



press clip

Big sister helps at-risk teenage girls blossom

By HANNAH McMANUS

Wollongong volunteer Gina Mammone has won the team volunteering award at the 2012 NSW Volunteer of the Year awards.

Ms Mammone is one of three team leaders in the SISTER2sister program, an initiative of the Life Changing Experiences Foundation in Sydney.

The 12-month program provides “big sister” mentors to 25 at-risk teenage girls from disadvantaged backgrounds.

“It is rewarding to be recognised for what the foundation does,” Ms Mammone said.

“We don’t do this for the awards, we do it because we see the value you can make to the girls’ lives.”

As team leader, Ms Mammone manages welfare issues and assists the mentors with challenges they may face.

She was a “big sister” for two years before being approached by the foundation to become a team leader, a position she has now held for the past two years.

“It has grounded me,” Ms Mammone said.

“It gives you a sense of self-worth by being able to influence the lives of people who are less fortunate and being able to see them blossom.”

Of the teenagers involved, 87 per cent have experienced sexual, physical or emotional abuse, and all come from broken families.

“The biggest challenge is the girls can’t see their own potential,” she said.

“It’s challenging to make them



Rewarding: Gina Mammone, a team leader in the SISTER2sister program. She says the work has “grounded” her. Picture: GREG TOTMAN

see that in themselves.”

Ms Mammone intends to keep contributing to the SISTER2sister

program by maintaining her role as team leader. The awards ceremony was held on December 5.