

MEDIA RELEASE



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Seniors and students connect for story project

Toowoomba train enthusiast Jeff Smith, 72, wanted to be a police officer in his youth but joined the military instead.

His story will be shared in a new book, *Wise Humans of the Downs*, featuring the life experiences of 30 local seniors as told to Toowoomba secondary students.

The book is a special project by not-for-profit organisation YellowBridge QLD in partnership with St Mary's College to uncover, record and celebrate the lived experiences and stories of people aged over 60 years.

"We can learn so much from the older members of our community and we wanted to help share their wisdom and tales," YellowBridge chief executive officer Penny Hamilton said.

"It is fascinating to hear how life was in previous generations and how people survived triumphs and tragedies along the way," Ms Hamilton said.

"We believe that everyone has a story to tell. The ordinary is just as important as the extraordinary and they help us to have more compassion, empathy and appreciation for others."

Twenty students from the College volunteered to join the project and spend time with an older participant to listen to and record stories from their life.

St Mary's College Assistant Principal Identity Paul Grealy said the students were excited to test their interview skills and be part of a published book.

"We had students from years 9 to 12 jump at the chance to be part of the final group that would meet and interview the senior participants including a few St Mary's Old Boys," Mr Grealy said.

"This is a special opportunity for them to connect with an older person who they are not related to and have an interesting discussion about their life," he said.

"The College has a proud history of providing experiences for our students that cultivate compassion, community service, justice and courage. Experiences like being part of this project are invaluable to developing responsible and caring young men."

Ms Hamilton said YellowBridge invited St Mary's College to be part of the project based on their community service programs that involved outreach with elderly residents.

"St Mary's College has a wonderful ethos of encouraging their students to help others and be compassionate and kind citizens. We felt they had the right heart for this project," she said.

The project is supported with funding under the *Advancing Queensland: an age-friendly community 2018-19 grants program*.

Wise Humans of the Downs will be launched in Toowoomba during Seniors Week in August.

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