



SERVICES INC.

## SHEKINAH VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

June Edition 2007

Shekinah Homeless Services Inc.  
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### Shekinah Homeless Services Inc:

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- 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
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Shekinah gratefully acknowledges the financial support of DHS HACC, the City of Yarra and would also like to thank GE Commercial Finance for their generous help.

### A word from the Volunteer Program Co-ordinator Dear Shekinah Volunteer

A big apology that you haven't had a newsletter for a while. It seems to have been even busier than ever this year; however I feel that I've been in touch with everyone fairly frequently with news of Shekinah and HACC training and seeing people at training and in the agencies.

#### SHEKINAH WEBSITE

A website for Shekinah Homeless Services is being designed even as I write! This is an exciting development which will enable volunteers to access information and newsletters online, help with recruitment of new volunteers and increase our profile in the wider world.

#### SHEKINAH BALL

The Shekinah Ball will take place on **Friday 16<sup>th</sup> November** in Collingwood Town Hall and will, as always, be a great night of fun & celebration! The theme this year is: Dress in Black & White and, as usual, there will be prizes for the best costumes and hats. Put it in your diary now!

#### TRAINING

As always, I am very impressed by the desire of our volunteers to extend their skills and knowledge by attending training. Thank you to everyone who attends training - I hope you find that it increases your understanding of the issues that our service users are dealing with.

**Thanks to you all!** Hope you're all enjoying your volunteer work and finding it interesting and rewarding.

With regards,  
Gill

Wonderful hats worn by wonderful people at the Shekinah Ball April 2006



**SHEKINAH DINNER**

The Shekinah Dinner will take place on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> July at the Sofia Pizza Restaurant, 857 Burke Road, Camberwell at 7.00pm  
**CHEAP AND CHEERFUL!!**



I thought I'd order a variety of pizzas and pastas (including for vegetarians) and we are asking for a \$10 donation.  
BYO wine (I'll bring some) and pay for your own drinks  
I hope this seems a fair deal.  
If you would like to come, please let me (Gill) know by Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> July

**ALSO - COME & BE SOCIABLE IN THE PUB**

We are launching a new way for people to get together to socialize and network. A social evening will be held every 2 months in a centrally located pub (possibly in Nicholson Street) on a Friday evening, starting in August. All volunteers, staff and friends of Shekinah are very welcome to come along and we hope that it will turn into a standing arrangement. More details soon!

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**AGENCY NEWS**

**St Mary's House of Welcome**

SMHOW will be moving for a while, as their premises undergo some renovations. They will temporary relocate to 34 – 36 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, probably for a period of 12-18 months. It is likely that the relocation will take place towards the end of this year. They are about to launch an exciting new project called Psyche Tube which will enable homeless, (dis) abled users and those with mental health issues to learn digital skills in order to tell their stories. They have also received new funding to run the Day to Day Living in Community Program which is funded through the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing.



**Regina Coeli**

A new wing called Anna House was opened last month at Regina Coeli. The State Minister for Health, Bronwyn Pike, was there to open Anna House, which can accommodate 10 women, and many friends and colleagues attended.

**Mercy Care**

Mercy Care had their annual weekend of training and reflection last month in the beautiful surroundings of Sorrento. Training on Cultural Awareness was given by Josie Prioletti, entertainment provided by those attending and a great time was had by all!

The sad news from Mercy Care is that Angela Reed, who has managed the agency for the last seven years, is leaving. Many thanks to you, Angela for your wonderful work and best wishes for all you do in the future.

**Bethlehem**

Bethlehem Community have recently completed their meditation room, a room for quiet reflection and contemplation. They are still holding Community Lunches on Fridays.



**The Way Community**

One of the residents at The Way Community turned 70 recently; his birthday was celebrated by over forty people with a party at Sophia's.



**VOLUNTEER ARTICLES**

**We have 2 articles about some of the training which Shekinah volunteers have attended recently**

Hello Volunteers,

My name is Christie and I volunteer at Mercy Care. I have to say, the whole volunteering experience from the very start, has been so nourishing (to the soul), and so pleasurable, that I almost feel guilty.



One of the many fabulous advantages that Shekinah provides for Volunteers is the opportunity to do HACC training. I signed up for 3 courses. Gill went to a great deal of effort to squeeze me in, at the last minute, to 'Dealing With Difficult Behaviour For Frontline Staff', 'Managing Violent & Potentially Violent Situations', and 'Understanding Advocacy' (yet to come).

Gary O'Toole, Dealing with Difficult Behaviours..., is one of the best teachers I have ever encountered. He taught us that to acknowledge and validate the 'emotion' behind a complaint or difficult behaviour, is *as vital* as listening to the 'content'. That people who rant angrily usually have only 1&1/2 minutes of verbal outrage in them before they pause for breath, so you may as well let them get it off their chest before trying to speak reasonably. (Mentally ill people may have a lot more!!) Always be respectful and above all, NEVER TAKE THINGS PERSONALLY! Of course there was much much more...

David Cherry, Managing Violent & Potentially Violent Situations, was excellent. He validated all that Gary had said, and took it a step further into more dangerous territory. One of the most valuable things he said, was that when a violent person has appeared to calm down, even if they are crying or being polite, they are still HIGHLY DANGEROUS and should be treated with the same caution as when in full flight. The category 'most dangerous' is the 'Psychotic Amphetamine User'. And people with frontal lobe damage, due to alcohol, drug or for other reasons, become permanently 'dis-inhibited and impulsive' which means they have very little self control; on the up side, they can be distracted more easily due to their impulsiveness. Again, only the tip of the burg!

Thanks Shekinah & thanks Gill. (By Christie Heart, a volunteer at Mercy Care)

**Urban Seed Walk – feedback from Lorraine Levins**

**Lorraine attended the Urban Seed Walk, one of the Shekinah Training sessions this year**

"I really enjoyed the walk. It raised a number of social justice issues for me, the main one being, "Who is my neighbour?" This then raises more questions such as, "What does that mean in my life?" "How I am living and relating?" "What do I need to let go of so that others can have more?"

These questions are sitting there in my consciousness and confronting me on many levels.

I also thought the young man who took the session was charismatic, passionate and inspirational in his commitment to his vocation and the people he serves, as well as getting the message across to us.

He was articulate, used humour well and was just a very good



communicator.

I didn't feel preached at, but I was challenged. I also enjoyed meeting other volunteers and hearing a bit about what they do in their respective agencies. It was great to meet you



face to face and just get a feel for what Shekinah Homeless Services are about (this came through the various questions asked and comments made by the volunteers). I did get to have some small discussions with some people from a few agencies and was impressed by their commitment and care.

Overall, I was touched by the experience and left with a desire to know and do more.

I don't really have any suggestions or other comments to make except to say a very big 'thank you'.

Warm wishes, Lorraine"

### **KAIROS ARTICLE**

Kairos Catholic Journal very kindly helped us out with an advertisement for volunteers and an article, written by Rebecca Cullen, a copy of which is reproduced below.

#### **Shekinah Homeless Services**

#### **A better future for our homeless: Inclusion – Dignity – Hope**

Being homeless isn't simply a case of not having a roof over one's head. A person might have shelter to sleep in, but without safety, security or social support, they are equally disadvantaged. Drug use, mental illness or domestic violence may also be involved, making it difficult to break out of the homelessness cycle.

In Melbourne, there is a network of 10 Catholic agencies that work to support [some of] the thousands of homeless people living in and around the city. The network is called Shekinah Homeless Services. Formed in the 1990's, Shekinah comprises agencies that provide emergency accommodation for homeless men and women. The network also includes day centres that provide meals, social support and companionship, residential aged care facilities and a residential unit providing short-term health care services.

The good work of the Shekinah network is complemented by a willing band of volunteers who each week make a wonderful contribution to the lives of the people they support. Gill Sealby, Volunteer C-ordinator at Shekinah, says there are 230 volunteers working across the agencies in roles ranging from teaching people how to make jewelry to cooking or simply visiting a resident.

"We have volunteers from many different cultures, backgrounds and professions. They range in age from 18 to 80 years, and have worked as plumbers, mothers, teachers, accountants, shop assistants, students, business people," said Gill. "The things they have in common are a concern for other people, the skill of listening without judging, a passion for social justice, the desire to give something back and the ability to 'walk a mile in another person's shoes.' "



A rang of volunteer roles are available across Melbourne, and each volunteer receives ongoing support and training.

### **NEXT TRAINING SESSION**

**ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY** Wed 18<sup>th</sup> July 6pm Supper / 6.30pm Training begins  
383 Albert Street, East Melbourne. Please contact Gill to book in.

**THIS IS A GREAT SESSION AND VERY RELEVANT FOR THE PEOPLE WE SUPPORT!**