

## **Special Sister for Support April 2004 Hill Shire Times**

Most girls would agree that when they're feeling down, a little pampering can make all the difference.

Imagine, then, how a teenage girl will feel after a whole week of special treatment.

Thanks to a \$6000 donation from the Rotary Club of Carlingford, eight young women who have been through tough times will experience that in a new program called "SISTER 2 sister."

An initiative of the LIFE Changing Experiences Foundation, it begins with a week long course that helps girls to feel special, teaches them life skills and encourages them to realize their potential.

They're put through a grooming course, taken on a Harbour Bridge climb, and shared a lunch with TV stars.

They also hear inspirational talks by high profile role models about overcoming challenges, and are trained in skills such as job hunting and job interviews.

Each Girl is then assigned a volunteer "big Sister" who will be the girl's friend for 12 months, and someone to lean on and talk to.

SISTER 2 sister was established by former high school teacher Jessica Brown. After watching many of her students struggle through life, last September she left teaching to set up the program.

"The aim is to give girls a helping hand to get their life back on track," she said.

"A lot of girls have low self esteem, so we hone in on self presentation, because we want to teach them to have self pride and high self worth.

"We work on their presentation, their confidence, the way they dress and speak. And we teach them all about job seeking... We want to give them the same opportunities as more fortunate teenagers."

SISTER 2 sister is funded by businesses, individuals and charity organizations. Girls are referred to the program by school principals.

Among the first participants will be Kirsten Hiddleston of Cherrybrook, and her Big Sister will be Baulkham Hills woman Melissa Glasson.

The pair met for the first time last week, and Melissa said she was excited about being a role model for Kirsten.

“I have a younger sister myself, who went through ups and downs, and now I’m up to a place where I’m comfortable in my life, and want to help someone else.