

Women Who Mean Business

...Selling Gippsland's Finest

Project Newsletter : Autumn Edition : 2005



Improbability hits Event Management Workshop at Ellinbank



Vibrant Maggie Maguire with Yvonne Maygar (left) and Maree Wallace (right) at Warragul's event management workshop

"Risk management," announced Maggie Maguire, standing in front of our group in her red cat-eye glasses and beautiful coiffure. "Risk management is key to your event's success – the improbable can happen."

Yes, I now knew that. As event coordinator of Maggie's workshop, I had just experienced the improbably occurring. I had woken up early, ready to feed and dress the children, then zip them to school and arrive, fresh and organised, at our venue to graciously greet Maggie and set up the room, organise the caterer, ... who knows, possibly pick fresh flowers for the room or even put on lipstick. Anything was possible.

Then came the improbable. The dog ate a plastic bag for breakfast. (Or

By Lara Whithead, Warragul Project Officer

dinner, or at some point prior to my waking up.) My daughter Sarah awoke, crying that she had a tummy ache. My husband sprained his ankle while on his morning run. Then a newspaper reporter called, wanting details of our project for his morning deadline. Within 20 minutes, my 'well planned' event was in grave danger, since I was the only one who knew all the details!

"Crisis management...plans for emergencies...written guidelines so someone can take over." Maggie's words rolled over me as I finally sat, exhausted, at the workshop. The dog had needed surgery, but lived; Sarah got to school (eventually); my husband was hobbling, but upright once more; and the workshop went off beautifully – mostly due to the wonderful women on our committee who jumped in and managed it all with nothing more than some rushed pleas for help and a tin box full of registration details that I dropped off with reception on my way to the vet. And I will never forget to do my risk management planning, no matter how improbable a hurricane in Warragul may seem. Thanks, Maggie.

Post Note: Maggie spoke about many other strategies, but risk management was all I could grasp at the time! And yes, it's all true.

The International Back to Back Wool Challenge Story

By Jean Jenkins, Omeo

In 1811 at Newbury in Berkshire, UK, a 1000 pound wager was made to make a coat from the sheep's back to a man's back in one day.

Watched by 500 people, the coat was completed in 13 hours. Then the sheep was eaten with much quaffing of beer to celebrate.

Today's Challenge began in 1992 when Richard Snow, a keen young spinner at the Scottish Wool Centre at Aberfoyle in Scotland, developed thyroid cancer. His desire to raise funds for cancer research sparked their Back to Back Challenge, a competition similar to that run more than 180 years before.

The event created enormous interest in the UK, not only because of the clever wool promotion but also because of the funds raised for cancer research.

When Australian Wool Showcase member, Wendy Dennis, visited Scotland in 1994, she came home inspired to hold a similar competition in Australia: and the first international competition was held the following year.

Teams comprise a blade shearer, a sheep and seven hand-spinners and knitters. All teams follow the same rules and pattern.

The 1995 inaugural International Challenge involved nine teams—from Australia, Scotland and the Shetland Isles. The following year, 22 teams competed and interest has continued to mount.

The 'Challenge is a simple and direct method of promoting wool from "sheep's back to spinner's back" using the ancient skills of blade shearing, spinning and knitting.

It is timed to coincide with Australia's long weekend in June and the tourist summer season in the northern hemisphere.

Wheels spinning at Omeo

Omeo is geared up to welcome visitors at its International Wool Challenge event on Sunday, June 12.

The event, to be held in the Omeo Town Hall, will start at 8am with the "Blessing of the Sheep" with Rev. Barbara Logan, followed at 8.30am by the official opening.

Competition will start at 9am with, hopefully, three teams of eight striving to achieve their aim, which is to blade shear a sheep, spin and ply the wool and knit a man's jumper in under eight hours.

In the hall a mini taste of the high country will be on offer with wine tastings, local bread and pastries, lamb tasting and local chestnuts being roasted at the front door.

Blade shearing, felting and machine knitting demonstrations will occur throughout the day.

There will be craft market stalls plus displays and sales of local woollen yarns and products, soaps, mohair and alpaca.

Town eateries will support the event by providing lamb and mutton on their menus and there will be a community photographic competition with a theme of "The High Country—Sheds and Machinery". Entries will be displayed in participating shops and children's entries will be displayed in the hall.

Buskers will be welcome and there will be entertainment galore.

The day will conclude for the competitors and helpers with, appropriately, a lamb dinner at the Golden Age Hotel.

- International Wool Challenge, June 12, Omeo Town Hall—Day Ave, Omeo. Details: Jean Jenkins, phone 5159-1557 or e-mail ormckkaum@dodo.com.au

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A Message from ...

WwMB project committee members



Di Deppeler

June has asked me to write about my involvement in this project and fortunately she has provided me with some headings. So I'll write as though in response to an interview – I am more at home with dot points.

Q. Why are you involved in the project?

A. I believe that projects such as this are a way of making a difference in people's lives and, from this, a ripple effect takes place and many lives are touched by the process.

And because, whether a project is a success in terms of its stated outcomes or not, it is always a success in terms of the growing and learning which takes place for all participants as the process unfolds.

Q. In what ways has your involvement been fulfilling/enlightening for you?

A. At the moment this is a hard one to answer – in terms of enlightening, it is enlightening to see the reporting requirements which occur with funding these days as compared with a few years ago; to see the amount of public liability and insurance which need to be organised for the project to take place' to observe the growing amount of restrictions which regulate the governing of public funds. This has both a positive and negative aspect - the positive being that funds are less likely to be mismanaged and the negative that there are so many things

which cannot be attempted for fear of litigation if they do not succeed. This makes it difficult for some of the more innovative and creative things to get off the ground.

In terms of fulfilling - I like to see people taking responsibility for their own growth, and venturing into new areas, and project like this give women the opportunity to do that. It can break patterns and make changes in communities and already these things are occurring within the project.

Q. What do you see as your role with the project?

A. Being on the steering committee is more of a guidance role I feel. Making sure funding guidelines are fulfilled, and that the projects happen. It is a responsibility in making sure that public money is used as the application requires and if changes need to be made then examining the issues involved. It is dealing with issues as they come up. I must say that Mary puts in far more time than the rest of us and does a great job. Being a steering committee member is as big as the project if it is to progress effectively. For me because I am so busy in my other job at the moment I don't think I give as much time as I should which is a sad reflection that paid work takes preference over voluntary work. I think paperwork has become a nightmare for many of us and while e-mail is fantastic it creates more.

Q. Why is the project important?

A. Because the Government/ funding bodies are recognising that there needs to be more support to women in rural regional areas, there are issues not being addressed by other means, and that the process chosen for this project works, as has been shown in previous projects of this nature.

Q. Has your initial expectation of the project been met?

A. I guess that when we were initially putting together the proposal for the project based on outcomes and evaluations from other projects, I imagined something along art/cultural lines which bought lots of tourist dollars into the region and which helped to address the issues which are

faced by women and their communities in rural areas.

Sort of like a quick fix for an ailing economy and rural and regional woes. Lots of cottage industries which made money for people and for communities and which allowed women who were not able to find employment to make money and employ others.

I dream and imagine on a large scale, however the scope of these thoughts is not often borne out in reality in a short timescale.

I see outcomes from projects in 1997 which have changed communities but took time to do so.

The project is now halfway through and I see it being similar in process to other projects, having times when you think things will never work out, times when they are going so well you breathe a sigh of relief. Sometimes it seems as though events are totally out of your hands, so you just keep doing what you have to do, following the process, and suddenly they come back together again.

We have achieved some important outcomes and great ideas and projects have been generated. People have put in a great effort, and we are well advanced. The projects are exciting and the website is great.

Q. What are your hopes for the projects outcomes?

A. I hope the project will enable women to be empowered, to be able to make changes in themselves and their communities, to deal with social issues involved with knowledge and the belief that they can make things better and in so doing to allow rural communities to grow both economically and culturally. To be afraid of no-one and to be able to take on any role they choose.

Q. What have you learnt about yourself and your community, through your involvement?

A. That voluntary work has its limits and these limits change depending on circumstance; that the community is able to pull together and work miracles if it believes in something, that knowledge is power but requires wisdom to be effectively used; that women involved in projects such as this one become later on the women who initiate projects for others.

From POW Camp to idyllic B and B



Patricia Dennis shares her inspiring journey

I will start sharing my life story from the time I was released from a Japanese concentration camp at the end of World War Two.

I was held as a Prisoner of War with my family for three-and-a-half years in Manila, the Philippines. Fortunately, we all survived this horror but then encountered a further life and death journey on the David C. Shanks, an American troop ship as we travelled in an ever-diminishing convoy through Japanese torpedo infested waters off northern Australia.

I was a little girl of 10-and-a-half years who could not read, write, spell or do arithmetic.

I became a guinea pig for the Education Department of Sydney. At 17 I was offered a place at the University of Melbourne but I declined—the previous six-and-a-half years had been crammed with catching up and keeping up.

Instead, I went off to learn and then taught the Remington accounting machine, with the dream of travel—with this skill, I could always get a job.

While in the world of commerce, I had yet another dream: I wanted to do modelling. I met Mr Peter Fox who suggested I go to the Greta Myers "School of Charm". I joined the Mannequins Association and soon I was walking up and down the catwalk in the latest fashions of the day, and featuring on magazine covers and inside knitting books.

In 1954 I won "The Australian Beach Girl of the Year" title.

I married 18 months later at 21 and sailed to Europe for a two month skiing honeymoon and then on to London. I travelled all over England and to Europe doing film and modelling work until I found I was pregnant with our first little girl.

We then returned to Australia, and settled for a four year stint on Grandpa's farm in Beaconsfield. This gave birth to my great and enduring love of country life.

We built a house at Hampton by the beach and moved to the city during the week and back to the farm every weekend and school holidays, with now, four little girls!

During the past 20 years I have lived in Albert Park—my girls have all grown up. I took up painting and writing and had a fulfilling social and working life—but my heart was calling me back to the country.

I scanned the property section of *The Weekly Times* every week for years, but there was always something that didn't quite match what I wanted.

Foot sore and weary, I stopped buying *The Weekly Times* and asked the Universe to give me a pointer. Sometime later, I was travelling on a city tram when I spotted a paper left by a commuter. Something told me to pick it up and take it home...I did so, and when I glanced at the property section...there was my dream patch!

The address was Yinnar South. I'd never heard of this place, but I phoned the agent and was there, at 570 Jumbuck Rd, next morning.

The three level mud brick house with tall gables stood majestically among rain drenched gumtrees and bushland. It was swept about by beautiful gardens and patios.

Beside it stood a smaller replica known as "Jumbuck Cottage", a bed and breakfast cottage. Plus a large American barn—an instant summer studio! Everything in perfect order—ready to move into. Amazing.

It was a long way from anyone I knew but here I was, signing up to buy and retreat into 3ha of trees, singing birds, visiting wallabies, resident wombats and echidnas, all within coo-ee of the Morwell State Forest.

The bed and breakfast business offered me opportunity for income plus keeping in touch with people: people have always been my life.

I took over on January 10, 2004 and opened for business, rated Four Star by the RACV, two weeks later.

I want to offer "health and healing" packages, including massage and painting classes, so have taken several TAFE courses and am now ready to roll with this next step.

Learning the computer has been uphill but I'm getting there. Having my own web site is a great incentive.

So instead of some predictions by well-meaning friends that I may be swallowed by boredom and loneliness, my venture has turned out quite the opposite. My dream-come-true has added more dimensions to my life and increased my feeling of wellbeing.

I am supported by my association with people involved with Latrobe City's "Creative Gippsland" project which includes a touring guide to arts, culture and heritage and as a member of the B&B and Retreats Accommodation through the Traralgon Information Centre.

Now I am meeting many new and life-minded ladies connected with the WwMB in the Latrobe Valley and am thrilled to be making a small contribution in time and effort. Also, the on-going workshops in skills development are marvellous.

Everyone has made me feel welcome and part of the community. I feel I belong.

I encourage everyone who has a workable achievable dream to persevere and you will get there.

Living life to the fullest will give you every challenge that you need to grow in the strengths you never knew you possessed and confidence to take many more steps in life.

I can see that I have already, one year on, become so caught up in my dream—that I will have to rent a villa in France to paint, and, take a cookery course while I'm at it!

Enjoy.

- Jumbuck Cottage Bed and Breakfast, 570 Jumbuck Rd, Yinnar South, ph. 5122 3344.



1000 years old and still young at heart

A magnificent 1000-year-old tree is the centre of attention for four members of the Maffra/Stratford Working Party: From left to right—project officer Deb Milligan, in the foreground, Amanda Goodge, Jane Gurling and Joan McCloud. The tree is about to become a ready-made part of the Maffra/Stratford group's community garden project.

Bush remedy works wonders



Mary Gilbert, of Buchan, shares her journey...

A big "Sea Change" came for me nearly 20 years ago, when I married and moved from living and teaching in the inner urban area of Melbourne to the picturesque, remote rural area of Buchan, in East Gippsland.

I dearly loved my "single-in-the-city" life and all that cosmopolitan Melbourne had to offer but the realisation of my great dream to "one day marry and settle in the country as a family person" far outweighed any lure of the city!

So it was that romance in the high plains (but that's another story!) brought me to my life in Buchan. What a change it was...from teaching in multi cultural environments to teaching rural country/farming children...and from living in central metropolis Melbourne to that of the rural Buchan!

This is where my "life in the community" story really begins.....

After a few years full time teaching in Orbost, I took family leave and turned from my thoroughly rewarding teaching career path, to that of being a full time family person, raising two young children with my husband.

Life was still very hectic, living on our little bit of paradise in a little tractor shed-come-hut. With no running water or mains electricity, this would be a test for anyone, but we did it for many years while building our beautiful home, using 90 per cent recycled and scrounged materials.

During this time I became involved with the local community, particularly through our wonderful Buchan Neighbourhood House. This was such a spirited place for meeting social and educational needs of the community.

I loved the chance to make new friends and share in community events, the likes of which just doesn't happen in a city lifestyle.

During those early years of child rearing I pursued many learning activities to quench and enhance my creative appetite. I pursued a life long interest in herbal medicine and gained much knowledge

through the particular courses on offer. It was here that I became interested in producing "herbal "potions and lotions" and started my popular line of Buchan Bush Remedies. After 10 years of producing a particular product I still have many favourable comments of user satisfaction! I have promoted it at many markets in the district and even supplied to practitioners in the city.

I also developed my creative skills in art, needlework and craft, including creating the popular American Indian Dreamcatchers.

I also undertook, with a friend, to organise and promote the Mystic Market -a local showcasing of holistic "mind, body and spirit" resources and practitioners. I enjoyed the networking with many like-minded people and found it personally rewarding to put many folk on a track to finding emotional and spiritual, and some alternative, support in their times of need. Many endearing friendships resulted.

Following the Mystic Market I became a founding member of the Buchan Foothills Festival which gave opportunity for some different cultural and aesthetic elements to come to Buchan. The Festival-Market also provided a venue for showcasing local artistic talents and I was able to promote and sell my Bush Remedies and cottage craft products.

Throughout the years, while maintaining a teaching commitment, I've enjoyed being involved in many community events in Buchan and in promoting Buchan as a piece of paradise.

Now the WWMB project has been the cake with the icing for me.

Besides bringing new opportunities for development and growth in the community, particularly for its artists, this project is enabling me to gain new skills which I can use to promote my family's new venture. For years, I had kindled the idea of having our own little cottage craft shop showcasing local art and craft, so: "Yes!"

"Not ones to lie idle" soon we will realise our ambition of opening a Farmstay Accommodation and Cottage Craft business. We hope to provide a base for travellers and families to stay and experience this area of East Gippsland.

I will house my range of products, along with other locally produced art and craft work, in a permanent display for the public to peruse and hopefully purchase. I am indebted to the WWMB project, to the women in the Buchan group and particularly to Kate Earle, for giving me the skills and encouragement to realise this great dream-a dream almost as big as my earlier one of "one day marrying and settling in the country to raise my family".

Letters and Comment

The Incorporation and Insurance Paper Trail – Not Too Hard, Really!

Lara Whitehead, Warragul

Is your group considering incorporating? The Warragul WWMB group has been going through the process of incorporation, so I thought we'd share what we've discovered so far.

I'd had no experience with group incorporation or, horror of horrors, insurance, so I asked Nigel D'Souza from Community Support Fund for some advice, and he sent to me a great website (<http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/>). This has been very helpful.

Our group decided to incorporate for several reasons. Firstly, we would like our project to continue over the next two years, so we need to exist as our own entity, separate from the WWMB funding which will end this year. Secondly, we wish to apply for several grants, and many grants prefer, or even require, that applicant organizations are incorporated.

There seems to be two main parts to the incorporation process:

- a) registering to incorporate and
- b) becoming Insured.

At the Our Community website I found simple guidelines to the incorporation process. I checked the fees (\$51.20), and downloaded the application form, plus a set of model rules for governing our group. Our group has now voted to incorporate, and we're preparing to lodge our paperwork.

The insurance issue has been more difficult, but I've narrowed it down, again using the Our Community website. I believe we'll be able to insure ourselves (after we get our incorporation certificate) with a group called Civic Mutual Plus.

Start at the www.communityinsurance.com.au website and work from there. This group specialises in insuring not-for-profit groups, but you must go through the links to check your Shire is participating in the scheme. (Most in Victoria are doing so.) If I'm right, our premium will cost the group about \$300 annually for \$5 million in liability cover. Of course, I haven't actually applied for it yet, so we'll see how we go!

Catalyst for life changing decision

Jill Gael, WWMB Leadership Workshop Facilitator

I have made a big life changing decision which is a direct result of the many creative, regional and rural experiences I had when I was in Gippsland last year.

My partner and I have done up our house in town and put it on the market!!! We are moving to our little farm at the edge of the Barossa, planning to work 25 per cent less and be active in our community, indulge in our hobbies, give more time to the boards and committees we are on and drink in the beautiful landscape.

We will have a little apartment in Adelaide for 3 or 4 nights of the weeks we do work, to cut down wear and tear. Thank you wonderful Gippsland women for the inspiration and the reminder that with a "Round 2 It" I can stop procrastinating and live my life exactly as I want to!

Community projects taking shape

Catch up on the progress of WwMB projects around Gippsland

Warragul

Our Baw Baw Seats of Distinction project is taking shape. We've contacted six local schools who are planning to design a seat for the Linear Park Walking trail, and, after a lot of work, have created the design guidelines and sent them out. Now we're waiting to get the submissions back from the students for the Shire's approval.

Our group supported Clean Up Australia Day by walking the trail on Sunday, March 6 to pick up litter.

On the fun side of things, we're planning mosaic workshops with local artist Mary Gabriel, and hope to work on a large mosaic compass situated somewhere along the walking track in April and May.

January and February were busy with paperwork, as we were sorting details involved in incorporation and insurance. Surprisingly, once we got on the right trail, it's not that hard to do! The website <http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/> is a wonderful resource for community groups if you haven't already discovered it.

Latrobe Valley

The Latrobe Valley group has been approaching business partners to cover the publication of our social history and recipe book.

We have begun our media campaign and Maya Fraser is following up our school competition, to encourage participation, and we're finding small sponsors to provide prizes in our art competitions.

We are approaching women on our data base to aid in the collection of names for the stories in their areas.

We are compiling business submission folders as our list of sponsors to approach list grows. We were invited to the ME&U credit union networking breakfast to talk to business owners about our ideas and are having a scenic tour to distribute information and collect stories from outlying regions.

Soon we will begin to pre-sell the books, design and arrange the launch and focus our sponsorship efforts.

Buchan

Buchan women have decided to run an Art Gallery and became incorporated in January as Buchan Gallery Inc.

At their annual general meeting in February some executive positions were filled and the rest will be filled at the next meeting. Initially it was decided to launch the Gallery on March 11-13 weekend. However, as the lease has not been drawn up yet this has had to be postponed. Artists are busy preparing work and members are signing up quickly to be part of the new group. Watch this space...



From front to back: Meredith Mooney, Jenni Lewis, Jan Govitt and Wendy Tilling enjoying lunch 'on site'.

Orbost

Partnerships continue to be strengthened with the local community. Parks Victoria will clear the area that the Women Who Mean Business group will work on so that there is less chance of encountering snakes.

At their meeting on February 28, after the successful Event Management, Marketing and Promotions Workshop, members toured the site with two landscape gardeners sharing their vision. Both contributed very good ideas on how the project should take shape. They will provide detailed drawings of their vision for the next meeting on the second Wednesday of the month.

Stratford/Maffra

Our group's dream is to develop a site into a Garden for Humanity. We are designing a contemplative, peaceful place with seating, art and sculpture, an area to celebrate local history and indigenous culture and pathways to encourage visitors to move through the space. The site is inspiring, overlooking the Avon River, with two majestic ancient red gums and wonderful views.

We are hoping the Garden for Humanity will become part of the historic walking trail that is being planned to go around the town.

The garden is being developed in partnership with Avon Landcare and in consultation with Wellington Shire, the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, Department of Sustainability and Environment, the Stratford Caravan Park, local businesses and artists.

Dates are set for working on the sculptures, working bees for developing the site, plus the behind-the-scenes work involved in managing and marketing a project such as this.

Omeo/Swifts Creek

The Swifts Creek/Omeo Working Group comprises 30 women from Benambra, Swifts Creek, Ensay, Cassilis and Omeo. We come from diverse backgrounds including agriculture, home-making, administration, business, health, education and the arts.

Our focus is on an alpine celebration around our region's entry in the annual International Back to Back Wool Challenge in June. We will document the process using artistic mediums such as photography, sketching and writing, and exhibit this work at Swifts Creek in September this year.

Even though the Back to Back is based in Omeo, we're developing skills to benefit all of our towns. Therefore, half of our project is based in Swifts Creek and we are spreading the workshops, meetings and where possible, the benefits, around all our the towns.

We're working with East Gippsland Shire; local businesses and many community groups.

Every picture tells a story

Photograph and words by Anne Richardson

Twenty-five budding photographers attended a workshop at Swifts Creek run through WwMB and funded by ANEG and Victoria University.

Daniel Jenkins, a local sculpture and photographer, gave instruction on the differences between digital and film photography, lenses, the importance of light, composition, flash photography and putting work on to the computer and working with

that. Daniel also touched on exhibitions and how to work towards this, giving some good tips on how to be the photographer in the group recording a particular process. His humour and enthusiasm was catching and inspired us all. The Omeo group aims to apply what was learnt to recording its progress, including the Back to Back Wool Challenge, and presenting an exhibition in September.



Addressing safety issues for women with disabilities

By Jodie Pullman
Gippsland Women's Health Service

In recent years, anecdotal evidence gathered by Gippsland Women's Health Service identified concerns about the vulnerability of women with disabilities to sexual and other forms of harassment when using public and privately owned transport. This also raised concerns about the needs of women to access their communities in a safe manner and how this impacts on their lives in general.

Having recognised a need for research into the safety needs of women with disabilities, Gippsland Women's Health Service recently completed a project that would identify those needs and develop a plan to meet them.

Project workers consulted with women across the Gippsland region with a range of different disabilities including intellectual, physical and sensory disabilities, neurological impairments and acquired brain injury, as well as meeting with disability networks and agency representatives.

As a result of the consultation process a range of issues and needs were identified, and many positive suggestions for change were made. In regards to physical safety,

a number of issues were identified that were common to women of all ages and with all disabilities. These included: crossing the street, kerb and gutter problems, poor street lighting, accessing disabled toilets, using automatic teller machines, feeling unsafe at home at night or feeling unsafe in public at night or in crowds.

Public transport was also problematic for most women interviewed as was parking for people with disabilities.

For many women with mental health illnesses, issues included feelings of being followed and/or watched in their homes, concern that there is nothing between "being well" and "being in (a psychiatric ward)", and/or fear about what will happen to them when their parents or carers die. Many women also had personal health and safety issues regarding safe sex, appropriate behaviour, and going to hotels and nightclubs etc.

When asked about possible strategies for feeling safer or dealing with difficult situations, women generally indicated three areas where change strategies needed to target.

1. Personal skill and knowledge development, including self-assertiveness training, self defence, in-home safety and strategies for coping when afraid.

2. Professional development programs for workers to increase their knowledge of disabilities and their skills in order to respond appropriately.

3. Advocate for broader social change.

As a result of the Women with Disabilities and Safety Project, Gippsland Women's Health hosted two forums on March 16 and 17 to develop strategies that will address some of these issues. The forums also featured a guest speaker from the Victorian Women with a Disability Network and Chris Jennings, who is the project worker for the Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre's "Triple Disadvantage Report" which focuses on violence against women with disabilities.

The forums, which were free, were held in Morwell and Bairnsdale.

- For more information contact Jodie Pullman at Gippsland Women's Health Service on 51431600 or 1800 805 448.



Tammy keeps watch on our water

By Tammy Dawson,
Waterwatch Facilitator for the Latrobe Valley

I grew up on a dairy farm near Warragul and enjoyed every minute of it. My parents loved to camp by rivers and go bushwalking so this love of the outdoors was transferred to me from an early age.

Eventually, enjoying the outdoors was not enough and I began to feel strongly about protecting our natural heritage. I completed

a bachelor of science degree (conservation biology and ecology) with honours at La Trobe University, Bundoora.

During the four years of study I missed Gippsland and decided I would go back and campaign for the environment in my own community. After a few months I landed my position with Waterwatch, and now take pleasure in helping others care for the environment.

At Waterwatch we conduct school education programs and run community events to raise awareness of environmental issues and to give people an opportunity to have their say. Most of all, I enjoy developing the Waterwatch community water quality monitoring program which recruits volunteers to monitor river health. It is great to work with a network of volunteers from a variety of backgrounds and skills, working towards a common goal.

Volunteering is something I love to do myself and have done so often, including a trip to South Africa in September last year to monitor wildlife for five weeks.

The great thing about volunteering is that you can learn new skills, provide a service to the community and the environment, participate in training opportunities, meet new people with a common interest, mix with influential people, and most important of all work towards bringing about change.

There are opportunities to all these things when volunteering to monitor water quality with Waterwatch. No prior experience is needed and all training is provided. Your data is collected and put into reports for natural resource management agencies and organisations. Waterhole Creek monitoring groups in Morwell have recently decided to work together to enhance the health of their waterway. The creek currently exhibits high levels of phosphorus and the groups are working on identifying the source of the pollution. There are many possibilities however, so it could take a while. The groups are looking for extra monitors to help assess the impact of the stormwater drains entering the creek.

Another example of a Waterwatch monitoring project is a new one involving environmental flows impacts in the Thomson River. In this instance the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority and Southern Rural Water are looking to recruit Waterwatch volunteers to begin the first ever community environmental flow monitoring program in Australia!

- To find out how to be involved in Waterwatch contact Tammy Dawson on 5175 7800 or tammyd@wgcm.vic.gov.au



Maggie wows at event management workshops

Maggie Maguire has inspired women across Gippsland with her event management, marketing and promotion workshops during February and March. Kate Earle reports on the workshop at Orbost, and Deb Milligan reports on those held at Omeo and Stratford/Maffra:

The Orbost Event Management Workshop had 34 participants. We had a participant from Buchan who had just turned 80 years and a primary school student. How is that for diversity!! The range of participants was wonderful. We had teachers, school council presidents, Rotarians, garden club members, the president of the local student representative council, a business management teacher with three students from Nagle College, a Landcare co-ordinator, arts group members, Parks Victoria, the list goes on...

Some participants commented that it was not what they thought it was going to be but they were really thrilled with what they had learned and shared with others. They would definitely recommend the course to school council and any group running an event.

Parks Victoria allowed the Snowy Wilderness Discovery Centre (formerly Orbost Rainforest Centre) as the venue and Orbost Exhibition Centre committee provided the lunch - when the floor has been finished at the Orbost Exhibition Centre the committee will cater for functions--the view is wonderful and the food is also very good so well worth booking.

Maggie Maguire wowed her audience in Maffra where 22 women attended her workshop. Maggie is an extremely entertaining and knowledgeable presenter who is very easy to listen to. One of the first things we did was to discover the range of community interests in the room.

As well as the WwMB Project participants there were representatives from: the Long Lunch; a number of arts based events; the Sale Turf Club; Landcare; the Maffra Agricultural Show; the Briagolong Improvement Group; National Water Week; Open Days for local businesses and the Stratford Shakespeare Festival. It is great to know that the skills acquired in this workshop will be spread so widely throughout the community.

We discussed common challenges, common solutions and the problems raised by the sheer number of Events being staged nowadays. There is a huge degree of

competition and we need to be tough when evaluating our events and their worth.

We discussed Risk Management and how essential it is in today's litigious society. It was stressed that, even though we may have Public Liability Insurance for events, this may end up being worth nothing if we have not shown responsibility and care in our planning.

One of the main ways in which we can do this is by developing a Risk Management Strategy as part of our standard business practice. Despite being a daunting subject it can be boiled down to answering three questions: What can go wrong? What will we do to prevent it? What will we do if it happens? If we can work out a strategy built around the answers to these questions then our projects, participants and the community in general will be safer. This is the message that came through most strongly for me and it has already had a profound effect on the way our project is managed. It is also worth noting that assistance is available, through shires and other sources.

After lunch we talked about marketing and promotion. Points raised included: the importance of clearly identifying the market; having measurable objectives; and knowing where to position promotional materials. All in all it was a useful and stimulating workshop.

Twenty women gathered at the Golden Age Hotel in Omeo for Maggie's workshop. Maggie quite simply wowed her audience. Besides WwMB, participants represented the rodeo; the picnic races; music nights; Up the Creek; and the district agricultural show society.

We discussed common challenges and realised that they are shared - with that comes the realisation that many solutions can be shared too!

One point recognised was that the events 'marketplace' so to speak, is very crowded and there is a huge degree of competition. We need to be tough when evaluating our events and their worth.

Photos From left: Arlene Loveland, Amada McIntosh; Di Pendergast; Val McCann; Annie Burne at the Events Management workshop in Omeo.

- Steph Makar and Keira Brown at the Events Management workshop in Maffra.
- Patricia Bowden and Debbie Brown catch up at the Events Management workshop, Warragul.

WwMB Calendar

Funding and Submission Writing / Budget Management Workshop with Belinda Brennan.

WHERE: Little River Inn, Ensay.

WHEN: Monday, March 21, 9.45am for 10am start until 2.30pm. \$10 cost. Open to general public. **BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL.**

CONTACT: Deb 5145 5240 or by email: littlemilligan@ozemail.com.au

Ongoing work on sculptures for Stratford Garden for Humanity

Two venues, participants welcome to attend either or both:

WHERE: Amanda Goodge's house, Seaton. BYO lunch, sponge, small towel, relevant tools.

WHEN: Wednesdays, 10am start: March 30; April 27; May 11.

CONTACT: Ph. 5148 9390 for directions and to inform Amanda if you are coming.

WHERE: Beth Ripper's house, cnr Merrick and Dixon Sts, Stratford.

WHEN: 10am start on 1st and 3rd Mondays of the month, except school and public holidays: April 18, 2 May 2, May 16, June 6 and June 20.

Planning Meeting

WHERE: Morwell project.

WHEN: April 7, 7.30-9.30 pm.

WHERE: Traralgon Library.

CONTACT: Michelle Tisdale ph. 5134-3223.

Show Me the Money Workshop, Women's Access to Finance Program

WHERE: Old Shire Building, Warragul.

WHEN: April 21, 10.30am-12.30pm, lunch provided. Cost \$5.

CONTACT for registration: Kellie Harvey, Baw Baw Shire Offices, -ph. 5624 2411.

Mosaic Workshops

WHERE: Morningswood, Petersons Rd, Ellinbank.

WHEN: April 30-May 1. Cost \$15.

CONTACT: for registration contact: Lara Whitehead, ph: 5626 1271.

Planning Meeting

WHERE: Morwell project.

WHEN: May 12, 7.30-10.30am.

WHERE: Morwell Library.

CONTACT: Michelle Tisdale ph. 5134-3223.

Event management/marketing and promotion workshop with Maggie Maguire

WHERE: Leongatha.

WHEN: Saturday, May 21, 10am-2.30pm.

WHERE: South Gippsland Shire Council Function Room, Council Offices, Smith St, Leongatha. \$10 cost includes catering.

CONTACT: For registration ph. 5149 8366.

International Wool Challenge

WHERE: Omeo Town Hall—Day Ave, Omeo.

WHEN: June 12.

CONTACT: Jean Jenkins, ph. 5159-1557 or e-mail ormckau@dodo.com.au

Women Who Mean Business

...Selling Gippsland's Finest

Project Newsletter : Autumn Edition : 2005



- Catch up on the progress of community projects
- Empowering message from Di Deppeler
- Be inspired by the personal journeys of Patricia Dennis and Mary Gilbert
- 1000-year-old tree comes 'ready-made' at Stratford
- Letters and comment
- Learn about Waterwatch
- Bid to address safety issues for women with disabilities
- Maggie makes event management 'manageable'

If undelivered, please return to:

WwMB
C/o RMB 7395
Clydebank
Victoria 3851

PP300038\0020

SURFACE
MAIL

POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTRALIA

Project Officers

Kate Earle

katedoc2@hotmail.com
Orbost – m: 0408-178179

Tina Hambleton

alberton@dcsi.net.au
Yarram – b: 5183 9123

Michelle Tisdale

maltis@tpg.com.au
Latrobe Valley – p: 5134 3223

Deb Milligan

littlemilligan@ozemail.com.au
Maffra/Stratford.
Ormeo/Swifts Creek – p: 5145 5240

Lara Whitehead

sandl@dcsi.net.au
Warragul – p: 5626 1271

Website and Media

Beth Harris

info@anchorweb.com.au
m: 0418-596392

Deb Bye

deb@lifefm.com.au
m: 0408-499046

Project Administration

ANEG

ANEG@a1.com.au

Contact person

Eileen Thurgood
p: 5153 1988

Project Management Committee

Di Deppeler TAFE
ddeppeler@egtafe.vic.edu.au
h: 5157 9333
b: 5152 0763

Jo McCubbin

jomccubbin@wizardtechs.net
p: 5144 7042

Mary Salce

masal@netspace.net.au
p: 5149 8366

Administration assistant

Kalinda Wade

kaimat@netspace.net.au
p: 5145 6618

Newsletter

June Alexander
junealex@bigpond.com
m: 0419-502111
p: 5662 5958

Project worksite for WwMB:

www.wwmb.org.au

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