TALL POPPIES PROJECT WINS PREMIER’S AWARD

Concerned to reduce bullying and youth suicide in our community, Val Wilkinson, was inspired to initiate the Tall Poppies project. Val was a teacher colleague of Zontians Rosalie Lake and Norma Cook. It was Norma’s connections which enabled this to develop into the first joint project of all the women’s service clubs in Bendigo.

Tall Poppies supported and mentored 15 young women to deliver projects enhancing their leadership skills and self-esteem. It was structured to shape the personal and professional lives of young women aged 15 – 25 in powerful and productive ways, to foster leadership and increase career opportunities.

The project started with modules training development of self-esteem, communication, time management, vision and goal setting, as well as a Challenge Camp where the “Poppies” experienced rock climbing at Mt Arapiles. A mentoring phase followed, with each Poppy matched to a mentor who guided the Poppy’s individual or joint project to benefit the wider community.

One mentor was Bendigo East MLA, Jacinta Allen. Jacinta said “It was rewarding watching 15-year-old Laura develop a deeper understanding of the concept of leadership” Mentee, Justine Hicks, daughter of Zontian Di Hicks, said the project had helped her establish friendship and an appreciation of all mentors in her life – it was a richly rewarding experience.

At the Graduation of the first intake in October 1999, the Tall Poppies project was lauded as “an outstanding success in its first year and has led to real results” (Bendigo Advertiser “Tall Poppies Bloom” October 23, 1999)

However, the ultimate commendation for the Tall Poppies project came by way of the Premier’s Service Club Award in 2000. Zontians Madge Pinge and Margaret Wild wrote a submission on behalf of all the other service clubs involved in supporting Tall Poppies, and the project was judged the best overall entry from a record 48 submissions from across the state. In late March 2000, Margaret Wild and Madge Pinge represented the service Clubs at the awards dinner in Melbourne.