



NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2011

New Zealand Woman of the Year Award - The Sophie Elliott Foundation was enormously proud when Lesley was named Next Magazine's Woman of the Year at a glittering function held in the Auckland Art Gallery. Lesley won the award ahead of 24 extremely talented finalists. The Judges, Sarah Henry (Next Magazine Editor), Dr Gareth Morgan (renowned economic analyst) and Dame Catherine Tizard (former Governor General), said of Lesley: *"This woman has unbelievable courage and resilience and is a beacon to us all. She has given something to the women of New Zealand that her late daughter would have been exceptionally proud of."*

Presentations - The past few months have been very busy with Lesley presenting *Sophie's Story – What WE missed* more than thirty times in many parts of New Zealand. She has presented to community groups, professional organisations and secondary schools. In Te Awamutu she spoke in an auditorium packed with 600 students. In Blenheim 300 senior girls heard her talk and that night over 400 people attended a community meeting. Lesley was a keynote speaker at the Unmasking Violence Conference following a large public meeting in New Plymouth. She has visited many parts of New Zealand, including two very well organised events by Zonta clubs in Oamaru and Timaru, followed by extensive visits to Southland. Already bookings are being taken for appearances through to April 2012.

Sophie's Legacy - In June, Lesley's book *Sophie's Legacy* was launched on what would have been Sophie's 26th birthday. The book has been phenomenally successful with royalties going to the Sophie Elliott Foundation. The website has been flooded with messages of support and many of the responses have been humbling. One response left Lesley believing writing the book was definitely the right thing to do. It read: *I am a lawyer predominantly dealing with family law. Yesterday I saw a young woman who needed a protection order. The violence she suffered ranged from psychological abuse to extreme physical abuse. What led her to finally walk away and tell her family was that she read your book. She related so much to what your daughter went through that it gave her the perspective and courage to speak up and seek help. Today we got a protection order for her and she is on her way to getting her power back. People say "if it saves one person then it's worth it." I am certain without this book her life was at risk. So thank you. I thought I should let you know the impact you are having on people's lives.*

Progress on Project - Bill O'Brien, co-author of *Sophie's Legacy*, has been appointed by the Foundation to manage the educational package. He is currently assessing the value of existing programmes and expects to make a recommendation in the near future. The next phase will concentrate on partnerships with other government departments and organisations for implementation into schools. This is a vital and exciting part of the Sophie Elliott Foundation.

After Lesley's presentations comments are often posted on Facebook or the Foundation's website. The following are samples of things said:

- When you came to my school you touched me and many of my friends. I have since been involved in removing one of my friends from an upsetting relationship which was damaging her way of life. What you do is so inspiring.
- I think of all the good work you are doing to help others avoid having bad relationships. You have managed to create good where there was only tragedy.
- I attended your talk at our college and wanted to thank you for the courage and determination you showed. You bared your soul for us and now it's time for us to bear our souls against violence. I am empowered by you to help my community in any way I can. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.
- As a mother of a 16 year old daughter I am grateful for the visit you made to her college. The message you gave is so vital and I am sure you would have already empowered many young girls to make positive choices.
- I think what you are doing will help so many young girls identify the early signs of an abusive relationship and give them the power to leave. Keep on doing what you are doing.
- As a mother of two teenage daughters thank you very much for your talk at their high school recently. My daughter's boyfriend was getting very manipulative and making her cry a lot over the slightest little thing. I think your talk helped her gain the strength to stand up to him and end this unhealthy relationship. Thank you so much from a grateful mother.
- I came along tonight with my two girls. Thank you so much for what you are doing for the women of New Zealand.
- How wonderful for my daughter to come home from her high school yesterday and talk about you sharing your story. She had such a boyfriend a little while ago and looks back in absolute horror. As you spoke she was mentally ticking all the boxes for her ex's behaviour. Thank you from the bottom of my heart and thank you for your bravery.
- As a teen I got a lot out of your talk and so did most of my friends. Sophie's story has encouraged us to try our best at schoolwork and make smart choices on who we date. Thanks again and keep up the good work of helping us as youth make the right decisions.
- Lesley's message is vital to the wellbeing of future generations of young women. I would encourage the Ministry of Education to provide resources to ensure Lesley is able to reach as many as possible.
- Good on you Lesley for empowering young women to seek help. Abuse of any kind is unacceptable and the more young women you save the better. I'm sure you will.
- Thank you Lesley for your talk. Your words made an important change to someone precious in my life. I now know she is armed with knowledge that will help her make wise choices. Blessings.
- I had the privilege of hearing Lesley yesterday. You are a true inspiration. I wear my white ribbon with pride.
- Thank you Mrs Elliott for talking to Te Awamutu College today and sharing your story. You really made an impact on us girls.