



INSPIRED: The founder of AMF, Dr Phil West.

Picture: BRENDAN MCCARTHY

Children's safety a priority

A BENDIGO man's idea has shown how great things can sometimes grow out of the worst of situations.

The Alannah and Madeline Foundation will celebrate 10 years of helping young victims of violence today.

AMF Foundation founder Phil West said the foundation was named in honour of the two daughters of Walter Mikac who along with their mother were gunned down in the Port Arthur massacre.

Over the years it has grown into a major organisation supporting

hundreds of young children and helping thousands more through programs such as the anti-bullying campaign, 'Buddy Bear'.

Dr West said the idea grew while researching his studies in Latin America to help children around the world affected by wars and brutality.

"I was in an El Salvador hospital where there were with kids with legs and arms blown off and I saw a little boy die with a bullet in his brain," he said.

"Then a few months after I returned, the Port Arthur mass-

acre happened, and I realised this is happening in my own country."

But it was the images of Walter Mikac's loss and, in particular, pictures drawn by his daughters that really brought home the tragedy to Dr West who had two small daughters of his own.

"I thought that we can do something in the memory of these beautiful girls and do something for other children who suffer."

The success of the Alannah and Madeline Foundation has led Dr West to develop a worldwide foundation Renew the Spirit.