



Hills News Tuesday 19/10/2010

Page: 15
Section: General News
Region: Sydney, AU
Circulation: 55876
Type: Suburban
Size: 117.86 sq.cms.



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Busy and successful year for women's support group

It has been an outstanding year for the Sydney Women's Network, now in its third year.

"There is a growing number of businesswomen in Sydney and many of these run small and medium local businesses," said Natalie Moutia, co-founder of the Sydney Women's Network.

"The network is helping to meet the demand for local dynamic women's business networks, small business expos in local areas, and business support for women in business," Ms Moutia said.

This year the group ran four successful business expos in the Hills, Parramatta, Penrith and on the Central Coast.

The interest generated meant the number of local business exhibitors and visitors were higher

than 2009, and visitor numbers doubled at some events.

The network started in 2008 by offering monthly networking lunches in a relaxed, yet professional, atmosphere.

More than 100 networking lunches for businesswomen are held each year and are now held in 12 locations including the Hills, Penrith and Lower Blue Mountains, the Hawkesbury, Blacktown, Parramatta, Ryde, Five Dock, Liverpool, Hornsby, Northern Beaches and the Central Coast.

As well as the expos and the lunches, this year the network held retreats, speed networking nights, Be Inspired Nights, workshops, e-learning and other special events for members.

A percentage of the money raised from these functions, as well as fund-raisers at the lunches was given to their charity of choice: SISTER2sister.

This charity offers a mentoring partnership between little sisters (teenage women at risk) and big sisters (businesswomen).

Ms Moutia, with co-founder Cindy Steele, won two of the five charity awards for fund-raising and advocacy at the Nivea Awards.

"We are now looking at holding networking lunches in other key areas throughout Sydney and expanding into other regional areas in NSW," Ms Moutia said.

■ sydneywomensnetwork.com.au or lifechangingexperiences.org.