

Women of Spirit Award 2008 **by Lara Bishop**

On the 20th June 2008, Lifeline Canberra partnered with O2C Solutions to present the second annual Women of Spirit Award. The award recognises women of the ACT and surrounding areas who have displayed courage by overcoming adversity and given back to the local community in an inspiring manner. The award honours a woman who, in overcoming her personal adversity and making a positive change in society, inspires others to make a difference in their local community.

There were 14 nominees for the Women of Spirit Award, all of whom had faced difficulties, obstacles and challenges, but had displayed resiliency and courage, building opportunity from adversity.

More than 70 people attended the award luncheon at the Southern Cross Club in Woden. Ilona Fraser, from Prime, was the MC for the event and guest speaker Julia Green, a social worker, provided a fascinating account of some of the challenges that both she, and a number of her contemporaries, have faced during their lives.

Robyn Stanhope, 2008 Patron, presented the winner, Dr Linda Reaby OAM, with the 2008 Women of Spirit Award. In 1990, at the age of 45, Linda was diagnosed with breast cancer. She underwent a double mastectomy and reconstructive surgery. Linda became a vociferous advocate and lobbyist for women with breast cancer and went on to complete a PhD exploring issues of self-esteem and body image in women who had undergone a mastectomy. In addition to research, Linda was an inaugural member of "Bosom Buddies," an ACT support group for women with breast cancer, and is a patron for a number of other breast cancer support groups in the region.

Sixteen year old Kim Voss, of Merici College, was runner up in the Women of Spirit Award. She is an inspirational young woman who was diagnosed with ulcerative colitis at birth and who underwent bowel surgery in year eight after her condition took a turn for the worse. In addition to being an inspiration to her classmates and younger students, Kim became actively involved with raising awareness for the Starlight Foundation, volunteers at Lifeline book fairs, collects for the Red Cross and supports Marymead.

Over eight hundred dollars was raised by a raffle held at the luncheon and all proceeds were donated to training volunteer Lifeline Canberra telephone counsellors. In addition, both the winner and runner-up donated their prizes back to Lifeline, to be auctioned at a later date. Lifeline Canberra provides an anonymous, caring and supportive telephone counseling service 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 365 days of the year. Over 60% of the 20 000 calls to Lifeline each year come from women.

O2C Solutions recognises the invaluable service that Lifeline Canberra provides and were delighted to partner with Lifeline to present this prestigious award. O2C Solutions is a transformational company that uses training, coaching and consulting to build successful and resilient people, leaders and organisations.

For more information on O2C visit the website www.o2c.com.au.