

SHEKINAH



HOMELESS
SERVICES Inc

**SHEKINAH VOLUNTEER
NEWSLETTER**

December Edition 2005

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- The Cottage
- The Good Samaritan Inn
- Mercy Care
- Prague House
- Regina Coeli Community
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- The Way Community

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A note from the Co-ordinator of Volunteers

Dear Shekinah Volunteer

This is the Christmas newsletter and the last one for 2005. It has been a tremendous year for Shekinah and the member agencies. Many of the Shekinah members are working together on a number of projects - more information in the excerpt from the Shekinah Annual Report on P. 4.

Shekinah Ball

Preparations for the Ball are going ahead. It will be held on 7th April 2006 - do come if you can. It is always a wonderful night! If you know of any companies who could give donations of prizes, finger food or decorations, please let me know.

GE Commercial Finance

GE Commercial Finance, whose volunteers help out at almost all the member agencies, have also donated some funding to four places: Mercy Care, St Mary's House of Welcome, the Good Samaritan Inn and the Way Community. This funding will help enormously towards new projects and we are extremely grateful to GE Finance for their kind donation.

Briar Terrace

We would like to warmly welcome a new agency into the Shekinah fold. **Briar Terrace** is a peaceful, 'dry' Cottage in Fitzroy which offers companionship and daytime security to men & women who know the aloneness of dense, inner-city living. Briar Terrace relies on the help and support of volunteers and would welcome new volunteers.

Your Contributions

I am very happy to be able to include some pieces written by volunteers in this issue. The contributions which I have received are all very interesting and often moving; they describe the work that you do and the people whom you meet. Please keep them coming!

Merry Christmas!

I hope that you all have a very Merry Christmas and best wishes for a safe and joyous New Year.
With thanks and kind regards to you all
Gill

VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTIONS

In the last newsletter, an excellent piece was included written by a volunteer at St Mary's House of Welcome. That piece was written by Michael Sullivan. Many thanks for your reflections on volunteering at SMHOW, Michael.

In this newsletter, we include articles written by volunteers from The Way Community and Mercy Care.

Key Thoughts on Being a Volunteer From Dorothy Hardy (Dot), The Way Community



I was asked around 3 years ago if I would like to join The Way as a volunteer. I met with Jill and John on a Tuesday and I started on Thursday for 4 to 5 hours. House cleaning was the norm then (busy days); now it is done through an agency.

The men treat me with respect and I with them and firm friendships have been made. An occasional outing has been enjoyed by those who come along.

I loved being part of the Shekinah Ball last November and helping with the BBQ in March.

Jill and John are wonderful to work with and I look forward to coming in every

Thursday.

The following are 2 pieces have been written by Maria Di Cocco, a volunteer at Mercy Care:

Two Kisses

They are leaving - one woman on her own and one with three children

I give the children parting gifts. Mum thanks me profusely, as she has done for the clothes and the bag and for listening and helping her this morning. Small and thin, childlike, fragile, easily persuaded, eager to please, open and needy she is. Vulnerable, she has told me her story and her eyes have begged to be heard and understood. She is so shocked and angry, she had no idea he had done this sort of thing to her little girl – how could he! But she is determined to stay away this time, after what he has done. ‘What do you think I should do’, she asks. I think to myself that she will have little choice now that child protection is involved.

She thanks me again “You have all been too good to me, thank you so much for everything, you’ve done so much, I can’t believe it.” Her arms reach up and she hugs me and says thanks again. She kisses my cheek. More thanks. We smile at each other, say goodbye and she is gone.

Now the other woman is leaving. She speaks no English. As we stand at the green gates and a worker waits to take her to refuge, she grabs my hand in



both hers and squeezes. She nods her head slightly to say thank you, leans forward and kisses my arm. Intense and earnest - her eyes say the words that she cannot.

Two women, Two kisses. Thankful. Vulnerable.

This morning I am left with gratitude for two thankful women. Today we helped in some small way and were rewarded with trust and thanks, overwhelming thanks. It is not always so. It is a gift, not something deserved - a gift to savour and treasure.



The Kids

She is thirteen and he is eleven, a sister and a brother. She sees a psychiatrist and is prescribed prozac; he has been diagnosed with ADHD. She sits with the adults around the outside table; he sits nearby on the steps playing with lego and a smaller boy. She listens to the adult conversation around violence and abuse and joins in when she can; he listens from the edges and remains silent. She talks to me when mum is not near, telling parts of her story, halting when mum returns; he plays nearby, separate but aware. She reaches out and is open; he appears isolated and closed.

There is not enough time today for these two children. There are two workers and three women and three children. Often there are more. Their mother and the other women here require a listening ear, comfort and encouragement. There is so much to be done to prepare them all for refuge. The children get the 'crumbs', the small parcels of time that can be snatched from the necessary and the practical. They have been safe here and the weekend has been an oasis from the chaos of their lives.

They are leaving. She is looking forward to, though nervous about, refuge and worried about keeping in contact with her friends; he sits in the front seat, silent tears trickling down freckled cheeks. And my heart is torn. I have done what I can – helped mum and the other women; listened, encouraged and provided some hope, prepared them for the next step in their journey – and I have made the most of those snatches of time to give something to the kid's. But it is not enough, so much left unsaid, so much that might have been. And I resolve to do something, the kids need and deserve more than the 'crumbs'.



Thank you!

We are always grateful to you, our wonderful volunteers, for the time and effort which you give to the people you support in the agencies. I am very impressed by the dedication and care which you bring to your work.

This month we would especially like to thank:

Matt Tonner, a volunteer at The Way Community, who has made a huge difference to the lives of the men, staff and volunteers there. The company he worked for, Inform Design and Construction, its suppliers and tradespeople, donated all the products and materials as well as the people-power, to gut the 2 existing bathrooms at The Way and rebuild them. After several weeks hard work there are now 2 spanking new bathrooms. We would like to thank Matt and his magnificent team for all their hard work and very generous donations. WELL DONE!!

GE COMMERCIAL FINANCE

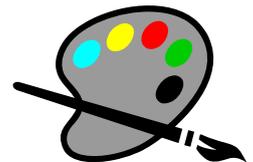
A very big thank you, too, to GE Finance who have very generously donated funding to four of the Shekinah agencies to support projects which primarily help children and families. THANK YOU!!



**EXERPTS FROM THE SHEKINAH ANNUAL REPORT
CONVENOR'S REPORT 2004 – 2005
Convenor : Carol Vale**

The past 12 months has seen Shekinah Homeless Services Inc increase its potential, in many ways, to provide better services and support to homeless men, women and children.

- Shekinah has engaged consultants to assist agencies to be involved in an Organisational Development Project which includes an accreditation process. QICSA has been chosen as the most appropriate organization to be accredited with. The project began in February 2005 and the accreditation date has been set for May 2006. The agencies involved are The Way, St Mary's House of Welcome, Bethlehem Community Inc, Mercy Care, Regina Coeli and The Good Samaritan Inn.
- The four Shekinah Homeless Women's Services are gradually working towards a formal amalgamation
- A joint recreation program involving Regina Coeli and Bethlehem Community is presently in progress. Six of the Shekinah Agencies are working together to streamline costs and efficiencies of our back-of-house operations.
- The Shekinah Forum was held October 6, 2005. Thirty five people from 9 of the 10 agencies attended. Staff and volunteers were given the opportunity to learn more about Shekinah and to spend time with the consultants involved in the Organisational Development project.



VOLUNTEER INFORMATION SESSIONS

I am trying out a new recruitment procedure. Instead of inviting potential volunteers immediately for an interview, I am running Information Sessions to which all prospective volunteers will be invited. This means I can cover a lot of information on our volunteering program, the agencies, volunteer roles, policies & procedures and so on, as well as touching on the issues of homelessness and mental health. I also show the Shekinah video.

If you know anyone who might be interested in volunteering for one of the Shekinah agencies, but who would like to know more about us before making a commitment, please let them know about the Info Sessions. They need to book in so I can send them a confirmation letter with details of the venue. The January sessions will be held on:

- 1. **Tuesday 24th Jan 10am - 12 noon at CSSV**
- 2. **Monday 30th Jan 6pm - 8pm at CSSV**

VOLUNTEER TRAINING 2006 - SURVEY

I will be offering the following sessions next year and would like to offer some of the 2005 sessions again, but need to know how much of a demand there would be for them, as some of them are quite expensive to run. Could you let me know which sessions you would be interested in? Please tick and return or email this page to me:



Title	Tick	Title	Tick
Cultural Awareness and Working with Interpreters		Awareness of Aboriginal customs and values	
Caring for the Carer (including massage for the participant & meditation)		How to do hand massage and how to offer it appropriately to a client	
Conflict Resolution		Communication skills	
Mental Health- an overview		Drug & Alcohol Abuse	
Borderline Personality Disorder		Acquired Brain Injury	
Depression & Anxiety			

Are there any other topics you would like to see sessions on which would help with your work?

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____



THE MERCY CARE TRAINING WEEKEND



By Rebekah Pinkerton & Natasha Tissavirasingham

What a trauma getting to what turned out to be a great fun-filled, emotive and educational weekend. One imprinted in our minds forever.

I'm sure Angela didn't believe our story that we could not get the car out of the garage, but it was true we were trapped! But after many calls, a spanner and much angst we got there at midnight!

We were met with open arms, we gave a huge sigh of relief and we knew that now we could relax and enjoy the weekend.

Once inside we shared a laugh, some red wine and retired to bed by 2am.

An early start was made by all, we felt anxious and excited by what was to come next.

The calm and peaceful feeling we were met with when we first walked in to the conference room was overwhelming...

We saw seats in a circle, and in the middle was a beautiful display of purple silk scarves and candles. More importantly were the statues that represented the different stages we go through as women and volunteers.

Then there was Nicole. A slight, softly spoken woman with great knowledge and wisdom and a huge heart. Just to look at her made us feel calm. We were instantly captivated.

At the opening ceremony singing "You Raise Me Up" instantly brought tears to our eyes, I think we felt that way because it encompasses all that we do at mercy care for each other and the women who use our service.

To start with we learned about Catherine the founder of Mercy Care (MC), the history of how the organisation began, her spirit, her sacrifices. About one woman's commitment and determination to eradicate violence towards women.

Through a series of activities we were encouraged to interact, learn and share with the other volunteers, to gain an understanding of why we are all a part of MC.

We were challenged to look at who are in a safe and protective environment. A part of the process was learning to be aware of the feelings we experience working with the women; not losing our compassion or passion, but not making the women's stories our own. Being aware of our boundaries but also being aware of the women and children's boundaries too.

That night we had fabulous home cooked meals, plenty of wine and an endless supply of entertainment, who knew there was so much hidden talent! It was an opportunity to meet and learn about the varied personalities of all the women at MC.

The following morning we learnt about the accreditation of MC, what is involved, how we can assist and the positive outcome when it is completed.

We were shown video footage of a young South African girl's personal experience that had a profound effect on all. She spoke of how her mother endured violence from her father, her mother always said "it will be alright, it will be alright" until she was killed then "it was no longer alright". Again something from this weekend we will never forget.

To conclude there was the closing ceremony, very moving also.

Again we sang "You Raise me up" this time was different, after all we had done, this song had so much meaning to us.

We were asked to choose a candle in the centre of the room, this was to represent the light within, within us as women and us as volunteers at MC. We were given the candles to take home to remind us of our journey and to keep our passion alive.

Lastly on behalf of all who attended we would like to thank everyone involved in making this weekend so special and such an unforgettable experience.

BETHLEHEM COMMUNITY GREAT WINE SALE

Bethlehem Community is selling commemorative labelled bottles of wine (both Chardonnay & Shiraz) as part of their 21st birthday celebrations this year.

They would make fabulous Christmas presents! Costs are:

\$12 per bottle \$140 per doz. More than 1 dozen \$130 per doz.



If you are interested, please ring Carol Vale at Bethlehem. Tel: 9462 3937 or Email: bethleh@bigpond.net.au