

• FOR RURAL WOMEN & THEIR FAMILIES •

The Country Web

COMMUNITY MATTERS

NUMBER 43 AUTUMN 2007 **FREE NEWSLETTER**

*In each of us are places
we have never gone.
Only by pressing the limits
do we ever find them.*

DR JOYCE BROTHERS



ELEANOR CODD, COOLAH, 2007 RIRDC RURAL WOMEN'S AWARD WINNER. PHOTO BY TOM BRAZ



Let's make it happen – together

Rural Women's Network

COOKING COMMUNITIES ■ BRING BACK THE SHED ■ WOMEN IN ACTION

THE COUNTRY WEB

The Country Web is produced by NSW Department of Primary Industries Rural Women's Network (RWN) and is distributed free, three times a year. For more about RWN see page 5.

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Letters, stories, poems and photographs from rural women and their families are always welcome.

FREE MAILING LIST

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COMPETITION TERMS & CONDITIONS

1. Information on how to enter and prize details form part of the Terms & Conditions. By entering the competition, entrants accept these Terms & Conditions. 2. To enter, you must provide your full name and postal details, and in 25 words or less answer the competition question. 3. Entries must be posted to the stated address by the stated date. 4. This competition is a game of skill. The best answer as judged by the RWN will win. The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. Prizes cannot be transferred or redeemed for cash. The winner will be notified by mail within 14 days from the judging date.

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contents

FEATURES

- 8 Cooking communities**
Rebel Black, Lightning Ridge, shares her thoughts on community development and gives readers some key 'ingredients' to ensure success.
- 10 Your community, your future**
A quick look at some of the funding that is available to help small rural communities find a new direction based on their unique strengths. Includes some great examples of what communities are doing to ensure their community remains viable.
- 12 Bring back the shed**
The growing problems with men's health, isolation, loneliness and depression are now looming as major health issues in Australia. Men's Sheds can play a significant and practical role in addressing these and other men's issues and at the same time act as a catalyst in stimulating their community's economic activity.
- 14 What makes a community group excellent?**
- 18 Helping teenagers celebrate safely**
Going out and partying is a normal part of growing up, but there are some risks involved. You can help your teenager manage these risks through discussion and planning.
- 30 Telework – Distance no barrier**
While Chris Capel lives on her family-owned cattle and sheep station, 90 km north-west of Longreach, her location has no bearing on the work she is able to do from her home.



06

International Women's Day 2007:
An extraordinary day in March.



16

2007 RIRDC Rural Women's Award
recognises two of our state's most
dedicated rural women.

REGULAR FEATURES

3	Editorial	18	Parenting	35	SAC Update
3	Calendar	23	Book reviews	36	Web Watch
4	Letters	28	Health	37	What's on, What's new?
5	RWN Report	31	Women in Decision Making	38	Resources
15	Grants/Funding				

editorial: on 'community matters'

There are many dictionary definitions for 'community'. These include: 'considered collectively', 'common' and 'interdependent'. A glance at the entry for 'matter' reveals that 'it is something of consequence, importance or significance'. Both of these words come from Latin roots, *communis* meaning common, and *materia* from *mater* (mother).

As rural people well know, the vibrancy of a community will have an effect on everyone living in it. Actions which enhance the community spirit nourish the people within it in obvious and also subtle ways.

In times of difficulty, how does an interdependent group of people do something significant to 'mother' what is important to them? Well, at the RWN, it seems that it really doesn't matter how or what you do. The important thing is to take some action, no matter how big or small.

A dig through our in-tray revealed the following great things that rural people are doing to help others in situations that may seem overwhelming or difficult.

Courage

Several readers have responded to Roslyn Lambert's invitation in the last edition of *The Country Web* to share their journey into 'retirement'. The courage and generosity of these readers is moving and certainly

shows the benefits that the wisdom of years can bring to communities. See the 'letters' section and pages 32 & 33 to hear what our readers had to say.

Support

www.prisms.com.au was launched on 21 July last year by Kate West. The site is a comprehensive resource for newly separated mothers to help navigate the complexities of separation and divorce. Surely a measure of the health of a community is the manner in which it supports its most vulnerable members.

Encouragement

An email about the benefits of flying in V-formation for migrating geese reached us recently. It is interesting to note that the geese at the rear of the formation honk to encourage the leading geese. Encouragement and sharing the load can go a long way to raising spirits in the face of adversity.

Generosity

After reading an article in the last issue, a *Country Web* reader forwarded a substantial donation towards the erection of shade sails over the Barmedman infants pool.

Mentoring

Lone Scouts is a special correspondence program that allows young people in

isolated, remote or rural communities to become Scouts. Participating through the use of radio, telephone or computer, each Lone Scout is paired with an experienced Leader, who becomes their mentor and friend. Programs like this are a unique way to build resilience in our young people and to give them life skills and knowledge to contribute positively to community life.

Fun & contribution

The Desperate Gardenwives group were a feature of the recent International Women's Day Celebration in Dubbo. These four friends from Trangie have published a book about their trials and successes in dry-land gardening. The book, *Desperate Gardenwives: unlocking the Mysteries of Gardening out West* is a robust ring-bound folder to accompany you in the garden. Clearly tenacious women, they wrote about their shared experiences of finding their place both environmentally and psychologically in the west. Proceeds from the book go to a local primary school.

So the challenge is out! What can you do to 'mother' your community? Your story could be coming to our in-tray soon.

Ruth Thomason,
Senior Project Officer,
NSW Department of
Primary Industries



CALENDAR OF EVENTS: LOCAL AND REGIONAL NSW EVENTS & ACTIVITIES GUIDE

FESTIVALS

8-11 JUNE
Merimbula Jazz Festival

DINNERS/BALLS

16 JUNE, DUBBO
Dubbo Golf Club
Black & Gold Ball

30 JUNE, OLD BAR
Old Bar Clams Charity
Black Tie Ball

SHOWS

1 JUNE, MUNGINDI
18 AUGUST, BEDGERABONG
24 AUGUST, CONDOBOLIN

EXHIBITIONS

19-20 MAY, WALGETT
Walgett Floods Photographic
display at the Walgett Show

22 JUNE TO 19 JULY
One Year On Exhibition,
Shoalhaven City Arts Centre

3-5 AUGUST, BENTLEY
Bentley Art Prize

MARKETS:

19 MAY, DUBBO
Dubbo Farmers Markets
19 MAY, COWRA
Cowra Farmers Markets

TRAINING/SEMINARS

2 JUNE, TRANGIE
Creative Volunteering: Plan &
Program Events

21 JUNE, DUBBO
Australian Women in Leadership
Forum

26 JULY, WAGGA WAGGA
Make Your Website Pay

**regional
eventslive.com.au**

Sign up now for your FREE
personalised Event Calendar
Newsletter and be eligible to
WIN Competitions.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The next edition of *The Country
Web* will focus on 'Learning from
the past'.

If you have stories, poems, pictures
or information of interest, we would
love to hear from you.

Contributions required by 1 June for
publication in August 2007.

Send your stories to: The Editor,
RWN, Locked Bag 21, Orange
2800, Fax: 02 6391 3650; or
Email: allison.priest@dpi.nsw.gov.au

A wonderful gesture

I am writing to let you know that we had our first response from the 'Hands across the divide' article which appeared in the last edition.

A lady who used to live in Barmedman many years ago contacted Shirley, and because she remembered the pool days there so well and had so many memories of great times with her family, she and her daughter donated \$500 each towards the shades.

Shirley and I are in shock. We didn't expect any money. What a wonderful gesture.

Thank you again for putting the story in, it is very much appreciated. Having re-charged the batteries over the Christmas break we are ready to continue the vision of City Country Connect and look forward to a busy year ahead.

Jan Dawkins, Oatley

Outback women

My name is Laura Trillitsch and I am a freelance photographer. I was born and raised in a city

called Dortmund in Germany.

In 2002 I completed my high school certificate and decided to take a break and go travelling. After speaking to my family and friends I decided on Australia, the land of opportunity and promise.

I arrived in Melbourne after travelling to Sydney, Alice Springs and Adelaide. I had a quick look around Melbourne and then decided to head back to the outback. As fate would have it, I met a country guy at a party and he invited me to stay with him on a farm near Jerilderie in NSW.

Together, with some friends, we made our way to the farm and after five hours of travel by car, lots of water and insect repellent, we arrived.

Richard had not told me a great deal about the farm except that it was hot, dry and flat. He forgot to mention that it is beautiful, inspiring and breathtaking. He also forgot to mention that his mother, Gillian, solely ran a three-and-a-half thousand acre property by herself for the past 33 years, raised three children and built a successful stud cattle enterprise.

During the time I lived at her farm, Gillian taught me a lot of interesting things, especially about the challenges women face in the outback.

In 2003 I decided to follow my dream of becoming a photographer and enrolled in a photography college in Melbourne. After three years of long nights, two jobs, two solo exhibitions and not forgetting my marriage to Richard, I finally completed my Diploma of Photography.

My past experiences and the strong relationship with Gillian have inspired me to put together a book on women in the outback. I think that outback women are the forgotten ones, who live amazing but hard lives with little recognition. I would like to change that with

a published book. If you are interested in being part of the book or if you know someone who might be, please call me on 0439 457 554 or send an email to: latri@gmx.de

Laura Trillitsch, Melbourne

Dubbo International Women's Day

Wow, what a great day! You are all to be congratulated on such a great get-together for women from such a vast span of our great area.

When I was first told what we were going to be doing I couldn't imagine anyone being able to organise 750 people to go to the one event and to be honest I was hoping there wouldn't be that many people there. How surprised I was to see the numbers on the day, all enjoying themselves and for the moment forgetting about all that is going on in their lives.

I would like to thank your Department and Women Out West for inviting us to talk on the day. I felt that it was a personal achievement that I will look back on and think that I was so glad I did it. Thanks also for your support and taking the time to encourage me. I really did enjoy the experience. Keep the good work up... for all of us.

**Kerrie Kerin, Trangie
(Desperate Gardenwives)**

Keeping things hands-on

Thank you as always for your excellent magazine, however I am finding your themes too difficult. Rural folk, while having to have a business head, want to speak from the heart of what they see, do and wish to do. Please keep the hands-on side of your magazine. We all should have a goal, but let the reachable side be always there.

June Birkett, Crystal Creek
Ed: Thanks for your comments, June. The theme for the next

edition, No.44, is learning from the past, which is a great opportunity for rural women to share their stories and views. I look forward to receiving readers stories, poems, letters or other information of interest to this theme. So, to all our readers out there, why not pick up a pen and write to us with your stories, because, without you, there wouldn't be a newsletter.

Dreaming of my retirement

I read Roslyn's Lambert's letter in the last *Country Web* with much interest. I am Sonia's [Muir, RWN] 67-year-old mother and companion on the Mongolian Trek.

Of course we all fear the 'scrap heap' syndrome – when paid work dries up... BUT that is when, instead of feeding those feelings, we must push them to the back of our minds and think positive.

If health is kind and we are able, society needs us... and our volunteer contribution keeps us busy and makes life worthwhile.

About me – apart from my knitting for the Christina Noble Foundation (in Mongolia) I assist with shopping buses for elderly folk who live alone. I am a member of Red Cross and participate in U3A activities.

I am fortunate to have a network of acquaintances and valued close friends who are always good for a chat, meal (her place or mine) or a coffee.

You are right about coming home and closing the door and thinking 'what now?' My days are fulfilling and active and I can also feel contented with a cup of tea (or glass of wine) and a good book.

Most importantly, don't ever think you won't be needed by society – 'she' needs willing hands and happy faces – believe me!

Veronica Pansaru, Kingscliff

COMPETITION WINNERS

Congratulations to the following women for their winning entries in the No.41 *Country Web* book give-away.

Gloria Dawn Stansfield, Talbingo, winner of *Around the Buoys*; **Belinda Grieve**, Mona Vale and **Jenny Finlayson**, Adelaide SAC, winners of *Secrets of Female Entrepreneurs Exposed*; and **Anna Garde**, Eugowra and **Catherine Rawson**, winners of the *Rachel Ward & Friends Celebrity Recipe Diary 2007*.



The RWN team: Allison Priest (Assistant Coordinator) and Sonia Muir (Coordinator)

The Rural Women's Network (RWN) is a statewide government program within NSW Department of Primary Industries and is based at Orange. RWN works in partnership with individuals and agencies to share information and promote action on rural women's issues. The RWN:

- provides information and referrals;
- supports the development of local initiatives;
- works with rural women and families to identify and bring attention to priority issues;
- develops projects with other agencies to address needs;
- provides a medium for networking and information sharing;
- promotes the profile of rural women;
- provides a two-way link between government and rural women; and
- provides policy advice.

Contact the RWN on
Ph: 02 6391 3620 or Email:
rural.women@dpi.nsw.gov.au

rwn update

By Sonia Muir, RWN Coordinator

I have heard so many inspirational stories of women and men who go the extra distance to ensure their communities not only 'matter' – but thrive.

A group of younger women from Tarcutta recently formed the 'Desperate Farmwives' group to host a ball in their small community. They gained city media attention and support flowed in from far and wide.

The Macquarie Matrons, another group of young women, host events in the outback which have seen hundreds of thousands of dollars pour into the small Trangie community. Some 'matrons' have now written a gardening manual – again raising money for their local school.

Lou Macdonald, a NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) officer from Kempsey wrote letters to suppliers asking for donations for a community event that raised \$30,000 in one night for a sick friend. A few years ago she also organised a free trip for suffering farmers to see *The Lion King* in Sydney.

Megan Beale, a drought-affected farmer and Rural Lands Protection Board Director from Harden, wanted to do something positive for her community and organised a women's information day. Seventy women attended.

The recent International Women's Day special drought event held in Dubbo again

showed the key role rural women can play in their community. Twelve buses were provided by NSW DPI to transport over 400 women to the event. Most buses were organised by local volunteer women who simply put their hand up and said, 'This would be great for women in my community so I'll organise it'. Some didn't even get to attend but didn't want their community to miss out. (See pages 6 & 7 for highlights from the event).

There are endless examples of people who know their community matters and take action. It only takes one or two people to put themselves 'out there' and get things moving. In the words of Sara Henderson, '*Don't wait for a light to appear at the end of the tunnel. Stride down there... and light the bloody thing yourself!*'

Here are a couple of RWN projects that reinforce the community matters theme.

DARING TO DREAM

The *Daring to Dream* (DTD) book includes 27 stories of amazing women from rural backgrounds who are following their dreams and is a useful resource for anyone wanting to feel more motivated to follow their passion. Each participant has included her contact details so she can mentor others. DTD is an ongoing project and I am interviewing women for the next bank of stories, so please let me know of rural women who may like to be included. (Read Jo Nathan's *Daring to Dream* story on page 24.)

SHAPING OUR FUTURES TOGETHER

Workshops are coming up in Narrabri and Harden in June. These popular 2-day workshops focus on building self-esteem and confidence, goal setting and networking and can be run anywhere there are at least 12 interested women.

For more information, call Sonia Muir on 02 6391 3611.



Rural women from the Tamworth Shaping Our Futures Together course

Visit the Rural Women's Network internet site at
www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/rwn

