



SERVICES INC.

SHEKINAH VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

December Edition 2006

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Shekinah Homeless Services Inc:

- Bethlehem Community
- Briar Terrace
- Corpus Christi Community
- The Cottage
- The Good Samaritan Inn
- Mercy Care
- Prague House
- Regina Coeli Community
- St Mary's House of Welcome
- The Way Community
- Inside this issue:

Item	Page No.
Volunteering at Briar Terrace	2
GE Pacific Premium Report	2
Email from a Mercy Care volunteer	3
Volunteering at Bethlehem Community	3
Volunteer Satisfaction Survey Report	3 - 4
Mercy Care news	4
The Way news	5
HACC Training Calendar	5 - 6

Shekinah gratefully acknowledges the financial support of DHS HACC and the Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund and would also like to thank GE Commercial Finance for their generous help.

A word from the Volunteer Program Co-ordinator

Dear Shekinah Volunteer

It's that time of year when, hopefully, we can have a break, see family and friends we may not see regularly, reflect on the year that's gone and look forward to the coming year. I don't have to remind you that, for many of the men, women and children whom we support, this can be a difficult period, when painful memories can come to the fore and the sense of loss can be sharp. I'm sure that you know that your presence and support can really help people at this time of year – thank you for your good will, dedication and kindness throughout the year – your work is much appreciated by everyone in the Shekinah communities.

Volunteer Satisfaction Survey

Many thanks to everyone who completed the survey which went out in August. There is a brief summary on Pp 3 & 4. If you would like a copy of the full report, please let me know.

Training

Northern and Western HACC have both released their new training calendars for Semester 1, 2007. I have pulled out the topics which are of most use for Shekinah volunteers and staff and circulated them. If you would like a copy of the full calendars, please let me know. (This list includes the western & northern courses.) I will be putting together the Shekinah training schedule soon and will send it out early next year.

New Volunteers

Several new volunteers have come on board since the last newsletter. Many thanks to them and to all our wonderful volunteers, including those from GE Commercial Finance and GE Pacific Premium.

It is easy to think, with all the gloomy news we hear, that society is breaking down and people are becoming more greedy and self-centred. I know this is not true because every week I meet and speak with people who are willing to give freely of their time to help and support others. It is truly inspiring to work with volunteers – your enthusiasm and energy rub off onto the people who come in contact with you, which is one reason that I love this job so much.

Thanks to you all!

Have a joyous Christmas and a safe & happy New Year!

With regards,
Gill

VOLUNTEER ARTICLES

Volunteering at Briar Terrace

It was only through the training/orientation program provided by Shekinah - prior to commencing as a volunteer one day a week at Briar Terrace, around the corner from St Vincent's - that I came to appreciate that homelessness doesn't just apply to those without a roof over their head. It applies equally to those often isolated, perhaps vulnerable and solitary people who need companionship and support - precisely what Briar Terrace seeks to provide.

Over a cup of tea/coffee and a biscuit it's often about listening to the 'companions' or 'friends' who call in for 10 minutes or a few hours as the case may be. First 'listening'- sometimes to 'life stories' repeated - or begging to differ, laughing together, perhaps playing a game of cards, sharing experiences.



At times an individual can arrive angry, hurt or upset and as volunteers I and others do our best to listen and provide positive encouragement/support or advice as the case may be.

On occasion there may be the need or opportunity for a pair of volunteers to visit a 'friend' temporarily immobile or in care away from their residence.

As the seller of the 'Big Issue' spruiking at Parliament Station said the other morning, 'it's the lots of small issues that together make up the big issues'. So too for the companionship and friendship, the Spirit that pervades 'The Terrace'.



Peter Cowan

Report from Emily Peterson of GE Pacific Premium

“Throughout the last 12 months GE Commercial Finance and Pacific Premium Funding have continued to build upon our rewarding relationship with Shekinah by participating in varied activities and fund raising. Whilst we understand fund raising is critical to ensure the continuity of these important services to the growing proportion of disadvantaged members of our community, we try to emphasise and encourage the importance of individual participation from staff.

Despite our hectic schedules many staff have been recognized by Shekinah and our business leaders for involvement with The Way, breakfasts and lunches at St Mary's House of Welcome; attending the fabulous Ball and raising donations; Mercy Care Play Therapy Centre; and participating in the educational training facilitated by Gill. Pacific Premium Funding is championing the rejuvenation of the sandpit and surrounds at the Good Samaritan Inn with many staff already volunteering to participate on the day. As a volunteer I have found the experience and insight I have gained by working with Shekinah and meeting many clients to be humbling and inspirational – not to forget the excitement of meeting the Richmond Tigers!

Being in corporate roles and having the supported opportunity to personally contribute to improving the social justice of our community makes us realize just how lucky we are.”



Email from Katie Dunlop, ex-volunteer at Mercy Care, who has recently left Australia to pursue studies elsewhere



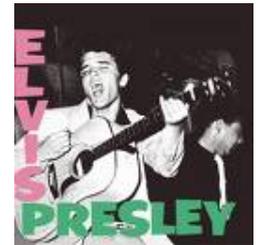
I don't know if I mentioned to you before I left Australia, but volunteering at Mercy Care really was a life-changing experience for me (sorry about the cliché!). I have developed a really strong passion for women's issues. The one on one contact with the women who used Mercy Care not only gave me an insight into the personal face of gender inequality but also really got me interested in the theoretical, political side of the issue. So here at university I am taking a Feminist Philosophy subject (philosophy is my major) and have a feeling from now on women's issues are going to affect what I end up doing with my life. Mercy Care has really inspired a sense of purpose in me, so thank you for the opportunity!

Volunteering at Bethlehem Community by Ann Shepherdson

On retiring after 35 years in education, I looked forward to some time and space to pursue some aspects of life that had not been readily available to me previously. As well as the joys of reading the newspaper daily, pottering in the garden and spending gentler moments with family and friends, I had always anticipated that I would volunteer my time and talents for others.

I attended a gathering of interested volunteers at Campion Centre of Ignatian Spirituality in Kew, where John Jennings, of the Ignatian Volunteer Association, introduced us to a variety of volunteer options. As well, Gillian Sealby of Shekinah Homeless Services, an initiative of Catholic Social Services, spoke of a variety of needs of the ten agencies under her care.

After interviews with John and Gillian, and police checks, I was approved to be a volunteer. After discussions with Gillian, I commenced work as a driver for the residents of Bethlehem in Reservoir. Each Wednesday fortnight, a few women would travel with me for a pick-up and delivery of goods in Brunswick. Our journey included a catch-up of events since our last meeting, a sing-a long with Elvis, Gene Pitney and other 60's stars, a shop along the op. shops in Smith Street, and a coffee at a favored spot.



Some interesting outcomes of this work for me have been the benefits I receive as a volunteer. As the relationships have evolved, the outings have become something to look forward to. Often the discussions have jolted me to new realizations and broadened my understanding of the lives of my new acquaintances. Often I come away from these outings re-energized. As well, I've become an enthusiastic op-shopper and been delighted with the purchases my friends and I have made. I look forward to sharing a celebratory lunch cooked by my new friends as this year draws to a close.

St Francis prayed, "for it is in giving that you receive." What a gift!

? VOLUNTEER SATISFACTION SURVEY REPORT

A total of 28 completed questionnaires were returned. Following are some of your comments and suggestions:

Generally people were fairly happy with the recruitment process. Some kind people made suggestions as to where we could place adverts to attract more volunteers – thanks for that and I will certainly be trying to follow up on those suggestions. Some volunteers wanted more specific information about domestic violence and/or mental health issues or more information about the clients before they started volunteering. Unfortunately, we can't cover a huge number of issues in our Information Sessions, but we do encourage you to come to either the Shekinah or HACC training which is on offer and which covers some of these issues.

Most people said the rewards of volunteering were in the opportunities to develop relationships with the men, women & children whom they supported, being involved in a community and knowing that they



were "giving something back".

Virtually the only volunteers who replied to the question about what was least rewarding were the those who work at Mercy Care and the Good Sam Inn – they found it frustrating not knowing what became of the women & children after they had moved on (though they understand that they can't know), and they were angry at the lack of government funding for this sector generally. Others found it hard to fit volunteering into already busy lives.

Suggested improvements for volunteers included: name badges, more social gatherings and the chance to debrief with volunteers from the same agency (I will be offering this in next year's training) and better job descriptions, which we are already addressing through the accreditation process.

Training questions

Many people had attended training and those who had done so found it useful. Mental Health topics were considered particularly useful as were the chance to: network; have group discussions; meet other volunteers and learn from them; and the opportunity to think more deeply about issues.

The main reasons people didn't attend training were the obvious ones such as lack of time; having training opportunities in their paid work; location and didn't feel safe travelling at night (which I can understand).

For people in this last group, I might be able to organize a lift home if someone else lives in your area – please let me know if this would help.

Ways we can show our appreciation

Many people didn't answer this question or wrote that the work itself was appreciation enough and they didn't want/need anything else. Or they felt that what the agencies already offered (parties, weekend away, training etc) was enough. Others would like to be mentioned in newsletters (we need your permission for this) or said that a yearly gathering perhaps during volunteer week would be good.

Would you like to come to a meal where volunteers would pay a contribution to the cost?

Most people seemed interested in this, so I will try and organize this next year.

AGENCY NEWS

MERCY CARE

The Mercy Care team have been very busy recently with the launch of a new report, the opening of a new service for children and, very excitingly, news that they have received their first funding from the government!

Launch of "Mind the Gap"

I recently attended the launch of "Mind the Gap" a report commissioned by Mercy Care and Western Women's Domestic Violence Support Network, which looks at the service gaps in supporting victims/survivors of family violence. Speakers included relatives of women who have been murdered by their partners in recent years and many of the speeches were passionate, as you can imagine. Afterwards we all went to the Parliament steps where hundreds of pairs of shoes were displayed with the banner saying "Walk in our shoes". It was a very moving event.



Opening of the Play Therapy Centre

Mercy Care is about to open their new Play Therapy Centre. It is a centre which has been established especially for the children who come to Mercy Care - a space for play and also for them to articulate their feelings and thoughts about what they are experiencing. A Children's Resource Worker has been employed and the centre stocked with toys and equipment. Many children come through Mercy Care. Between 2004 -2005, 262 children were accommodated at Mercy Care with more than 75% of them under the age of 8 years. This figure, sadly, is likely to be greater in 2005-06. In the past, there was no specific environment set up to help them. Now their needs will be met in a tailored therapeutic setting. Many thanks to GE Commercial Finance and many other organizations who have sponsored this Centre.

The Good Samaritan Inn

The Inn has a new sandpit thanks to GE Pacific Premium, who also spruced up the play area.

The Way

The Way held their 25th Anniversary celebration recently. Many volunteers attended who had worked there many years ago and it was great to hear their stories and memories. John Osborne gave a wonderful speech which outlined the changes The Way has gone through and the abiding values it espouses. It was a great night!

HACC TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERS & STAFF - JANUARY TO JUNE 2007

If you would like to attend any of these courses, please book in quickly, especially for First Aid.

FIRST AID LEVEL 2 (You do not need to have Level 1 already to take this course) and CPR updates

Name of course	Dates	Venue
First Aid Level 2	Mondays 12 th & 19 th Feb. 9am - 4.30pm	ISIS, 1 Andrea St, St Albans. (W)
First Aid Level 2	Weds 21 st & 28 th Feb 9am - 4.30pm	Hume Global Learning Centre, 1093 Pascoe Vale Rd, Broadmeadows (N)
CPR Update	Thurs 1 st March 9.00am - 12 noon	Rose Shamrock Hotel, 709 Plenty Rd, Reservoir (N)
CPR Update	Thurs 15 th March 9.30am - 12.30pm	MS Society, 398 Barkly St, Footscray (W)
Evening First Aid Level 2	Tues 17 th & 24 th April, 1 st May - 6pm - 10.15pm	Link Community Transport, 5/ 105 Newlands Rd, Coburg North (N)
First Aid Level 2	Tuesdays 17 th & 24 th April 9am - 4.30pm	MS Society, 398 Barkly St, Footscray (W)
Weekend First Aid Level 2	Sats 5 th & 12 th May	Link Community Transport, Coburg North as above (N)
First Aid Level 2	Thurs 24 th & 31 st May 9am - 4.30pm	Royal Talbot Rehab Centre, Spinal Seminar Room, 1 Yarra Blvd, Kew (N)
First Aid Level 2	Thursdays 21 st & 28 th June 9am - 4.30pm	Sunshine Library Harvester Rooms A & B, Hampshire Rd, Sunshine (W)

WORKING WITH COMPLEX NEEDS/MANAGING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

Name of course	Dates	Venue
Understanding Grief & Loss	Wed 28 th Feb 1pm - 4pm	DASSI Training Rooms, 88 Herbert St, Northcote (park in Hardington St - over the railway) (N)
Understanding the conditions of ageing	Thursdays 1 st , 8 th & 15 th March 1pm - 4pm	ADEC, 175 Plenty Rd, Preston (N)
Managing Challenging Behaviours	Tues 13 th March 9.30am - 4pm	Preston Creative Living Centre, 648 High St, Reservoir (N)
Mental Health for Non-Mental Health Workers	Weds 14 th & 21 st March 9.15am - 4.30pm	DASSI Training Rooms, Northcote As above (N)
Depression in the Aged	Wed 16 th May 9.30am - 4pm	Hume Global Learning Centre, Broadmeadows as above (N)
Depression in people who are frail and ageing	Tues 22 nd May 9.30am - 4pm	MS Society, 398 Barkly St, Footscray (W)

CONFLICT RESOLUTION/MEDIATION AND NEGOTIATION

Name of course	Dates	Venue
Conflict Resolution for direct carers	Thurs 1 st March 9.30am - 4pm	Workplace Learning Initiatives, 436 High St, Northcote (meter free parking in Langswell Pde or behind the police station in Dennis St) (N)

Dealing with Difficult Behaviour for Frontline Staff	Wed 18 th April 9.30am - 4pm	ISIS, 1 Andrea St, St Albans. (W)
Managing Violent & Potentially Violent Situations run by David Cherry	Wed 2 nd May 9am - 4pm	Riverview Convention Centre, Footscray as above (W)

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Name of course	Dates	Venue
Mental Health & the Polish Community	Wed 14 th Feb 9.30am - 12.30pm	Riverview Convention Centre, Maribyrnong Blvd off Farnsworth Ave, Footscray (W)
Cross Cultural Communication (incl. working with interpreters)	Fri 27 th April 9.30am - 12.30pm	DASSI Training Rooms, Northcote as above (N)
Cultural Awareness: working with the Coptic, East Timorese & Sri Lankan communities	Thurs 14 th June 1pm - 4pm	Riverview Convention Centre, Footscray as above (W)

POLICY AWARENESS

Name of course	Dates	Venue
Duty of Care & Confidentiality	Wed 14 th March 9.30am - 12.30pm	DASSI Training Rooms, Northcote as above (N)

PRACTICAL & PALLIATIVE NURSING SKILLS/PERSONAL CARE

Name of course	Dates	Venue
Provide Personal Care in a HACC environment (staff only)	Tuesdays 6 th , 13 th , 20 th & 27 th March 9.30am - 4pm	Annecto Training Room, 81 Cowper St, Footscray & Altona Meadows Nursing Home, 297 Queen St, Altona Meadows (W)

LOOKING AFTER YOURSELVES/CARING FOR THE CARER

Name of course	Dates	Venue
Professional Boundary Setting (to help our clients and ourselves)	Wed 21 st Feb 9.30am - 12.30pm	DASSI Training Rooms, Northcote - as above (N)
Body at Work - importance of caring for your bodies at work	Friday 16 th March 1pm - 4pm OR Friday 18 th May 1pm - 4pm	Both at: Moreland Comm Health Service, 79 Jukes Rd, Fawkner (N)

OTHER COURSES

Name of course	Dates	Venue
Food Handling & Safety	Friday 9 th Feb 9.15am - 1pm	The Concert Hall, Moreland City Council, 90 Bell St, Coburg (N)
Ageing & Sensory Loss - strategies for assisting people with vision & hearing loss	Tues 15 th May 9.30am - 1.30pm	Riverview Convention Centre, Footscray as above (W)
Understanding Advocacy	Fri 25 th May 9.30am - 12.30pm	DASSI Training Rooms, Northcote as above (N)
Assist with self medication	Weds 6 th , 13 th , 20 th & 27 th June 9am - 4pm	Hume Global Learning Centre, Broadmeadows as above (N)

TO ENROL: Staff of Regina Coeli and Bethlehem can enrol through their managers if they prefer. Other staff members - please speak to your manager & then enrol through Gill. Volunteers - please contact GILL SEALBY, Volunteer Program Co-ordinator, Shekinah Homeless Services Tel: 9287 5568 / 0422 266 122
Email: shekinah@pacific.net.au