

Helping the young cope with growing-up pains

KATRINA ADAMSKI

NORTH Shore teenagers are not a pampered bunch who grow up with silver spoons in their mouths.

They face the same serious issues as any young Australians – depression, alcohol or drug addiction, sexual and physical abuse, teenage pregnancy, family breakdown, low self-esteem and suicide.

This is why Vicki Condon has established the Young Love Foundation, offering mentoring and personal development workshops. The organisation is working with young North Shore people as well as staff at Chatswood High School and Northern Sydney Institute of TAFE.

“People often ask me why I work around here



MENTOR: Vicki Condon.

but it's a myth that everyone is rich and glamorous on the North Shore,” Ms Condon, the foundation's director, said.

The most common illness teenagers face is depression, while one in four 12- to 15-year-olds drink alcohol weekly and Australia ranks third highest

for teenage pregnancies in the developed world.

A teenager who has received mentoring, Shannon Meath-Summerville, has seen many of her friends influenced by peer pressure.

The Roseville girl, 15, who is about to start Year 10 at The Forest High School, said having a mentor gave her the confidence to talk to different people, adults in particular.

“I tried drinking because I wanted to see what it was like but I wasn't interested,” Shannon said. “Peer pressure has a lot to answer for.”

Ms Condon, a qualified counsellor, said Young Love was on a recruitment drive for mentors.

Those interested should phone her on 0419 633 881 or see www.younglove.org.au