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# Spirit of Shekinah

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## Shekinah News for March

Another year is upon us and I hope and trust it finds you well and rested and ready for whatever the year holds.

For me and for several of our member organisations it means accreditation. And accreditation means jumping through hoops of fire every three years to prove that we are continually improving our service delivery and programs. Having said that, it is always a very worthwhile exercise as it forces us to look closely at the way we operate and, as with anything that we value, there is always room for improvement.

In the Christmas newsletter, I remarked that there were very few people offering their time to volunteer. This year is a very different story - so far I have had more volunteer enquiries than I've experienced for some time. I can't account for the reason, but I am enjoying the fact that in some areas, people are responding to invitations to volunteer within our Shekinah network.

I recently conducted a satisfaction survey on behalf of the Good Samaritan Inn. The response was wonderful and my thanks to all who contributed - your feedback is much appreciated.

With Easter upon us, it is perhaps a good time to reflect on the hardship endured by many who use the services of Shekinah member organisations and how much you as volunteers contribute to their overall well-being.

Easter is a time of acknowledging that we can move on from the hopelessness of our burdens into a new life filled with hope. For many service users in the Shekinah network, the prospect of being able to 'resurrect' themselves from their predicament is totally alien. For them life on the margins is the norm. It is where many see themselves remaining with no hope.

That is where the Shekinah organisations come to the fore. The programs are designed to enable people to live as fulfilling a life as is possible - where possible. For many that hope can be realised - for many others it cannot. In other words, they reach out to those most in need and this is where we experience the Easter message.

I wish you all a very happy Easter and may it be a time of reflection and renewal for you, as I hope it will be for those who benefit from your generosity of spirit.

*"Those who can, do.  
Those who can do more, volunteer."  
--Author unknown*

*Marg Casey*

Volunteer Program Co-ordinator



*"Your eyes will see a home that is secure,  
a tent not to be moved, none of its stakes  
ever to be pulled up, none of its ropes  
ever to be broken." Isaiah 33.20*



## Around the Network

### Bethlehem Community

We have had some change in staff. Chris Wade retired from Bethlehem at the end of January and was given a fitting farewell by the Bethlehem women and another by the staff and Board members. She will be greatly missed for her warmth and generosity of spirit along with her expertise. Chris is now living the good life in Echuca – soaking up the sun and warmth and enjoying retirement.

We warmly welcome Babita Narayan to the full-time role of

administration and bookkeeping. Babita, with her bright personality, has settled in very well and is proving to be a great asset.

Bethlehem held its 2<sup>nd</sup> **Homework** event at Crown on 24<sup>th</sup> March. The event was again a spectacular success with 450 people gathering to celebrate Bethlehem and what it does for women who have been or are at risk of homelessness. Once again the amount raised was a sensational result.



Homework in full swing!



### Corpus Christi Community

For many years, and on three to four occasions within each year, groups of Corpus Christi Community staff and residents have travelled to a Melbourne bay side location for four nights away.

The groups usually comprise two staff members and seven to eight residents with the purpose being simply to spend time together. Usually each trip involves different staff and residents but the results are generally the same. Both staff and residents find the trips to be good

occasions to get to know one another and to share tasks and outings that build a sense of community and belonging. The benefits of the Program more often than not have reflected in improved attitudes and relationships back at Corpus Christi Community.

This year the Lazy Day program will continue with trips planned for April, July and October. If past experience is to be used as a guide there will be no problems in having willing participants to these events.



## Good Samaritan Inn

The Good Samaritan Inn, together with Women's Information Support and Housing in the North (WISHIN) is developing and implementing a Respectful Relationships program at three high schools in the north, over a three year period. Our program, titled 'We Can Do It', is designed to promote healthy and respectful relationships, not only between the students themselves but in their families, schools and wider communities. Respectful relationships education is essential to putting a stop to violence against women and children in our society. The 2008 White Ribbon Foundation Report states that *"violence against women is one of our most significant social problems, with deep, long-lasting impacts on young people. Action must not be left to others; both as individuals and working together, we can make a difference"* (White Ribbon Foundation Report, p.38).

The 'We Can Do It' program will follow the same group of students over three years and track changes in their behaviours and attitudes. We see violence prevention and respectful relationship-building as an active, collective and developmental process. Research informs us that one of the underlying causes of violence against women and children is the unequal distribution of power and resources between men and women. We hope that by equipping young people with the necessary knowledge and skills, we will assist them to develop and maintain non-violent, respectful and equitable relationships. This will be strongly supported by the positive environments and high-quality pastoral care provided by each school.

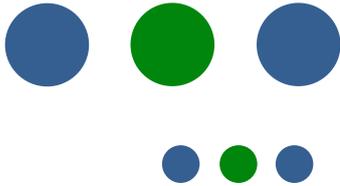
The Good Samaritan Inn has welcomed two new staff members this year. Jo and Therese are sharing the Day Support Worker role, with Jo working Monday to Wednesday and Therese working Wednesday to Friday. They have settled in well and it feels like they've been here forever! We are so grateful to have such dedicated staff, all of whom are a joy to work with!

We have also had Shannon move from the Admin/Finance role into the Coordinator role which has been fantastic. Shannon is also developing and implementing the 'We Can Do It' program in the three schools.

**Save the date!** Our Annual Dinner Dance will be held at L'Unica on Parkville on **FRIDAY AUGUST 17<sup>th</sup>** at 7pm. Tables are selling fast so contact Marg Godino on 0410 540 436 or [mgxtt@inet.net.au](mailto:mgxtt@inet.net.au) to book tickets.

We still desperately need cleaning volunteers for either a Monday morning or a Friday afternoon. If you have a couple of hours to give you could come and do some dusting, vacuuming, mopping and have a cuppa at the end! Make it a social time – bring some friends and have the work done in half the time! For more information please contact the Shekinah Homeless Services Volunteer Program Co-ordinator Marg Casey on 9462 3933 or [shekinah@shekinah.org.au](mailto:shekinah@shekinah.org.au)





## McAuley Community Services for Women

**Regina Coeli Program** and **Mercy Care Program** now have new names. They are **McAuley House** and **McAuley Care** respectively.

Kirsty from McAuley Care and Marg from Shekinah conducted an information evening at the

beginning of March for prospective volunteers. Four women turned up and three of them have been accepted to volunteer – the best result we've ever had!

## St Mary's House of Welcome

On Christmas Day, St Mary's hosted 'The Big Give' at the Fitzroy town hall for over 300 guests.

Despite the heat the day was a huge success complete with gifts, entertainment, snow and even a visit from Santa himself!

On 10 January St Mary's staff, service users and volunteers were invited to watch a presentation and film screening from the St Mary's creative writing group. The captured audience was amazed and some were even drawn to tears by the touching and heartfelt poetry, prose and song writing presented by the group.

A total of 20 service users were involved in the creative writing group that met regularly over the course of three months to share their ideas and works.

St Mary's staff and service users celebrated *Tet Nguyen Dan*, the Vietnamese Lunar New Year.

Tet Nguyen Dan means feast of the first morning and feast we did! A delicious traditional meal was

served to a selection of lucky staff and service users including the traditional Banh chung, a tightly packed sticky rice with pork filling wrapped in banana leaves, yum!

St Mary's have been lucky to develop a relationship with Big Lou's donuts on Brunswick Street who are happy to donate donuts each day. The donuts selection and range has been pretty impressive.

The arrangement is that each morning around ten the donuts are collected. They are then used for morning tea and are well received.

They are also shared with others, with crate dropped off to The Way and another to Turning Point who were extremely grateful.

