you to the committee for putting together a wonderful event for women of Western Australia.

If you are interested in finding out more about Women on Boards check out the website www.womenonboards.org.au. By registering on the site you have an opportunity to list your CV on their database as a potential board aspirant.

It's your council – Be counted!

Make a difference in your community by nominating to be a candidate in the May 7 Local Government Elections. Nominations open on March 24 and close at 4pm, March 31.



COUNCILLOR IRIS PROUSE SHIRE
OF DERBY/WEST KIMBERLEY

Local government is an important area of government and with 144 local governments across Western Australia, the responsibilities are significant and varied. Some of the responsibilities undertaken by local governments include looking after public amenities such as parks and playgrounds, organising events like festivals and concerts, and promptly attending to problems with trees, fences and barking dogs.

In some country areas, local governments are helping to attract people like doctors, other health workers and tradespeople to their areas to retain services that otherwise would mean a long trip to a distant centre. The council is placed to lead the development of some of these great initiatives and councillors have a significant part to play in how people live in their communities.

Cheryl Gwilliam, Director General of the Department of Local Government and Regional Development, says councillors are often elected unopposed because there aren't large numbers of people willing to have a go.

"It's better for people to have a choice of candidates and vote in elections – that way they have some input into how their local government is run.

"Many people don't realise the rewards and satisfaction that can be gained by being a councillor, including putting fresh ideas into the activities their local government undertakes ensuring that the budget is well spent and representing their area in many different ways, such as making planning decisions.

"Councillors also receive a small meeting attendance fee and can receive an allowance for certain expenses such as a phone and a computer or child care."

The experience of being an elected member has helped many people to develop skills in working on a board of management; understanding the planning and financial aspects of business; and in negotiation. Some councillors have also progressed opportunities in State and Australian politics and others in business or community development. Often, however it has simply been a very enriching experience that people are glad they endeavoured.

Iris Prouse, an Indigenous councillor at the Shire of Derby West Kimberley, has found her role to be very rewarding and challenging.

"Some of the qualities a person should have if they're nominating for council is commitment and availability. You need to be open and receptive to the public.

"Once you come on board as a councillor, there's on-going assistance. Training workshops are available ranging from conducting meetings to community facilitation."

Metropolitan councillor, Dr. Amanda Tilbury, of the City of Cockburn, says the most challenging part about being a councillor is that you have to realise that you can't please everybody all the time.

"I honestly believe that if you care about the community then that's the only quality you need to start with because if your heart's in the right place you can learn everything else as you go along. It's a long process and it takes a while to learn everything, however, you're given all the information and you can ask questions."

The council is placed to lead the development of some of these great initiatives and councillors have a significant part to play in how people live in their communities.

Candidate information sessions are being coordinated by many local governments across the State with country candidates being able to log into a Department coordinated Westlink broadcast system which shows a short video and a panel of experienced councillors talking about what it's like to be a member of council.

If you have a strong interest in your community and are considering becoming a candidate in the local government elections, contact your local government or the Department of Local Government and Regional Development (DLGRD).

For more information contact DLGRD on 9217 1500 or (Freecall 1800 620 511 from country areas), or visit the Department's website at www.dlgrd.wa.gov.au/lgelections.



CATHRYN WOOD (RIGHT) RECEIVING HER AWARD FROM JULIE RYNSKI, WESTPAC

Telstra winner setting high standards in the regions

Businesswoman Cathryn Wood from Brookton was thrilled to receive the WA Business Owner Award category at the Telstra Business Women's Award in late 2004 which also qualified her as the National Finalist in that category. With a background in health education, training and hospitality, Cathryn has transformed an ordinary roadhouse into an integral part of not only the Brookton Community but also the Avon region.

Cathryn Wood has been the owner and operator of Stumpy's Gateway Roadhouse since she moved to Brookton, 90 kilometres south east of Perth, in May 1999 with her husband and two young children seeking a better environment and lifestyle. Since taking over the business, Cathryn has successfully steered the roadhouse through a period of economic volatility for the fuel reselling/convenience store industry.

Prior to coming to Brookton, Cathryn was the training co-ordinator for the School of Public Health at Curtin University where she developed and delivered two training courses. Healthy Catering was designed to improve the nutritional quality of food from commercial kitchens. The second course, Food Service Planning for Long Day Care Centres, was designed to improve the nutritional quality of food served to 1-5 year olds.

After qualifying as a chef in 1987, Cathryn travelled and worked throughout Australia, Europe and Malaysia. On returning home, she joined a training company where she consulted to 300 Western Australian hospitality establishments completing a degree in Training and Development with Edith Cowan University in 1998.

In addition to the roadhouse business, Cathryn has developed CaterNet, her own brand of snack foods that offer the traveling public a healthier alternative in ready-to-eat products. These products are currently being distributed throughout the Southwest with preparations in place to expand distribution throughout Western Australia. She is also developing a 16-20 room motel complex to become part of the Roadhouse.

Whilst in Brookton, Cathryn has been involved with several community projects. She is currently on the Brookton Shire Council where she is committed to creating a positive social and economic future for her community.

Telstra Business Women's Award entrants were judged on their professional achievements, business management skills, leadership skills and their future goals.

"I felt very honoured when I won the award. My husband and my team here at the road house also deserve a huge credit," said Cathryn.

As a winner of a Telstra Business Women's Award, Cathryn aims to inspire and give hope to small businesses operators in remote and regional towns, especially those in towns with diminishing populations. She would like to encourage other small businesses to spend as much money as they can locally and regionally, to invest in their community so the community can invest in them.

Cathryn believes small business owners should be the leaders in their communities, encouraging people to become involved in the community and support the whole community concept like past generations.

"I would strongly encourage all women to take a chance on themselves and have a go at the Telstra Business Women's Awards. I was so proud to bring the award home to regional Western Australia and I have my list of people to nominate for the 2005 Awards so that hopefully we can keep it in regional Western Australia."

Cathryn aims to use the profile given to her by the awards to fight for the infrastructure needed to keep small regional communities viable and to ensure small businesses have the framework to build a positive future.

For more information go to www.businesswomensawards.telstra.com

Info Online

www.safetyline.wa.gov.au/youth/Energy/Children/index.htm

A great source of information compiled by energy safety aimed at children as an interactive site with regards to electrical safety.

www.ncoss.org.au/msu/index.html

For a list of current board and committee vacancies in social services visit the National Council of Social Services website.

www.travelbug.gov.au

Planning, checklists, tips and other useful links from organizing your passport and booking flights to finding out how much your Australian dollar is worth in other countries.

www.familycourt.gov.au

Download free copy of the Family Law booklet which includes information on available services, how and where to access these services and how they may assist in resolving issues around the breakdown of family relationships.

www.yconnection.org.au

Y Connection is a new website for young people (17–30) with disabilities. Provides a forum to contact their peers through chat rooms and discussion groups and information on making friends, coping with problems.

www.reachout.com.au

The Reach Out! Website has fact sheets on topics such as grief and loss, depression and other mental health issues, drugs and alcohol, family issues and much more.



THE FINISHED PRODUCT. PHOTO BY ROSS SWANBOROUGH THE AUSTRALIAN.

Tin dog gets tails wagging

By Tash Holden

Not exactly what you'd expect to see down a main street, but a massive Tin Dog is exactly what you'll find next time you drive through Dowerin.

A group of dedicated secondary school students from Dowerin District High School have come up with this innovative town entry statement as part of a C.R.E.A.T.E (Creating Rural Entrepreneurial Attitudes Through Education) program that kicked off last year. After 12 long months of deliberation, planning and fund raising, the students finally unveiled their masterpiece on Friday 13 August 2004.

So why a Tin Dog? The students recounted the story of the stream that runs through Dowerin. Not only was it an integral part of the town's water supply, it was also a popular resting point for travelers making their way to the Goldfields at the turn of the century. Bully beef was the "catch of the day", with most swaggies reaching for an unappetising can of "beef" (known affectionately by many as tinned dog!) to satisfy their appetites before tossing the empty can into the stream...and so the creek was christened, Tin Dog Creek.

The students seized upon this fascinating history and have created a unique landmark to celebrate it. Country Arts WA and the Uncovered Arts Scheme supplied a third of the funding for the project with the Midlands Education District Office, the Shire and most importantly, the community of Dowerin pooling together for the remaining funds. The

students commissioned the talents of sculptor Peter Boylan-Knight who spent over 270 hours turning their vision into a spectacular reality.

When the students were asked what was so good about being part of this project, they said, "It's harder than you expect. Teamwork's really important. Some of the adults said we'll never do it but we have".

'Rusty', 'Snoop' & 'Bender' were all bandied around as potential names for the streetside pooch.



THE DOWERIN STUDENTS AT THE STUDIO OF SCULPTOR PETER BOYLAN-KNIGHT WATCHING THE FINISHING TOUCHES BEING APPLIED TO THE "TIN DOG".

And so the legacy of Tin Dog Creek lives on...celebrating the past and a very positive future. With kids like this in the town it's a reminder to all that creativity and the entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in the Wheatbelt.

For more information contact Tash Holden on (08) 9622 7222 or tashholden@wheatbelt.wa.gov.au

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Training Improvements is setting the standard Australia wide in training programmes for regional business and agricultural enterprises.

Training Improvements specialises in bringing training services to regional Australia, rather than businesses having to send staff or themselves to the city. This saves time and money, and minimises staff downtime.

The courses offer self-development tools valuable to a wide range of people, and Training Improvements clients include farmers, small, medium and large businesses, government, service industries and their staff.

With trainers based all across regional Australia, including 2 locally based and experienced Western Australian trainers – Joe Young and Sandy Jackson, Training Improvements can offer local knowledge, professional expertise with a unique regional understanding.



JOE YOUNG

Joe Young runs a large grazing and farming property “Yannawah” at Kojonup which is small in area but reasonably large in numbers, turning off in excess of 25,000 head per annum. At “Yannawah” they also have a canola crushing plant which crushes approximately 8,500

metric tonnes annually. Joe has qualifications in agriculture and training and has been training since the mid 1980’s as a trainer in professional development and people management. Joe’s lively and humorous manner ensure his courses are enjoyed by everyone. Joe is currently involved in the Sheep and Wool extension in WA “The Sheeps Back” in conjunction with the AWI.



SANDY JACKSON

Sandy holds an executive role with the Great Southern Merino Sheepbreeders’ Association.

Sandy Jackson works in partnership with her husband running a merino stud near Kojonup. Sandy has many years experience in education with both adults and children in rural and metropolitan WA. She has tertiary qualifications in Economics and Education.

The discipline of planning ... importance of thinking ahead ... getting that balance between family and farming ...

These were three of the take home messages for me from the Time Matters course, which I thought was excellent. To learn such important lessons from an amazing trainer who also manages a farm, family and job made it even more real. I believe that farmers are getting busier and there are more demands on our time with staff, hands on jobs, family and community. I highly recommend this course to anyone who has many demands placed on their time.

Jeremy Lefroy, Moora, WA

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Katanning	11th Aug/25th Oct
Northam	27th Jul/18th Oct
Port Headland	3rd May
Woodanilling	9th Aug

Volunteering – The Warmun Experience



KATHERINE HALL WITH HER WARMUN INSPIRED WINNING WORK ON THE AWARD NIGHT OF THE 2004 SOUTH WESTERN TIMES SURVEY AT THE BUNBURY REGIONAL ART GALLERIES.

By Katherine Hall

When Katherine Hall, a resident from Gracetown in the Margaret River region, spent a few weeks with the Warmun artist community in the Kimberley's as a volunteer with the Indigenous Community Volunteer (ICV) program, she soon realised that it was she who would be gaining the most from the volunteer program.

For many people a sense of identity is closely linked to one's place of birth, parents and background. Although I was born on Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean, I have lived mostly in the south west of WA. As a child my mother took my sisters and I camping all over this wonderful continent and as we grew it become part of us – our memories, our idea of beauty, part of our identity. The land and nature became a place of refuge in times of need, a place of quiet reflection, a coming home. I now live in Gracetown, in the Margaret River region, and have been using drawing to deepen my connection with my environment.

My initial interest in volunteering with ICV came out of respect for indigenous people and their relationship with this land, and an attempt to address my fear and ignorance. With a passion for art and the beauty of the Australian landscape, a yearning to know more about the land and its indigenous people, I offered my services as a visual artist.

An opportunity eventually came up at the Warmun Art Centre, who were looking for someone who could transfer skills in photographing and cataloguing art works, and possibly some printmaking and drawing workshops for those interested.

Warmun is an Aboriginal Community, about 200 kilometres south of Kununurra. It is the home to some of Australia's top artists, including Hector Jandany, Patrick Mung Mung Betty Carrington, Shirley Purdie, Madigan Thomas, Gordon Barney and Lena Nyadbi, to name a few. It is also the home of the Krill Krill, a performance 'found' by Rover Thomas, which inspired his move into painting, with the original paintings being made for the performance.

The land and nature became a place of refuge in times of need, a place of quiet reflection, a coming home.

On the 8th of July 2003 I travelled to Warmun from Perth, arriving in the dark after two flights and a two-hour bus ride from Kununurra. The second flight was in a small 30-seater plane from Broome to Kununurra, over some spectacular country. Below the land changed from water ways cutting their way through the earth like veins in a leaf, amazing milky green colours on white sand, to deep cut snake like rivers in red earth scattered with low 'dot' like bushes. More change



LENA NYADBI (BOTTOM LEFT) TAKES WARMUN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ON AN EDUCATIONAL TRIP TO HER 'COUNTRY' WITH FELLOW ARTIST NORA.

revealed dryer land and I travelled for some time over some quite flat country before the hills began, with their rings and lines. I was inspired to draw – and hoped that some of those images would stay with me and make their way into my cells to emerge in drawings to come. Later, Hector Jandany, the oldest and most respected artist at Warmun, informed me that the lines on the earth and around the hills are water marks from when all that area was under water.

Turkey Creek seems to be in a valley with long bushy dry grass and the occasional tree, surrounded by relatively low ranges of reddish orange hills. In some areas the ranges are quite flat and in other areas they appear round and lumpy. In seeing the land I gained a better understanding of some of the Warmun art. Much of the work is made with a 'profile' perspective, as Mark Nodea a young but well-established artist explained, while some has a topographical aspect.

I was inspired to draw – and hoped that some of those images would stay with me to emerge in drawings to come.

At the art centre, there was a constant stream of tourists, art collectors and visitors.

It amazed me how busy the Centre was and I became swept up in the day to day running of things, minding the shop, showing visitors around, assisting artists, cataloguing works, making endless cups of tea, packing art ready for freight, cleaning up, photographing art and writing up the stories which accompany the work as dictated by the artist. Canvases were generally stretched and gessoed by two of the local fellows, and artists supplied with various sized canvases, brushes and acrylic binder, ready to mix into paint once they had ground the ochre to their liking.

My time at Warmun taught me so much about myself and on my return home I began a whole new approach to drawing which involved an inward gaze, reflecting my experience and relationship with

the land. I have since exhibited a series of charcoal drawings at the Bunbury Regional Art Gallery. For this I thank the artists at Warmun and the support of ICV.

Indigenous Community Volunteers (ICV) is a private not for profit company established to improve the access of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to business, management, technical and professional skills. ICV provides skilled volunteers to transfer their skills to Indigenous organisations and communities. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer contact ICV on 1800 819 542 (toll free) or call Rhonda or Benita in our Perth office on (08) 6363 4502.

For more information visit our website at www.volindigenous.org.au

SHIRLEY PURDIE PAINTING 'COUNTRY' WITH NATURAL, LOCAL OCHRE, AT THE WARMUN ART CENTRE.





It is OK to Ask for Help

The Midwest Yellow Ribbon for Life a prevention of suicide program has been promoting its message "It is OK to Care – It is OK to Ask for Help" since December 1998. The journey has been an interesting learning experience for many and sometimes an empowering experience.

By *Kate Rickerby*

When a tragedy touches your life especially when it is a close family member the thoughts turn to what could I have done differently to avoid this? How can I help to prevent the same thing happening to others? The effect of a suicide in a family sends ripples through families and communities.



MIDWEST YELLOW RIBBON FOR LIFE DONGARA PRESENTATION

This happened to me and then a few weeks later opportunity to do something confronted me. I was shown a Yellow Ribbon card – it is a business card size – but with the power to save a life and much heartache. Six years forward a small group continues to distribute cards and pamphlets, talk to groups about the program and run Listening Skills Workshops.

Initially the goal was to distribute the Yellow Ribbon cards together with the pamphlets to all households in the Midwest region so that everyone

I was shown a Yellow Ribbon card – it is a business card size – but with the power to save a life and much heartache.

would know that there is always someone to turn to in times of distress. With the financial generosity of Rotary and several businesses and other community individuals together with time and effort from many, the

first distribution of cards and pamphlets through the Midwest Times reached over 19,000 households around the region.

What was a great beginning became an interesting journey. Our next target was the schools in the region. A team of young people were keen to share their experiences and talk about how the cards can help overcome the fear of asking for help. They were trained to give a half hour presentation to introduce the card and how it can be used and shared.

The first year presentations were given to all Geraldton High School students and subsequent years the offer was extended to all schools in the region mainly focusing on year eight students.

The questions they often ask are – What do I do if someone gives me a card? How do I help? What do I say?"

The value of the cards was recognised by many professional people and businesses around the region and advice was sought. The Samaritans from Perth held the initial training workshops and from this we developed our own Listening Skills Workshop.

Since 1999, Listening Skills Workshops have been run regularly for community members and for other organisations on request. It is a two hour workshop teaching a variety of aspects of listening and communication skills.

The Midwest Yellow Ribbon for Life has continued to distribute the cards and pamphlets in the region and beyond and it has gained recognition and support from many people and agencies.

The way forward is opening up and our small committee is looking at an opportunity to establish a part time base in Geraldton where people may come to talk and a website for Midwest Yellow Ribbon for Life is currently being developed

We all need to know that we never need to be alone – It is OK to ask for help and it is OK to care.

We all need to know that we never need to be alone – It is OK to ask for help and it is OK to care.

For more information contact:

Kate Rickerby

Midwest Yellow Ribbon for Life
Phone 9921 4895 (Not 24 hours)
E-Mail krajern@wn.com.au

24 hour Help Lines

Samaritans 1800 199 008
Crisis Care 1800 198 313
Lifeline 131 114

To find out more about the Yellow Ribbon for Life program go to www.yellowribbon.org

Expo Offers Hope to India's Poor



BROOME

MAGGIE NOLAN WITH YOUNG FRIENDS IN INDIA.



By Gerri Rainieri

The sale of handmade goods at Expo by the New Hope Rural Leprosy Trust is part of a successful rehabilitation scheme run by the Trust to help disabled children and tribal

women in the Indian State of Orissa to earn vital income and become self-sufficient with the help of remarkable women like Maggie Nolan from Broome.

New Hope is a voluntary organisation that works to eradicate leprosy in western Orissa and cares for aged leprosy victims in both Orissa and Andhra Pradesh States. The work covers all aspects of development – from planting trees in rural hill tribal areas to vocational training for street children in the cities, free eye surgery for the cataract blind and corrective surgery for polio-crippled children. This year, demands on the Trust's resources have been further stretched by the need to care for 250 children orphaned by the Asian tsunami in the Indian State of Tamil Nadu.

A remarkable Broome woman and former nurse, Maggie Nolan – known among her Indian friends as Maggie Sister – has been involved with New Hope since 1989. Maggie was the first white person to be seen by many remote Indian villagers and for the past 15 years has spent several months in India each year working with children and tribal women who live in poverty, afflicted by diseases such as leprosy, polio and AIDS.

“An important part of the Trust's work is to give disadvantaged people the opportunity to learn a vocation and be able to make a living from it and become independent.”

One of New Hope's projects is a rehabilitation scheme aimed at creating income and self-esteem for disadvantaged women and children through the manufacture and sale of a variety of traditional Indian handicrafts. Maggie has found North West Expo to be an excellent venue for the sale of their products.

“Having come to Broome 3 years ago, I was interested to be part of North West Expo to display and sell authentic Indian clothes, tablecloths, bedspreads, embroidery and mirrored articles, made by the New Hope Trust in Orissa,” Maggie said.

“Being new to town it was the perfect place to make people aware that I am a Trustee and volunteer for New Hope, that I have a commitment to raising funds and that by buying from the stall the people of Broome could help the cause.

“An important part of the Trust's work is to give disadvantaged people the opportunity to learn a vocation and be able to make a living from it and become independent. This project embraces tribal women who do some beautiful embroidery work, disabled children, mainly Polio-affected, as well as homeless and orphaned children. The project helps these children develop skills which enable them to gain future employment in tailoring, cobbling, screen printing and other crafts.

“North West Expo 2004 was my first experience in having a stall within a trade-type expo. It was so successful that I ran out of stock and was able to raise enough money to enable the Trust to buy the raw

materials so that this important project could continue. The main objective of this project is to raise people's self esteem, enabling them to leave New Hope educated in a trade or craft and able to make their own way in life.”

Maggie is currently in India, working with New Hope, but will be back in time for Expo with plenty of handicrafts for sale.

“The tribal women and the children are all working hard to make sure that I get the best of their work”, she said. “Thanks to last year's Expo, the goods produced under the New Hope project are now known, admired and snapped up by people who have seen the work.”

“Sister, Sister”, an inspiring book about Maggie's life and her work in India, will also be on sale at New Hope's Expo stall.

For more information contact Gerri Rainieri in Broome on (08) 9193 7008 or www.expo.westnet.com.au.



FROM LEFT, ERICA SMYTH, CATHERINE BULLEN AND MARY GURGONE.

Pilbara professional women welcome development opportunities

By Pam Glossop

Professional women in the Pilbara are being given the opportunity to network and gain professional development through an initiative of the Pilbara Development Commission (PDC).

The project will provide regular forums and a major conference addressing the opportunities available and challenges faced by woman in management is to be held in mid 2005.

Robyn Crane, the Acting Chief Executive Officer for the PDC, has a passion for providing development



ROBYN CRANE

opportunities for women in the Pilbara. Robyn who has lived in the Pilbara for over 30 years has seen some major changes in that time.

"I have seen the region grow and develop from being a male dominated environment, especially in the mining industry, to a large proportion of females holding senior management positions," she said.

A reference group has been established to ensure relevant opportunities for the professional women in the Pilbara are addressed. The makeup of the reference group consists of representatives from the public sector, small business and non-government organisations.

To kick start the project, women in management positions in all sectors across the Pilbara were invited to participate in the initial forum that was held in November in Dampier. Key note speakers included District Superintendent Catherine Bullen from the WA Police

"I have seen the region grow and develop from being a male dominated environment, especially in the mining industry, to a large proportion of females holding senior management positions..."

Service, Erica Smyth, Chairperson of the Pilbara Development Commission Board and Mary Gurgone from the Office for Women's Policy.

"From the turnout here today, there is obviously a need for women to have the chance to network, mentor and learn and the PDC are to be commended for taking the initiative to provide these opportunities," Mary said.

The response to the forum was overwhelming with over 60 women attending. The event was jointly coordinated by Soroptimists (Karratha Branch), the Business and Professional Women's Association (Pilbara) and the PDC. Sponsorship of \$2000 was secured from the Office for Women's Policy.

The project will continue to provide opportunities for networking and professional development for woman in management positions and the Pilbara Development Commission is now working on the major conference which will be held later in the year.

Further information on the project is available from Nicole Nugent in Karratha on (08) 9185 0188.

BACK FROM LEFT: CAROLINE WILLIAMS, MIKE KENDALL, CAROL INNES, MIKE FLOOD, MARILYN MORGAN, TROY BENNELL. SEATED: BARRY MCQUIRE AND CHARMAINE GREEN.

Helping Indigenous Artists to Overseas Success

THE Mid West Development Commission (MWDC) will investigate using a Federal Government Trade initiative to help local Indigenous artists sell their works to lucrative overseas markets.

The move to enlist the help of TradeStart's new exporter program, through local TradeStart officer Mike Kendall, comes in the wake of the highly successful Indigenous Art Workshop held in Geraldton on November 24 and attended by more than 20 people.

Workshop organiser and MWDC indigenous enterprise development officer, Caroline Williams, says that with TradeStart's help she envisages adapting a model for exporting artworks that has been successful in other parts of the state.

Caroline said she hopes to organise a follow-up forum soon to build on the enormous momentum generated by the recent Geraldton seminar. Among inspirational speakers at that event was Bunbury artist Troy Bennell, who will hold his first solo exhibition next year in Milan. His works currently sell for more than \$15,000 a piece overseas.

Mr Bennell (whose attendance was sponsored by the

Artists Foundation of WA Artsource initiative) is an Indigenous artist who has successfully entered the international exporting business through collaboration with the Bunbury Regional Art Gallery.

He was joined as a speaker at the conference by Marilyn Morgan, Head of the Australian Indigenous Arts Marketing and Export Unit run through the Department of Industry and Resources.

"Exporting art has been incredibly lucrative for some artists' communities in other parts of Australia and I believe it's an area we haven't fully explored here in the Mid West," Caroline says.

"There is a wealth of creative talent here and this is an exciting opportunity for artists to learn how they can take that crucial first step toward selling to international markets.

**For more information contact
Caroline Williams on (08) 9921 0809.**

Weekend Retreats for Home-Based Business Operators

Wheatbelt home based business operators will benefit from a series of weekend workshop retreats to be staged throughout the region in March and April by the Wheatbelt Area Consultative Committee (ACC).

The workshop retreats will be held at Cervantes on 12 and 13 March and at York on 16 and 17 April, 2005.

These retreats are intended to be interactive, practical, relaxing and inspiring and have been designed especially for people in home based businesses.

All of the speakers and presenters at the workshops have been carefully chosen for their links to the Wheatbelt and their understanding of the issues that are faced in

working from home, managing a successful business and maintaining a balanced life.

Delegates will also have the opportunity to participate in a variety of rotational relaxation workshops as well as attending a session on better nutrition. There will also be a number of displays with information specific to the home based business person.

The registration fee of \$300 includes accommodation, meals, workshop manuals and participant workshops.

Delegates may be able to apply for

a Department of Training Small Business – Smart Business voucher through their local Business Enterprise Centre which may enable them to recoup part of the registration fee.

For further information or to register, please contact Project Manager Millie Ferguson on (08) 9654 8305 or mobile 0428 930 962 or by email at cpsolutions@westnet.com.au

The 'Building a Stronger Home Based Business Network Project' is supported by funding from the Australian Government's Small Business Enterprise Culture Programme.

Writers Tips

The RRR Network News magazine aims to encourage women to share their thoughts, perceptions and information. Articles about and by women are given first priority, as well as articles that add dignity and appreciation to women's unique approaches to problem solving.

We'd like to receive your articles on topics such as: Women's health, Business and Enterprise; Leadership; Primary production; Community Building; Environment; Education and Training; Family; Opportunity; and just about any topic that's of interest to non-metropolitan women.

If you are interested in writing an article for Network News and would like some assistance and guidelines, feel free to contact RRR Coordinator, Christine Thompson on cthompson@agric.wa.gov.au or (08) 9861 2022.



Letters to the Editor

SOUTHERN SCRIBES HAVE DONE IT AGAIN!

Readers of the Summer Edition 2003 Network News, may remember reading that our writers group had won a prize of \$500 for our publication 'From Within'. This was only a photocopied book which was distributed solely among contributors.

It was spoken of so well by the few people who saw it that we were encouraged to publish a soft cover booklet of 44 pages. It is not identical as the songs and prose were left out and more photographs and poetry included. As such, it had to have a new title and 'Land Song' was chosen from the first poem in the book.

As our writers all live either at Jerdacuttup and Hopetoun, the latter was chosen for the launch which took place at Mary Ann Haven, our Seniors Hall on November 27. It was really gratifying to see the number of people who attended. Enough copies were sold at the launch to cover the final printing costs.

The book was designed and typeset by our member Richenda Goldfinch.

For a mailed copy, please send a cheque for \$12.50 to Gai Downes, PO Box 20, Hopetoun WA 6348.

*Helen Taylor
Hopetoun*

I collected the mail last night and what a thrill to receive my Christmas reading. The "Network News" has arrived.

It looks great and I am looking forward to sitting down with my favourite drink and soaking in all the stories in the latest edition.

I needed something bright to distract me from the goings on down here in Esperance this week. The many fires in this region have been a big worry.

This just reinforces what RRR and the magazine is about, providing some light relief and uplifting news on life in rural WA. It still has a place in our lives.

*Marg Agnew
Esperance*

What's in a name?

Place Names of the Gascoyne

The Gascoyne is the first region in Australia to be recorded by their names and the story behind their names. Star constellations and Aboriginal and local names have been included for very mountain, bay, river, street and town. Many features are listed, including underground geological ones and banks under the sea!



BOOK COVER BY RACHAEL STEADMAN.

The Gascoyne region was the first place in Australia to have a post and sign erected on it by Europeans and so it is an extremely interesting region to record. Lots of original place names remain and so I had fun learning how to translate them from the eleven Aboriginal languages recorded for the region. The region offered a good start to migrants by giving them a good return for hard work and so we have a steady flow of new names into the region, particularly the names given to plantations along the Gascoyne River.

Some place names originate from our pioneer women, some were chosen by women and many women feature in the tales behind the names. Take Jane Hooley, for example, who wished they could have butter with their damper like the pioneers of the state's south west, and bowls to mix the damper instead of stiff dry sheep skin vessels on the ground!

Or Mrs Mary Louise Walker, the first white woman to live at the Junction whose policeman husband was away when the Aborigines warned the river was flooding. She took heed and freed prisoners who would have drowned in their chains. They never troubled her and her three daughters after that and in turn saved her life, warning her to escape the attack by another

The Gascoyne region was the first place in Australia to have a post and sign erected on it by Europeans...

tribe in which her husband died. When she remarried, she became Mrs Glasgow and grew old in Carnarvon where she delivered over 300 babies and cared for every one in the days before bush doctors. No wonder a day care centre uses her nick name: Granny Glasgow Day Care Centre.

Another place name leads to Rose who was smuggled aboard a French ship dressed as a boy back in 1818. She kept a diary which is not complimentary about our coast line for she had hoped for forests and waterfalls.

In all there are over 1,000 place names listed in alphabetical order, collected over four years. New names can be added in later editions. I hope the book helps newcomers to "get a handle" on the region and presents some fine role models to young and old.

For more information contact Paquita Boston on (08) 99411652 or boston@wn.com.au. Paquita Boston, Carnarvon



Corroboree Rock

By Richenda Goldfinch

Still pools of deep water
hold secrets
rock warmed by sun

has felt many feet
bare feet feel smooth
rock

brush wallaby and kangaroo
draw paths through the bush
swan and wedgetail eagle
nest nearby

water rippled by wind
fed by ancient spring
gives life

bottle brush and mallee flower
reflect in silent shadows
wattles weep

Jerdacuttup River

we come to sit watch listen
to swim
thankful for cool depths
and wonder who came before
to corroboree
on this rock?





Curlews in the moonlight

Curlews in the moonlight is a book that will touch the heart of all who read it. On the book's cover Joan Major invites readers, "to laugh and cry with her as she shares her memories, adventures, loves and heartaches" and I found myself sharing all those sentiments.



JOAN MAJOR

By Nicole Egginton

The book is a compilation of short stories from a bygone time. A time, as Joan explains, to play and think and make up one's own enjoyment and be content and happy. Joan wanted to give her readers a "glimpse of the joys and sorrows of one who grew up in the 1930's and onwards."

Joan was born in the old 'tin' hospital in Esperance in 1933. At the age of eight moved to Booraan, eight miles east of Merredin, where the book is set. The daughter of pioneer farmers she soon developed a love of the land and outdoors. This is portrayed throughout her stories.

Life in the 1930's was a far cry from today. Joan's home was made from bush posts and corrugated iron, a dirt floor with wheat bag mats, and only one Hessian lined bedroom. The all important 'dunny' was fifty to

sixty yards from the house complete with the kerosene box toilet, newspaper toilet paper and red back spiders.

It was a life of 'bush' cubby's, farm adventures and riding horses. Joan, her sister Eileen and brother Vic, didn't know the word 'bored' as they made their own fun and they looked forward to their occasional treats of bran and brown sugar on paper from their mother.

The collection of stories in the book vary from the arrival of the new Massey 44K tractor to the excitement of an army base arriving next door. Joan shares her family's joy in the birth of her brother through to tragic death of her sister. I found myself laughing and crying throughout the book.

Joan had always enjoyed English and words at school, which may have assisted her in writing the

Life in the 1930's was a far cry from today. Joan's home was made from bush posts and corrugated iron, a dirt floor with wheat bag mats, and only one Hessian lined bedroom.

book. School for Joan had been at the kerosene box desk with her mother being taught by her mother. Although she enjoyed English she had always "wanted to be out helping Dad."

Joan is a remarkable woman who went on to marry and have four children and now has nine grandchildren and one great grandchild. She and her husband went on to farm at Mt Walker east of Narembeen. She continued to have

an active life on the farm after marrying and says she particularly enjoyed driving vehicles driving the truck for years. Joan was the first lady in the district to get her truck and semi-trailer licenses.

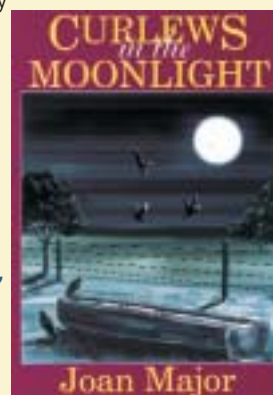
Although writing the book had been a long process (she wrote it by hand three times) Joan said it was a lot of fun.

"I had stories in my mind that I knew needed to be written down to let people know how life used to be," said Joan. "But editing and getting the book to print was the hardest part".

Finding a publisher was a difficult task as many companies required large amounts of money up front, but she found a publisher who was willing to help her to get her book to printing stage. Joan encourages other women to write their story if not for wider publication then for

their families as so many family histories has been lost. However, she advises others of thinking of writing a book that it must come from the heart.

Copies of the book 'Curlews in the Moonlight' can be purchased by phoning Joan on (08) 9418 6074 or emailing jfx0403@tpg.com.au.





The Leaning Tree Project

By Anne-Maree Hopkinson and Wendy Watters

It was an interest in alternative schooling that brought Ann-Maree Hopkinson and Wendy Watters together. They discovered they shared similar beliefs – a love of the lifestyle Geraldton offered, the beaches, small community, the weather – it's where they wanted to bring up their families. The only draw back was the lack of alternative schooling options. Chatting about alternative schools that they had heard of, they started to write down what they wanted in a school. It was the start of a partnership and great friendship.

"We were thinking of something a little alternative, where the whole child is nurtured where the school has a warm home-like feel, and education is more project based with small class sizes and parents playing an active role. All this in an eco-friendly sustainable community environment," said Wendy.

"We were thinking of something a little alternative, where the whole child is nurtured where the school has a warm home-like feel, and education is more project based with small class sizes and parents playing an active role..."

"We had to do a lot of research. After all we knew we wanted something different but did not really know where to go from here and were worried about looking like two hippy mums trying to convince interested parents that we were serious."

So began our journey of reading, discovering, networking, discussing and learning. The first open public

meeting was held on 25th May 2004 with 17 people attending. and a Working Party of ten women was formed.

The group's first major milestone has been the lodging of their 'Advance Determination' application to the Minister for Education. We are now waiting for consent from the Minister to progress their dream and hope that after this process, they will be invited to submit our full application to see the Leaning Tree 'open for business' in 2007.

The Leaning Tree Community School will be a Primary School offering Kindy to Year 7. It will be a low fee non-government school following the

Curriculum Councils thirteen overarching educational outcomes. To date 38 children are enrolled to commence in 2007. It is envisaged that this will grow before the School opens to around 50 inaugural students with the maximum number to be 150 students which will ensure that the School is economically sound as well as maintaining a community environment.



WENDY WATTERS (LEFT) AND HER CHILDREN, GRACIE (7MONTHS) AND BAILEY (2) WITH ANNE-MAREE HOPKINSON AND HER CHILDREN, CAIRO (31/2) AND DENVER (1).

The group has since made application for funding to the Mid West Development Commission's Regional Development Scheme to employ a leading consultant from Perth who will be engaged to complete the Leaning Tree Community School Feasibility Study/Development Model.

"Some have asked us why we have bitten off such a large task," said Wendy. "At the end of the day, someone has to do it for our children, so it might as well be us. It is important that we raise our children to be well-rounded individuals in every way. At Leaning Tree our community will encourage the virtues of love, courage, generosity, strength, patience, truth, respect and peace."

The group would love to hear from others with experience with similar projects and interest in being involved.

For further information contact: wendywatters@wn.com.au or Anne-Maree (08) 9965 5137.



Bush Poetry In My Life

By Chris Sadler

PHOTO: CHRIS SADLER



Chris Sadler first became interested in bush poetry because she liked the rhythmic pattern of bush poetry and reciting to an audience. Since those early days, Chris has recorded much of her family farming adventures in verse and writes poems and ditties for special people and occasions. For Chris, it has been a wonderful medium to share her “farmer’s wife” stories with others.

I became interested in bush verse when I recited a humorous, country theme poem at a CWA concert and it went down well with the small audience. When some funny incidents happened on our farm I decided to put them down in verse form because they were stories well worth preserving as far as humour goes, and also a way of telling about life on a farm especially when you come from an urban city lifestyle.

The first poems I wrote were from incidents that have happened, nearly happened, or could have happened on our wheat and sheep farm. They are really suitable for me to recite to an audience because I have had that real personal link of experiencing what is in the poem. I think this makes the audience appreciate the story and the humour a little more. However I have now written many other types of poems and ditties for special people and anniversaries which can be read by others.

It has been wonderful to share my “farmer’s wife” stories with so many. We can feel so isolated out here with our way of life and meeting people with similar experiences. In particular, city people learn a lot of things about farming and country life from listening to or reading bush poems.

I enjoy the challenge of rote learning and the way in which I am able to recite poetry if the occasion is appropriate especially since it doesn’t require too much planning or carrying of instruments!

In our local town, I am often asked to be part of any entertainment happening for locals or visitors and have travelled to many WA towns as a guest ‘bush poet’; Some years ago I also competed in Winton in Queensland and Tamworth Country Festival in NSW.

I don’t think my well educated daughter living and working very hard on our farm would think that seeing me wearing my wedding dress in the sheepyards was very funny when she is in the middle of drafting 3000 ewes that have to be trucked out that afternoon in the scorching summer heat.

However, I am sure that women of my generation could relate to being forgotten on their anniversary and would think what a good way to get his attention! I hope you enjoy my poem of A Sheeppard Anniversary.

They are really suitable for me to recite to an audience because I have had that real personal link of experiencing what is in the poem.

A Sheepyard Anniversary

It's expected in a farming life,
That sheep work comes around,
So now and again in a dusty yard,
Is where I can be found.

I'm the lady of the house,
Not the sheepdog that you thought,
But I'm dragged into the sheeyards,
Where marriage rows are fought!

And once again its shearing time,
It's in the diary nice and clear,
It's the third week into August,
The same time every year,

But the hectic pace of shearing,
I really was quite dreading,
And to make it worse, the first day of it,
Was the anniversary of our wedding!

And this ten year one was special,
I was sure he would remember,
And if he didn't, every body part of his,
I would happily dismember,

So the morning of our day arrived,
I dreamt of chocolate, wine, and flowers,
But alone I woke at six A M,
He had been driving sheep for hours,

I swear to call the cooking off,
To throw his new gift (a pocket-knife) down the loo,
But there's just no time to dwell on it,
For There's a million things to do!

I tend to kids and housework, phones and faxes,
Then the cooking I was starting,
When I heard the 2 way, loud and clear,
We need some help with drafting,

I was furious and rotable!
I'll change his farming mind so set!
I'll embarrass him somehow,
In a way he won't forget!

I pull the suitcase from the MAN hole,
Dust and spiders everywhere,
But to the sheeyards, my wedding dress and veil,
Is what I plan to wear,

I pull it on, zip halfway up,
I'll embarrass him and me!
But what the hec I say,
From this day on,
He won't forget TODAY!

With an Elders cap upon my veil
His attention I will catch,
I stride the distance to the yards
In blundstone boots to match,

I canter through the iron gates,
White fabric flying high,
And clamber over splintered rails,
And then my husband I do spy,

While gathering up my lengthy skirt,
And flicking back my veil,
I shout at sheep to force them through,
Determined not to fail,

The sheep they look real startled,
But they move on down the race,
To farmer Don at the drafting gate,
Where I see the expression on his face,

Under a dusty hat, his eyes shone out,
White teeth showed through the dirt,
He smiles and sighs and shakes his head,
But he was aware, I had been hurt,

So farmer Don with bride in hand,
Drafted every single ewe,
But the comments they were flying high,
From the local shearing crew,

Did he want to take a honeymoon?
Did he need to knock off early?
Remarks about forgetting dates,
Was making him quite surly,

Yes the attention to the sheep yard bride,
And the things the shearers said,
To this quiet unassuming farmer,
Was something he did dread.

You can only just imagine,
The sight before them there,
A dirty, tattered dress and veil,
That made them stop and stare.

The butt of every joke he was,
About my wedding dress and veil,
It was not the norm on this his farm,
And it did, humiliate this male,
So up I'm heaved, and fireman carried to the Ute,

I screamed and said that I would fall,
But his huge arms wrap around me,
And he says, "I had not forgotten, our special day, at all."

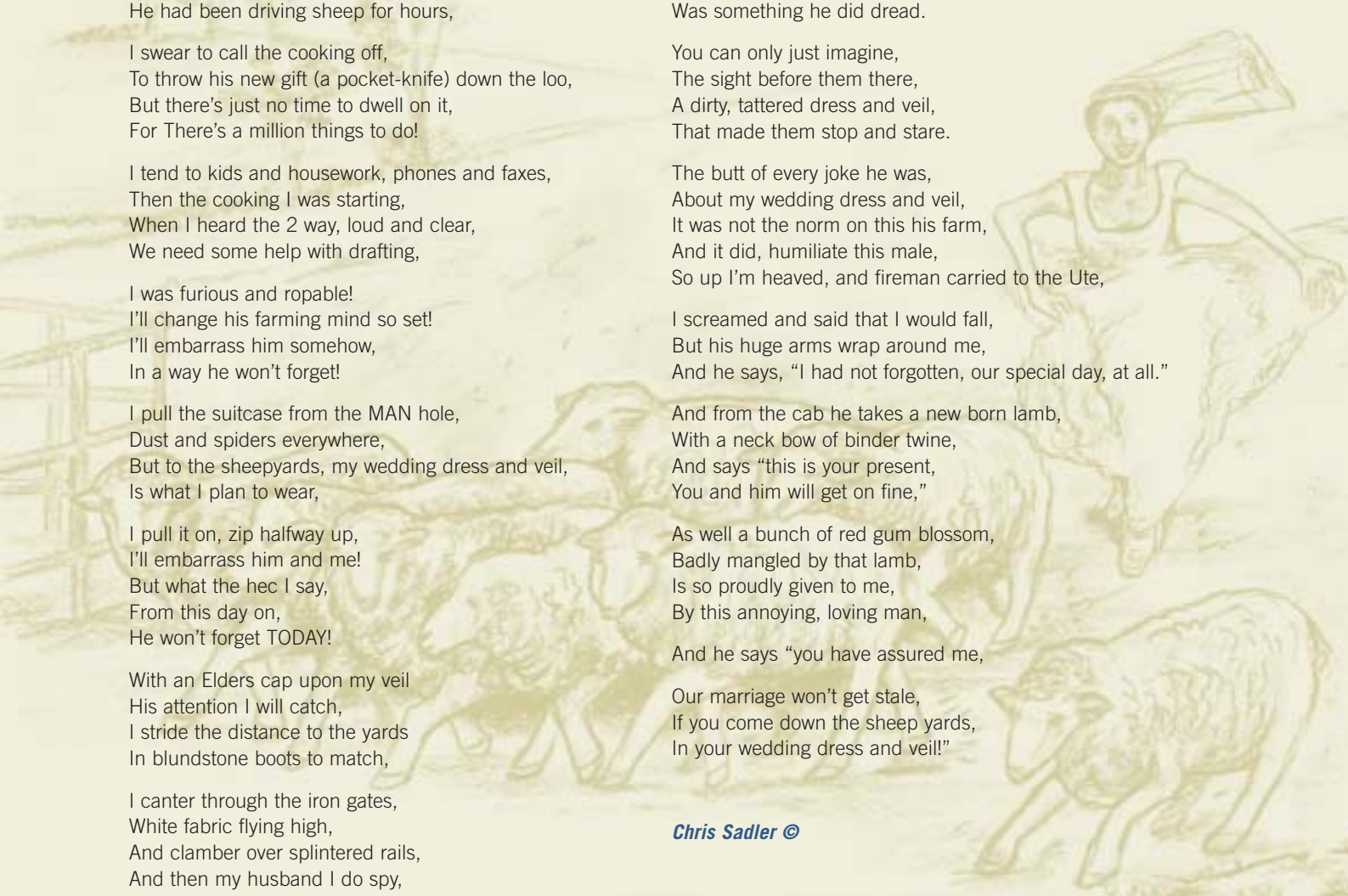
And from the cab he takes a new born lamb,
With a neck bow of binder twine,
And says "this is your present,
You and him will get on fine,"

As well a bunch of red gum blossom,
Badly mangled by that lamb,
Is so proudly given to me,
By this annoying, loving man,

And he says "you have assured me,

Our marriage won't get stale,
If you come down the sheep yards,
In your wedding dress and veil!"

Chris Sadler ©



My view

Bushfires 2002, 17km East of Southern Cross

Photo sent in by: *Lorraine Firkins of Southern Cross*

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