



**HELPING OTHERS:** Magdelaine O'Moore, or Maggie as she is known, has won the Riding for the Disabled Association's national Young Volunteer of the Year award.

## Maggie named young volunteer of the year

By **ELIZABETH SWEETMAN**

**VICTOR HARBOR** - Magdelaine O'Moore is one incredible young woman.

At just 15 years of age, the Victor Harbor High School student and self-confessed "horse-a-holic" has won the national Young Volunteer of the Year award for the Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA) of Australia.

Nominated by mentors Sue and John Vincent of the Victor Harbor RDA, Maggie has been volunteering at the RDA for close to six years, first in the northern region, then in Victor Harbor for the past three years.

Her volunteering roles include grooming the horses, getting them ready for lessons, lunging and leading, and also cleaning the saddles and bridles.

Maggie's passion for horses is very evident, as is her talent for painting and sketching them, with the walls of her bedroom covered in intricate horse art.

Also a talented musician, Maggie plays bass guitar, piano, cello and sings, while learning the acoustic guitar.

Winning a national award has caused much excitement within Maggie's household.

Her mother Hillary said she actually believed the award was at state level, up

until the awards night held in Toowoomba, Queensland at the weekend.

However, Maggie was only one of three national award recipients.

"I actually felt as if they had the wrong person," joked Maggie.

Mature beyond her years, Maggie's success is profound, after years of living with Asperger's Syndrome.

Asperger's Syndrome is an autism spectrum disorder which is characterised by its sufferers having difficulties in social interaction, alongside restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviour and interests.

For her Individual Personal Project studies at Victor Harbor High School this year, Maggie wrote and illustrated a picture book with mum Hillary as her mentor, with an anti-bullying theme, having been through hard situations herself.

"We (Asperger's sufferers) don't see the world like everyone else does," said Maggie.

"A lot of kids with Asperger's do get bullied."

Maggie hopes to raise funds to publish the book, and for the RDA, by busking on the south coast with her cello throughout the summer holidays.