Program shows minds matter

By Rhody Gleeson

While mental health problems may seem most apparent during turbulent teens, educators are now turning their attention to children as young as six in an attempt to establish a groundwork for greater wellbeing later in life.

Mt Barker’s St Francis de Sales’ College recently became SA’s latest school to receive official ‘KidsMatter Primary’ accreditation for schools that have adopted a framework for working with parents and health services to raise mentally healthy students.

There are a number of programs for teenage and adolescent students but professionals are now advocating for greater focus on the mental health of students from Reception right through to Year 12. While their ages may differ considerably, primary students often still face a number of the same challenges as their teenage peers and St Francis de Sales’ community manager Michelle Thomas said it was important to identify these issues early.

Healthy mindset

“It might be trouble at home, difficulty making and maintaining friends or a number of other factors which can affect kids of all ages, not just those in the senior school,” she said.

“If we are able to foster a healthy mindset and identify any issues early on it can have a hugely positive impact on a student’s mental health and well-being throughout their schooling.”

Ms Thomas said the KidsMatter Primary framework was a whole school approach which helped children to feel like they were part of a community instead of just one student among hundreds.

“We aim to create a positive environment where each child feels like they were valued, it’s the little things like ensuring we greet each child with a smile and making everyone feel welcome,” she said.

Another important factor is creating a partnership with parents to ensure there is adequate support at home as well as at school and to also foster a strong sense of community to make our students feel like they belong.

“It has taken us three years to gain accreditation and it is nice to have it coincide with Catholic Education Week which this year is all about making sure every child matters.”

Lenswood set to celebrate

By Genevieve Cooper

A community picnic, a renovated town entrance and even a roadside sculpture in the shape of an apple core are among the suggestions made by Lenswood residents to celebrate the town’s centenary next year.

The suggestions were outlined to the community last week by the Lenswood 100 Committee during a forum hosted by the Adelaide Hills Council. The committee, a sub-group of the Lenswood and Forest Range Community Association, wants to survey local residents to short-list a few key projects.

Spokesman Peter Stafford said one of the first things the committee wanted to do was to change the town’s establishment date on the entrance sign from 1853 to 1917.

He told the meeting that Lenswood was formed during WW1 when locals desperate for news about their young men serving overseas successfully lobbied the Post Master General for their own post office.

Until that time residents would have to walk to Forest Range, sometimes braving swollen winter creeks, to get their mail.

Lenswood was named after Lens, the coal mining region of northern France that was devastated during WW1.

The Lenswood Post Office was officially opened on June 1, 1917. It was set up in a converted shed that Mr Stafford said was also “reputed to be a sly grog shop”.

Details about the centenary activities are available on the association’s website.