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# Spirit of Shekinah

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## Shekinah News for December

Well it's nearing the end of the year – and I'm guessing that someone must have stolen several months as it only seems like yesterday it was Christmas last year!

It has been a busy but good year for the Volunteer Program, with approximately 100 people applying to volunteer across the Network [mostly from word-of-mouth not advertising], with about 30 being accepted and starting as volunteers. It's a constant challenge to screen potential volunteers, but a challenge that I enjoy. I often say that I have the best job as I get to meet some truly amazing people - people from all walks of life who are willing to give of themselves for those less fortunate.

It sometimes seems that there is a never-ending need for volunteers, and luckily it would seem, a corresponding desire for people to want to offer their time and/or expertise to the many people who use our services.

I know that each organisation in the Network has some kind of thank you event or acknowledgement of their volunteers, but I would like to add my sincere thanks. Without you, the volunteers, much of what we do would be a huge struggle. I'm sure that sometimes you feel you are not really contributing, as very often you may not see any tangible sign of your involvement, but believe me; you do make a huge difference.

The drivers, the companions, the sleepover volunteers, cooks, cleaners, gardeners, painters and those who are just ready to lend a hand at whatever is required – we acknowledge and thank you. You are special people – volunteers are the lifeblood of our Network.

May this Christmas be a time of happiness and joy for you and your family. May you delight in the work you have done in 2010 and look forward in anticipation to what your contribution in 2011 will mean for so many who have so little! Your gift of time and yourself is precious.

Don't forget that on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2011, we will be conducting the next Shekinah Ball.

Until then I wish you all a very happy and safe Christmas and a wonderful new year.

*Marg Casey*

Volunteer Program Co-ordinator





## Around the Network

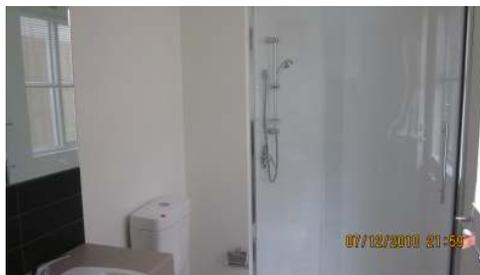
### Bethlehem Community

Bethlehem is preparing for some of the women to move into the new Thomastown complex early in 2011. The units are looking spectacular with a light and bright atmosphere and all the mod cons including a fabulous kitchen and big bright bathroom. The women won't know themselves, and we wish them well in their new home.

On Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> December, a lovely night was held at Reservoir to thank the many supporters, volunteers and friends of Bethlehem Community for all their support during the year. Without our volunteers and supporters we would not achieve what we do - and that is a great deal. For example the

new front garden – which is now complete and looking fantastic thanks to loyal volunteers and staff working very hard to make Bethlehem look like a home not just a house.

Don't forget that on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2011, Bethlehem's fundraising extravaganza will be held at the Palladium Room at Crown. If you are interested in attending, please contact Bethlehem on 9462 3937. This is an important event, as the need to raise more money is crucial in order to provide the women at the Reservoir and Thomastown properties with some level of extra comfort on top of the day-to-day programs offered.



Bathroom in one of the units at Thomastown



Looking across the new car park to new garden



### Briar Terrace

On one of my recent visits to Briar Terrace I had the opportunity to learn a card game from one of the regular friends. It was not only a chance to connect with some of the friends in the relaxed setting that is Briar Terrace, it was a lot of fun.

If you know someone who has time to offer a regular and ongoing shift volunteering at Briar Terrace, please let me know. They are in need of people who are able to commit long-term.



## Corpus Christi Community

On the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> December 2010 Corpus Christi Community (CCC) underwent a two day site survey to determine if it is to be accredited for the next three years.

As an Australian Government funded aged care facility, CCC will be assessed by three surveyors who will consider whether Expected Outcomes relating to the following standards have been met:

- Management Systems, Staffing and Organisational Development;

- Health and Personal Care;
- Resident Lifestyle; and
- Physical Environment and Safe Systems.

In total there are 44 Expected Outcomes which CCC must be assessed as having met before accreditation is given. CCC expects to be made formally aware of the survey result before Christmas but usually the surveyors provide a strong sense of the likely outcome at the summation conference given at the end of their site visit.

## Good Samaritan Inn

On 4<sup>th</sup> November, around 30 Year 8 students from St Monica's College came to the Inn, accompanied by Glenda Hays, Community Development Coordinator and the RE teacher for a thank you gathering. Since the beginning of the year, under the supervision of Glenda, the students have been organising different activities to fundraise for the Inn. The students' genuine enthusiasm and their keenness to help are most impressive.

It is a very good initiative for the school to make them aware that

out there people are suffering and that the young ones can do something to bring some happiness in their life. These youth of St Monica's embody what the late Pope John Paul II said at one World Youth Day. The late Pope always gave thanks for the gift of youth and he reminded the young ones by paraphrasing Saint Catherine of Siena's words: "if you are what you should be, you will set the whole world ablaze!" (Cf. Letter 368). We give thanks to the year 8 students of St Monica's for their gift and for being 'part of the Inn.

## McAuley Community Services for Women Mercy Care Program

It has been an exciting year here at Mercy Care. Last financial year we accommodated 319 women and 357 children. The volunteers play an integral role in our program as they support not only the women and children staying at Mercy Care but also the staff. Quite often in the

evening and on weekends there is only one staff member on shift and the difference a volunteer makes is enormous. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all volunteers and Marg Casey, Shekinah Homeless Services Volunteer Coordinator for the fantastic work.



## Shekinah

On the visits I make to the member organisations I have the amazing opportunity to meet some fabulous people. As mentioned above in the Briar Terrace section, I met a man who taught me how to cheat at cards. I didn't have the heart to tell him I already knew how to 'cheat' – the only problem being – I didn't really know how to play cards at all!



I have been privileged to attend 3 thank you events from member organisations. One at Corpus Christi Community in October which was celebrated with Mass followed by hospitality in the form of a cuppa and wonderful food prepared by Marie Conlon, the long-time wonder of the kitchen. There were many people present who support the men at Corpus including some incredible volunteers who have been visiting the men for many years.

Another was the breakfast at the Good Samaritan Inn in November which was a lovely occasion with good company, good conversation and good food. I even had the chance to catch up with people I haven't seen for years.



Bethlehem's thank you night at the beginning of December was another celebration of good people who do wonderful things for the women by volunteering, supporting and financial donation.

Mercy Care will have a thank you evening next week which will be yet another chance to express thanks to their volunteers and supporters.

The Way has had two get-togethers to celebrate who they are and what they do and it's a great time for people to come together – some to express their gratitude and others to receive gratitude.

Shekinah Homeless Services held its Annual General Meeting in November and the Annual Report can be viewed at [http://www.shekinah.org.au/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=cat\\_view&gid=20&Itemid=36](http://www.shekinah.org.au/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=20&Itemid=36)

On a sad note, one of our wonderful volunteers died after a very short illness in October and she will be sadly missed. She was admired and loved by all who met her. May she rest in peace.



### St Mary's House of Welcome

St Mary's is gearing up for Christmas with a Christmas dance organised in conjunction with Reclink.

The Wine Rules on Sunday 21 November was a really fun and successful day. Nearly 2000 people attended and enjoyed fabulous wines, great food and bands and

watched 20 wineries from across Victoria face off in an intense touch football competition. The winners were Ten Minutes By Tractor, who were coincidentally friends of several long time St Mary's volunteers (according to St Mary's, this in no way influenced the outcome of the games!).



### The Way Community

There is a lot to celebrate at Christmas, and volunteers and residents at The Way Community have been busy with a Gourmet Christmas BBQ on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December and are looking forward to a traditional lunch on Christmas Day. However, it is also a challenging time of year. It is likely that every Shekinah volunteer has seen first hand just how difficult the Christmas holiday time of year can be for so many people in Melbourne.

A few weeks back a long-time resident of Fitzroy passed away. The Way Community got to know him a number of years ago when he came seeking help for somebody

else who lived in the same rooming house. From time to time he would drop in for help with a form or to have a cup of tea with certain volunteers, but he was not one to sign up for help. He was a very independent man.

Lots of people knew him, but when he passed away there was nobody to hold a funeral. The Way Community, with help from Fr Michael at Corpus Christi Community, was able to advocate to State Trustees for a small service to be held. Even if coming to a funeral was a bit much for some of the rooming house residents this man knew, at least his friends know his life has been remembered.

