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Spirit of Shekinah

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Welcome to the New Newsletter for the Shekinah Volunteer Program

Shekinah has undergone some major changes in the past 18 months since the last newsletter was produced.

Mid way through 2008, Connie Gray moved back into nursing. Connie was a wonderful asset to Shekinah and developed a great rapport with everyone she met. She is greatly missed. It took some months before Connie was replaced, leaving a huge gap in the Shekinah volunteer program.

So, let me introduce myself. My name is Marg Casey and I am the 'new' volunteer Program Co-ordinator for Shekinah Homeless Services. I started at the end of last year and have spent much of my time since then moving into our new premises, settling in to the role, preparing for accreditation and interviewing and placing new volunteers.

I spent the last 6-plus years working for Catholic Social Services Victoria which was largely the driving force in the creation of the Shekinah Network, and it is where Shekinah was based up until the end of last year.

You will note from the address at the top of this newsletter, that Shekinah is now based at Bethlehem Community in Reservoir. This has been a great thing for Shekinah as not only am I based in one of the Shekinah organisations but also I have the support needed to operate in this solo role.

I have been slowly making my way around the Network and meeting a few 'old' volunteers and engaging

several 'new' ones. I hope that in the near future I meet more of you.

Speaking of near future – the Shekinah Ball will be held on Friday 2nd October at the Collingwood Town Hall. Please put this date in your diary as many of you will know it is a highlight for the people who use the services of the Shekinah organisations.

A committee will be set up in the coming weeks to plan for the Ball and we will decide on a theme – which will probably have something to do with footy as it is the Friday after the Grand Final. So I'll keep you informed via email – or check the website - www.shekinah.org.au.

In the meantime, I would like to thank those who completed the online survey in April. It was a great help to me in gauging what is and is not working for you – particularly with regard to training and general satisfaction.

On behalf of the Shekinah Network, and especially those who use the services, thank you for giving of your precious time and energy to volunteering.

Marg Casey

Volunteer Program Co-ordinator





Around the Network

Accreditation

Several of the Shekinah organisations are undergoing accreditation through the QICSA organization at present. They are Shekinah Homeless Services, Bethlehem Community, Good Samaritan Inn, McAuley Community services for Women and their two programs, Mercy Care and Regina Coeli. This process ensures that each organisation is meeting standards in quality improvement.

So if you've seen people in the agency you volunteer in looking a little stressed recently – that's the reason why.

PS. Shekinah passed its accreditation with very positive feedback – as has Bethlehem Community, Good Samaritan Inn and McAuley Community Services for Women. HOORAY!!

Briar Terrace

Volunteers are required at Briar Terrace which provides a safe and welcoming environment for rooming house men and women who experience the loneliness of inner city living.

If you know anyone out there who would be interested in helping out at Briar Terrace please let me know. I can be contacted on 9462 3933.

They are hoping to expand their opening times to include weekends, however for now, volunteers are urgently required to work Mondays to Fridays.

People wishing to volunteer would need to be able to commit to regular shifts as without that real and ongoing commitment the people who visit Briar Terrace are the ones who suffer.

Bethlehem Community

Bethlehem Community has undergone some wonderful improvements, including new gardens, vegie patch and a stunning water feature. They have done this with donations and the help of several dedicated volunteers.

As I'm based at Bethlehem, I also get to see first-hand the women enjoying the fruits of the labours of the volunteers and staff.

I've also had some input - putting in two worm farms which provide yummy castings and tea for the vegie patch.

St Mary's House of Welcome

St Mary's House of Welcome has now moved into their amazing new premises.

The new building allows St Mary's to offer more programs which will be a wonderful boon to those who use the services provided.

As you may be aware, St Mary's rebuilt on their site in Brunswick Street and now have a wonderful purpose-built amenity which is welcoming, light and environmentally friendly.

New spaces include a women's room, training kitchen, arts and crafts room, computer training room, multi-purpose room and health clinic.



McAuley Community Services for Women

In August last year, Mercy Care and Regina Coeli Community merged into a new entity called McAuley Community Services for Women.

Mercy Care has a new Co-ordinator, Marita Manski who works closely with me to interview and induct new volunteers.

Robyn Davies is the new Co-ordinator at Regina Coeli and is desperately looking for some new volunteers. If you have anyone within your social circle who may be interested, please give them my contact details.

Good Samaritan Inn

The Inn has been going through some major renovations and now has a spectacular new kitchen and dining area. The bright green splashback is a sight to behold!

Recently I had the pleasure of being part of an induction session at the Inn

and met some new and not-so-new volunteers. It was a great chance to give a brief overview of Shekinah and outline what is expected of from us in their new roles.

Shekinah

Shekinah has got a new look! We have new-look stationery and presentation folders to store all the info required for prospective and new volunteers, plus a banner which we can take to forums, induction sessions and gatherings of all sorts. It's pretty snazzy as the photo [right] suggests.

We also have a website: www.shekinah.org.au. It has information on each of the 9 organisations and information on how to go about volunteering. It will be constantly updated and I suggest you keep a watchful eye on it for updates on the Shekinah Ball in October.

I am hoping to make contact with many of you soon in the hope of having some of you contribute to the newsletter via a couple of paragraphs outlining what you do or some highlight of your volunteering experience.

In fact any news from either volunteers or Shekinah organisations would be warmly welcomed, as I

believe it is important that we all have some idea of what's happening around the Network.

Once again, please keep the Shekinah Ball in mind – Friday 2nd October at the Collingwood Town Hall. Think about joining the people you volunteer for and consider joining with them as they celebrate together as a community of homeless people.

