

OCTOBER 2020 | ISSUE NO. 2

PROVINCE OF ROSALIE RENDU



NEWSLETTER



Incorporated
works



The Daughters of Charity
of St Vincent de Paul Services

GREETINGS

Sister Ellen Flynn

Greetings and welcome to this second edition of our quarterly Newsletter. The time has flown since our last edition. In this period the suffering and hardship of those who experience poverty has been considerably worsened by the pandemic which continues to sweep the globe. This Newsletter spans the two hemispheres of the world and as I write I feel the embrace of God urging us to take notice of the augmentation of suffering and the emergence of new poverties caused by COVID-19.

Into the midst of this bleakness Pope Francis has issued his latest encyclical, 'Fratelli Tutti'. I am working through it at the moment. He speaks of a world without borders, openness of heart, human rights, the care of the earth, the fundamental principle of human encounter and the dignity of each person. Writing during the time of pandemic Pope Francis highlights our Christian call to 'take up and discuss many new paths of hope'. There is an in-depth reflection on the parable of the Good Samaritan and a continuing thread urging us towards 'social friendship' and 'befriending'. Whatever your faith background this encyclical is significant for us all in its content and I commend it to you for reflection. It could have been written for us, Vincentians! This Newsletter demonstrates the practical implementation of so much to which the Pope calls us. I rejoice in the hope that springs from its pages. It is clear that each of our Projects



and Incorporated Works has borne the impact of the Coronavirus and there has been much disruption. Yet you have magnificently responded to the needs around you with creativity and innovation. You shine as beacons of hope to your people and to your locality in a time of darkness. As I read these pages the words 'friendship' and 'befriending' spring frequently from the texts. Your deep ability to stand alongside people, to accompany, to respect the dignity of each one and to encounter the human person, shines forth from all you have written. I offer you my deep admiration and profound gratitude and I encourage you to persevere. Rosalie Rendu, a woman who served her people through several serious health crises, would be very proud!

May God continue to bless you with courage and conviction and may your light continue to shine, seeking out those who most need your love and friendship.



ST JOSEPH'S SERVICES

A never-ending stream of smiles, fun and laughter has come out of St Joseph's over the past few months. From garden concerts and beach parties to cake bake-offs and 'staycation' cruises, residents' days at the project have been filled with imagination, joy and hope.

Staff have been working tirelessly to ensure the health and safety conditions at the

project are, as always, a top priority, but particularly during the pandemic. Their high quality, person-centred care and support services remain exemplary, which shows in the faces of their smiling clients and their families.

Many of St Joseph's employees celebrated big milestones throughout the Summer, including a few 35-year anniversaries working at the project. Their commitment is testament to their Vincentian spirit and dedication to serving the wonderful clients at St Joseph's.



THE LOUISE PROJECT

Food poverty is the primary reason for people contacting The Louise Project. From June to September the project addressed 753 issues as part of their Crisis and Integration Support service. 220 families received food donations, 78 £20 Asda vouchers were distributed and four families were provided gas/electric top up cards to alleviate fuel poverty.

As lock down eased, staff devised new systems that follow all the safety protocols so that families could collect food from the project. The Daughters who support the project also deliver essential supplies to families shielding or isolating.

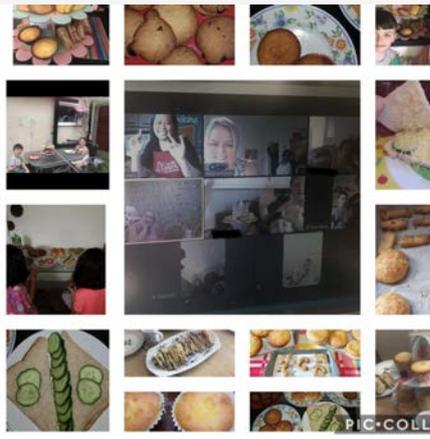
www.thelouiseproject.org.uk

The project now has five individual appointment bays where they have introduced face-to-face appointments, enabling staff to address health, education, housing, finance and welfare benefit issues.

Additionally, as part of their Digital Activities and Skills Development service, isolated and low-income families in the Roma community were provided with free digital devices and access to broadband, enabling them to attend literacy classes, well-being sessions and engage in fun and informative activities. Educational videos are filmed and uploaded weekly to their YouTube channel and families also receive a Learning Pack consisting of stationary, pantry ingredients and creative art materials. The project is also running small group sessions with up to six participants to develop literacy and promote digital skills.

OUT THERE

SUPPORTING FAMILIES OF PRISONERS



OUT THERE

Over the last few months Out There has supported around 130 clients through the pandemic. They have continued to provide families of prisoners with physical and emotional aid, including the delivery of fresh food, well-being hampers and some fantastic online events.

Most recently, young families took part in a Summer Afternoon Tea to help bring families

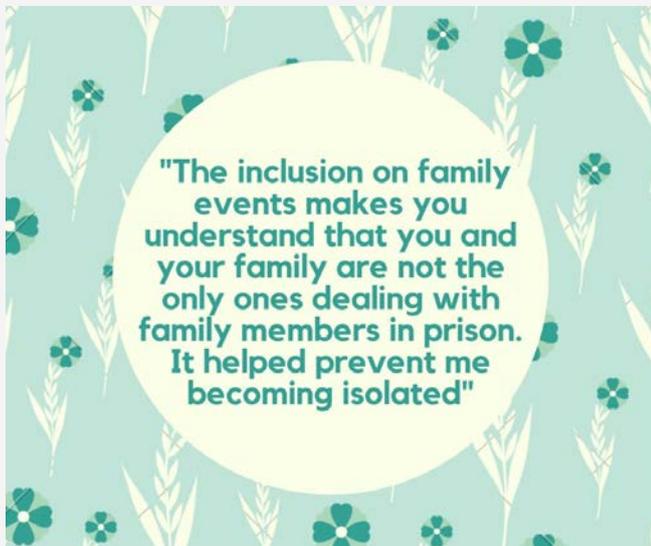
together. Clients also had the opportunity to participate in a well-being session to learn the 'Emotional Freedom Technique', which helps rid of stress and anxiety.

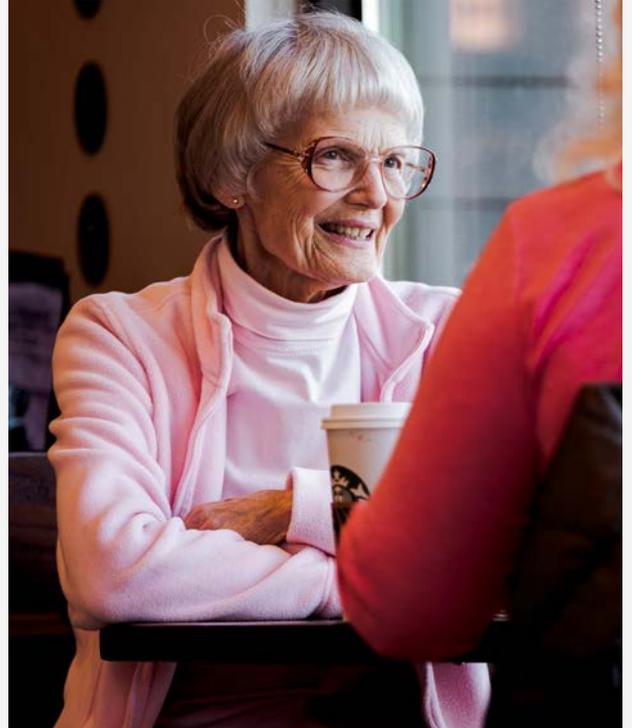
The project continued to run their online arts programme throughout the summer, all of which were extremely well received by the families that they support. Many of their clients had the opportunity to submit their art for an online exhibition and even received certificates for their work.

OUT THERE CONTINUED ...

Out There were delighted to receive additional funding grants which has enabled them to continue their support services. The project's phone support line has proven invaluable to clients throughout the pandemic, as shown in a recent survey conducted with families they have supported over the past year.

Social visits to Manchester Prison resumed in September, and Out There are happy to be supporting their clients as they reunite with family members. The project is now looking to recruit to its Board of Trustees, including a new Chair, to help support families impacted by imprisonment.





VINCENTIAN CARE PLUS

Despite the uncertainty posed by COVID-19, Vincientian Care Plus (VCP) has continued to work on the development of a three-year business plan, seeking to improve their financial resilience and develop service areas.

The project re-launched their Befriending service back in July which provides vulnerable elderly people with extra hours of companionship and care to prevent isolation and loneliness. This service is a continuation of the project's original Befriending service, which is so much part of the 'Plus' of VCP. The launch even attracted media attention, featuring on various news sites including Famvin.

In September, their Board of Trustees were delighted to approve the commitment to pay all carers the London Living Wage, a commitment which it has long been eager to undertake and is now in a financial position to do so.

Additionally, VCP recently introduced a new homecare management solution that supports the project with managing clients' care plans. The sophisticated system enables care staff to log home visits, instantly notify the whole care team with updates, flag concerns quicker and much, much more.



ST VINCENT'S FAMILY PROJECT

St Vincent's Family Project has had a profound effect on young families during the pandemic. They have continued to support their clients online over the summer with family support sessions, art therapy and respite care, which has helped families deal with the ongoing changes and uncertainties caused by the pandemic.

The project is now delighted to reopen their facility in accordance with new health and safety regulations. They currently have two 'Community Bubble' sessions on a Monday and Wednesday, which allows three families to gather and share any issues they are facing with staff and a chance to relax and in an informal setting.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays, the project offers a flexible 'Positive Parenting Programme', which involves a gathering of small groups of parents as well as online parenting skills development. The project is pleased to re-open its crèche on Thursdays too, which they plan to take it outside as much as possible with the addition of a gazebo. Later this month staff will also be providing one-to-one arts therapy to children on this day.

As in previous years, Fridays are back to being 'Healthy Living Day' at the project. Most recently they held an online exercise class for families to take part in at home. The project will also be recommencing 'Dad's Space' on Saturday mornings at the end of the month, a great way for dads to get to know each other, enjoy time with their little ones and speak to staff about any fears or difficulties they are having. Additionally, the project offers one-to-one Respite sessions, online and phone support, online family therapy and therapy in schools.

The project says farewell and huge thanks to their Lead Therapist, Amanda Dudley, who has provided invaluable support to families over the years and was integral in setting up the Online Family Therapy during the pandemic. Amanda is ceasing her therapy work to focus on health issues. We hope to see her again soon.

SETON VILLA

Seton Villa continues to focus on keeping our 29 residents across seven houses well and safe from the coronavirus pandemic. Residents, staff and families are regularly updated with advice from NSW Health for residential disability providers and in accordance with that advice, all staff and visitors wear surgical masks whilst in the houses and community participation activities are risk assessed for appropriate social distancing etc. Thankfully everyone has remained well to this point and have recently enjoyed walking outdoors in our beautiful Spring weather!

During the past month two of our residents celebrated 35 years of supported employment at a local disability employment provider – New Horizons. Lisa cut the cake at a special morning tea and Rosie celebrated with a beach outing!



Some of our residents have also recently celebrated birthdays. Here Marlene is celebrating 75 years young at her David Avenue home!



SETON VILLA CONTINUED ...

Fortunately, the coronavirus has not inhibited the construction industry from engaging in building activity and our first two Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) houses are almost ready for handover by the builder. Keiley Street (known as Jenny's Place) was purchased from the Daughters of Charity around five years ago and has been used as a Day Centre prior to redevelopment. Residents of our Culloden Road rental property have been excitedly visiting the footpath to view progress of their new home and actively participated in the choice of bedroom colours and furnishings. We hope to move in around the end of November in time for Christmas!

We are also very grateful that following permission from Rome, the Trustees have now transferred the fully owned Seton properties across to Seton Villa for redevelopment over the next 2-3 years. This is indeed a very exciting time for us, and we are thankful to God for His provision of these wonderful assets.

We hope to receive confirmation shortly of our new status as a Tier 3 Community Housing Provider. Our application and documentation are currently being assessed by the Registrar for the National Regulatory System Community Housing (NRSCH). Once approved, we will be able to recommence discussions with NSW Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC) for the transfer of their 80% share in the Oslo Street property. Once agreed, the Daughters will also transfer their 20% share across to Seton Villa.

This is certainly a very exciting time and we have much to celebrate!





HUTT ST CENTRE

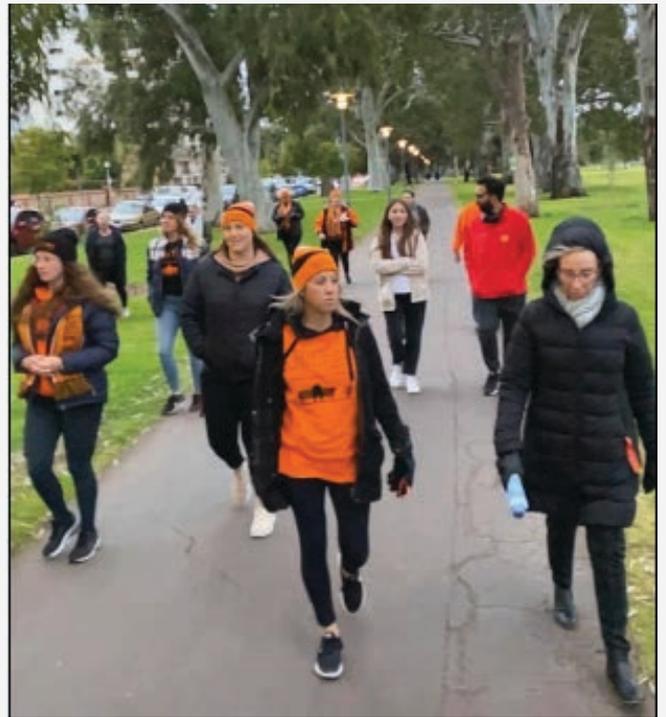
Hutt St Centre's fundraising event, Walk a Mile in My Boots, is held annually in August during National Homelessness Week. The event attracts around 5,000 people who walk one mile through the city in support of people experiencing homelessness. The event also encourages people to Go the Extra Mile and fundraise, which funds basic essential health and wellbeing services such as meals, showers and access to GPs, nurses and health clinics.

In March 2020 the impending mass gathering and physical distancing restrictions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic placed our annual event at risk – our highest fundraising income-generating activity essential to keeping our Wellbeing Centre open.

The team determined that by August, a physical event would not be able to proceed, and transformed the Walk a Mile in My Boots to the Walk a Mile Challenge.

Since we were unable to safely gather in one location as a community to support people experiencing homelessness, this year we challenged people to walk a mile or more on the 7th of August 2020 in their local area - in a park, by the beach or around their neighbourhood. Participants set their own personal challenge - choosing how many miles to walk and where they walked. We wanted to come together as one community.

www.huttstcentre.org.au



even though we were apart, to collectively walk 6,000 miles for the 6,000 people experiencing homelessness in South Australia. The support, passion and commitment from the community to help people experiencing homelessness was heartening and inspiring. Over 2,500 people, from the young to the young at heart, registered for the challenge with participants extending from the traditional metropolitan Adelaide area to regional South Australia, and even through to other states in Australia.

The collective goal of 6,000 miles was doubled with over 12,000 miles walked – that's Adelaide, South Australia to New York City! One team of 60 people, the Willunga Wanderers, walked 31 miles / 50 km raising over \$60,000. And in this time of change and uncertainty brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the community raised double what they did in 2019 in support of a Work of the Daughters of Charity in Hutt St Centre, and people experiencing disadvantage and homelessness.



ST MARY'S HOUSE OF WELCOME

No matter how you look at it, 2020 has been a year like no other. A meal is an important way of connecting with someone. The connection that comes with giving a meal is so important.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect on social connection. As a focal meeting point for disadvantaged communities, our service has provided essential services and invaluable aid in our community. Faced with the impossible task of meeting the needs of vulnerable clients and abiding by public health restrictions, we swiftly changed our service model. To date we have delivered over 80,000 meals since the pandemic restrictions were set in place in March 2020.

Apart from basic essential services like housing and food, mental health has been of key concern for both homeless individuals and their support workers. St Mary's House of Welcome has continued to do community outreach and mental health checks, and organising phone calls between case workers and clients. Well-being packages with a puzzle, piece of soap and a message asking, "Are you okay?" has gone a long way in providing respite.

Admittedly, it hasn't been the easiest time. Clients have reached out anxious about what it



means to wear a mask, worrying whether they will get the virus, and wondering when they can come back and see their friends. For our clients in temporary accommodation - they are still vulnerable.

Finding ways for them to access social connection is vitally important. Our Welcome Relief meals note is just one small way. Yet, speaking positively our service user's mental health has been significantly improved by the donations of food, gifts, and wellbeing packs. Students at Xavier College and St. Mary's Anglican Girls School in Perth donated handmade masks designed with messages to say, 'we're thinking of you'. While it's great to not have to worry about meals for the day, our service users also feel gratitude knowing "there's someone out there who cares about me."

For our staff, while being grateful to be able

ST MARY'S HOUSE OF WELCOME CONTINUED ...

to continue to help our community, it is the constancy of work, busy hours, high demand and impact of Stage 4 restrictions that can lead to high stress so, we have downtime in the afternoon for mindfulness sessions and training in self care as new additions to their program.

As the Board and CEO have reflected, it is difficult to predict the outlook for the year ahead, the impact of recession still uncertain. The greatest challenge moving forward will be how to sustainably keep up the volume of meals we've been supplying, and tying in mental health and social support into the meals program.

The strategic partnerships between local agencies have, and will continue to be, key. We won't just go back or move on but will need to share the knowledge gained from this time and leverage the lessons we have learnt this year. We are contributing to an Australian Catholic University (ACU) COVID-19 project, bringing together five organisations - Catholic Social Services Victoria, Jesuit Refugee Service Australia, Lord Somers Camp and PowerHouse, St Mary's House of Welcome and St Vincent de Paul Society NSW. The ACU Stakeholder Engaged Scholarship Unit is launching a broad, multifaceted project that will address the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 on community services and their clients. We have also partnered in a project with our service users providing insights to Monash University in understanding the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable communities.

One thing's for certain - things won't go back

to the way they were. With physical distancing the new norm, we will have to look at other ways to engage our community socially, perhaps with small groups of people meeting outside for lunch or coffee, Taiichi or music.

Whatever, the spirit of Welcome will still be strong.

De-Frustration for Dignity

Normally, at this time of year, here at St Mary's House of Welcome, we are busy organising 'Degustation for Dignity', our gala event to help people sleeping rough and experiencing chronic homelessness. COVID-19 and physical distancing has put a stop to that.

So this year, we are bringing St. Mary's House of Welcome into everyone's lounge room - and, by saying we are bringing it to you, we actually are! For each ticket purchased, donors will receive a premium grazing hamper for two, full of beautiful Victorian wine and produce; exclusive access to an online wine masterclass hosted by renowned wine writer, Max Allen; as well as tasting notes, links to an online silent auction, and more... all delivered to you in the comfort of your own home! Anywhere in Australia! A night at home, to help those without a home, in support of St Mary's House of Welcome meals program. Friday 30 October 2020. Thanks Sr Therese and Sr Debra for supporting us!



ST CATHERINE'S AGED CARE SERVICES

Margaret and Jill met in the late 1940's whilst attending school together at the Loreto Convent, Kirribilli. A strong friendship was formed between Margaret and Jill enjoying each other's company, sharing their education, sharing friends and enjoying sports together, especially Tennis, a sport which Jill excelled at.

Jill was well known for her lovely long blonde plaited hair and her excellence at being a School Sports Captain and a friend to everyone that knew her. 1955 came within blink of an eye and these friends parted company as their education was coming to completion.

Life carried on for both and sadly, they lost contact with each other. Almost 64 years later, Margaret was passing through the Bethany Villa corridors and saw the Memory Board that staff had displayed on Jill's door.

After much research, Margaret discovered that her friend from over six decades ago, Jill Ryan, was now Jill Tracy, a resident at St Catherine's!



As their friendship was rekindled and so many memories to share, Margaret has now become a regular visitor to Jill at St Catherine's. Margaret and Jill shared so many funny stories from times past, from their mischievous exploits outside of school, their joyful times as young friends, stories involving Jill smuggling in lollies under her hat into school to name a few, so many stories that are so poignant to both.

It is so endearing to see these ladies together, a reminder to us all, that great friendships never end. Time may pass, but friendship shall remain... .