

Waroona goes wild

By Chris Bellinger

Two September days in Waroona saw rural and regional women gather for the annual Southern Regions Community Leadership Forum.

You could be excused for wondering what was going on in the Waroona Hall between 15th and 17th of September, and might have been surprised to learn that sounds of Indian drumming and loud cries of “yeee haaa” were emanating from the 2010 Southern Regions Community Leadership Forum.

Chair, Di Holly from Broomehill, said, “the committee works extremely hard throughout the year to deliver the annual Forum, but ensure we have lots of fun along the way. The Forum is all about learning new skills, sharing, networking and, most importantly, acknowledging ourselves and each other. This year’s theme was CELEBRATE”, and celebrate everyone did, in Wild West style!”

“All community group volunteers work incredibly hard all year” said Di “so this Forum is designed to bring like-minded people together, share stories and recharge the batteries. The focus is on learning, but in a fun way.”

This annual event, now in its sixth year, is organised by a voluntary committee from the Peel, South West and Great Southern Regions. The 2010 program included:

- A Skills Training Day presented by WACOSS - discussing burnout and facilitation skills.
- Pathways to solving problems.
- Workshops included ‘Getting funding shouldn’t be a brain drain’, ‘Presentation skills for the mortally terrified’, ‘Dance movement therapy’, Personality typing through colour”, ‘Experiential learning’, a ‘Laughter’ workshop and a bus tour of Alcoa!
- Peter Dhu - a truly inspirational man who was an elective mute for many years as a result of a severe stutter explained how he became a public speaker. He also demonstrated a technique of how to stop a room full of chatting people within 20 seconds.....and it worked!
- An Open Space session with Alan Halford.

Alan said they were "an exciting dynamic passionate diverse bunch of people who are committed to their communities. They did not stop at anything to give their members an unforgettable experience. The energy, expertise and commitment of the committee would be the envy of any corporate events organiser and these guys did it for nothing!"



People who forgot to turn off their mobile phones got to cool off in the naughty corner teepee!

The Leadership awards are a highlight of the Forum. “The quality and quantity of nominations was astounding” said the Awards Coordinator Cheryle Brown.

“The big difference between these and other awards however, is that short listed nominees give a brief presentation of their project at the Forum.

The winner was then chosen by the audience - using some wonderful Keepad interactive technology”.

This year’s Leadership Award Winners are:

- Leadership in Project or Event Volunteer Based organization: Mandurah Corporate Triathlon.
- Leadership in a project or event- funded organization: The Blackdog Ride.
- Inspirational Leader in a funded organisation: Carina Bradbury (Milligan Community Learning & Resource Centre).
- Inspirational Leadership by Youth: Waroona’s got Talent – Waroona YAC.
- Inspirational Leadership Volunteer Based: Sandra Kennedy (Rockingham City Community Garden group).

Here are Sandra’s reflections after winning her award:

“I have come away with a great deal of self worth and I truly thank you all. I am no longer just a stay home mum that is filling in the gaps at school or just another person creating a community garden.

I am now confident that what I have to say and offer my community is of great worth to me, my family and my community.



Sandra Kennedy and Rachel Green, Confident Women Australia sponsor

“My 3 children have all told me how proud they are of me and even gave me their own certificate that they made while having a sleep over that nite at gran’s. It is as treasured as the one I received Friday night.”

The committee was delighted to have many corporate sponsors at the Forum to present the awards to the finalists. LotteryWest, Alcoa, Bendigo Bank, Royalty for Regions, Development Commissions, local government and others make the journey possible and enable the Committee to provide this experience for rural people at a fraction of the cost of similar forums and conferences (just \$30 for two days, including the Gala Dinner!).



Bronya Wickland & Di Holly at the Wild West Gala Dinner

The Wild West Gala Dinner was held on the last night. In true western style our events coordinator and Chair rode in to battle on two ‘not-so-wild’ black stallions and threatened everyone with death by cap gun.

One of the exciting outcomes for the group in the past six years has been the continual growth of the network; the camaraderie and friendships that have developed and the all important recognition of individuals and groups through the Leadership Awards.

“It isn’t easy working in a cross regional capacity with the tyranny of distance” said Di Holly “but fortunately with today’s technology, we are able to meet ‘virtually’ and often. We still have those very necessary face to face meetings which we really look forward to, despite the travel”.

“There’s no doubt that the main reasons for the group’s success are passion and commitment, inbuilt flexibility, the capacity to recognise all contributions and using skills from within and without.”

Di continued, “A good example of this is Bronya Wickland, who was terrified of public speaking a few years ago but, with a bit of prodding and support from the committee, is now the MC– and what a wonderful sense of humour she brings to the Forum!”.



Committee members and Alcoa representative Tom Busher kicking up their heels at the Wild West Gala Dinner

The future of the group is solid. This year the Committee will begin the roll out a five year strategy which will see the regions further develop their own leadership capacity through skills delivery and mini forums; making this a totally unique and sustainable program in rural WA.

The committee will continue to provide an annual Forum and next year the event will be held in October in Balingup. Work begins right now.

The Southern Regions Community Leadership group is happy to share its successes to other regions. If anyone wants further information, see www.communityleadership.com.au or contact the committee by email on info@communityleadership.com.au.

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