

LIVING TODAY

in Mooroolbark and the Yarra Ranges

NO. 61 DECEMBER 2017



A Gift from the Heart

Good news stories from your local community

A Gift from the Heart



Thank you forever.

Those were the words of deep gratitude from a parent who had suffered the tragic loss of a newborn baby, and who had received the gift of photographs to memorialise that precious life.

Too many women and men around the world have suffered the grief of child loss—the heartbreaking, gut-wrenching pain of losing a child. When that child is just a baby—when that cherished life has been so fleeting—there are so few concrete things for grieving parents to hold onto. There's no treasure trove of lifetime memories, and few, if any, photos to memorialise a life well lived. There is no video of the child's first steps, no well-loved and outgrown toys to discard, no prized pictures of birthdays, holidays, or school graduations.

Heartfelt, a non-profit organisation, was born out of a desire to offer comfort to families who have suffered infant and child loss. Heartfelt was founded in 2010 by Melbourne photographer Gavin Blue, and had its origins in an organisation called Australian Charity of Child Photographers, which operated from 2007-2009. Gavin knew firsthand the pain of losing a child, after he and his wife Kelly lost their daughter Alexandra to stillbirth in 2006. Determined to offer other bereaved parents some consolation in the midst of their grief, Gavin knew that having beautiful images that they could share with friends and family would provide a measure of comfort.

Heartfelt brings together volunteer professional photographers who are dedicated to giving the gift of photographic memories to families that have suffered the devastating loss of stillbirth, or who have critically premature



and ill infants in intensive care. Heartfelt also provides services to families with babies and children who have serious and terminal illnesses. The gifts are provided to families with care, compassion, and sensitivity. From small beginnings with just a handful of photographers, Heartfelt has now helped thousands of families across Australia and New Zealand. In 2016 alone, a decade after Heartfelt began, more than 1500 families received a priceless box of memories from Heartfelt.

Heartfelt requests come in two ways: via the parents, friends or relatives who know about

Heartfelt; or via hospitals, most of which are now very familiar with Heartfelt's work. When a family requests Heartfelt's services, the hospital or family contacts the organisation and a photographer volunteers to attend the session at the required location. Because of the importance of the work, photographers often drop everything to get to a session, with some of them making round trips of several hours to meet an urgent need.

The photography sessions are provided free to families, and afterwards the family receives a beautifully presented package containing around 20 prints and a USB with digital versions of the images taken during the session. For grieving families, the gift fulfils a deep need to have a tangible memory of their child. Many parents fear that as time passes they may forget what their child looked like. Some parents in the midst of their shock and grief may not take pictures, only realising the omission later. Sometimes a few snaps taken by hospital staff are the only images a family has of their child. Those snapshots might be of poor quality or filled with distractions such as hospital equipment and inadequate lighting. Having professional-quality photographs gives parents beautiful images that they can share with loved ones, display in their homes, and treasure for a lifetime.

For many parents, these pictures of their children provide comfort and help with the

healing process. One mother said that her Heartfelt photos display the authenticity of her grief and at the same time are "delicate and beautifully respectful of myself and my child." She described the images as "... devastating and comforting, beautiful and sorrowful. They capture all the love and loss and pride and sadness that I carry in my heart. These pictures don't speak a thousand words; they are so much more because they show what it looks like to love enough for a lifetime in just a few hours."

Without the compassion, skill and dedication of its volunteer photographers, Heartfelt would not be able to provide this meaningful service to families.

Lilydale mother of three Adrienne Gilligan has been a Heartfelt photographer for six years. After completing her photography studies, Adrienne wasn't sure what she wanted to do with her new-found skills. When she saw a television segment about Heartfelt, she immediately felt drawn to the idea. "From that moment I thought, that's what I'm meant to be doing—and I've been doing it ever since," Adrienne said. Having her own children makes her involvement especially poignant for Adrienne. "It makes it harder in some ways because I can personally relate to being a mother."

Fundraising is vital for the continuation of Heartfelt's work. The lovingly prepared packages which are provided free to families cost \$65 to produce and are funded by the generosity of donors and by the volunteer photographers, who pay a \$50 annual membership fee. As well as contributing to the costs of the photography sessions, the membership fee helps cover public liability insurance and ensures that a committed membership is maintained.

Many people donate or fundraise because they have lost a child, or have a family member or friend who has. Corporations sometimes choose to sponsor events to raise money for Heartfelt because they have an employee who has been affected by the death or serious illness of a child. Some fundraisers participate in an existing challenge—such as Run Melbourne or Melbourne Marathon Festival—and nominate Heartfelt as the recipient of money raised. Some people feel a more personal connection by donating the exact cost of a photographic session for one or more families, or paying a photographer's membership fee. Heartfelt also has several other projects which look after families suffering bereavement, and financial contributions toward these additional projects are always welcome.

One of Heartfelt's projects is the donation of customised photography kits to neonatal intensive care units and maternity wards, so that on the rare occasions that a Heartfelt photographer is unavailable, the family or hospital staff have access to quality equipment. The kits contain an easy-to-use quality camera suitable for shooting images in low light, a compact printer, ink, and photographic paper. There is also a video tutorial which shows hospital staff how to get the best pictures at

such an important time. Many families who have suffered child loss have contributed the cost of one or more of these camera kits in memory of their child, and the kit is engraved with the child's name as an ongoing memorial.

Heartfelt also offers a service to families whose child passed away some time ago and who have only a few prints or even just a single photograph of their child. Parents are often concerned that their precious images will deteriorate. For these families, the cost of carefully and professionally scanning the images is covered, so that the family has digital copies of the pictures. Heartfelt also has volunteers who can provide skilled retouching of photos taken by the family or hospital when a professional photography session was unable to be organised.

For photographers, coming into a family's life at a time of such intense and personal grief can be confronting. Heartfelt provides training and support for its photographers, especially for their first sessions. Photographers are also motivated and touched by the need and the gratitude of the families whose memories they are preserving. "I wanted to capture with my camera proof that he mattered," one photographer said. "He was here; he was someone's world and he was loved beyond the lifetime he would never have. It was up to me to capture beautiful images for those who loved him."

Adrienne Gilligan, who took the powerful photos of Hayja and her son Khalid which accompany this article, feels honoured to be able to volunteer her time and expertise to help grieving families. "I get so much out of it, probably more than I put into it," she said. "It gives me a lot of life satisfaction." Heartfelt and its photographers don't expect any thanks from the parents, but Adrienne said that when feedback is given, it is very welcomed.

One mother told Heartfelt that the photos taken of her and her baby validate her motherhood, her daughter's short life and all the grief associated with her death. The images give the family a way to continue an emotional connection with the baby despite her absence, and are a testament to the fact that she is very much loved and missed.

"This is her, this is what I lost, she was real, she is my baby," she said. "This is what I grieve. This is what I miss. This is why I'm so irrevocably changed. Because I held her in my arms, but I don't get to watch her grow."

Janet Van Dijk

*Photos this article and cover: Heartfelt
Photographer Adrienne Gilligan*

If you would like to help provide this precious gift to parents, please contact Heartfelt to donate. Donations are tax deductible and allow Heartfelt to provide more services and raise awareness through hospitals, support agencies and media. As the organisation's work becomes more known, there is increased need for photographers and retouchers who are willing to donate their time and skill. If you have the compassion, talent and flexibility for such work, please contact Heartfelt.

The Eastern Baby Expo, to be held on 4 February 2018, will donate all its profits to Heartfelt. More information about the expo is on page 4.

www.heartfelt.org.au

Ph: 1800 583 768





Eastern & Pregnancy & Baby Expo

Jo first started thinking about the need for a suburban baby expo in 2015. As a midwife who also operates her own business as a birthing educator, Jo realised that both businesses and expectant parents were disadvantaged by the lack of a local baby exhibition: parents didn't have easy access to information and products in one central location, and many small businesses couldn't afford the fees associated with having a stand at some of the large city exhibitions.

Jo spoke to her friend Jennifer, who was also enthusiastic about the idea of a local expo. Before long, they had added Nicole and Lauren to their group, and the organising committee for the Eastern Pregnancy & Baby Expo was born. Jo, Jennifer, Nicole and Lauren are all mothers and business owners who understand the importance of providing relevant, up-to-date information

and products to expectant parents. Since the first glimmer of the idea in 2015, they have held two baby expos, and are busy planning the third event, to be held in February next year.

The first baby expo was held at the Mooroolbark Community Centre in 2016, and was followed by another expo in February this year. The third Eastern Pregnancy & Baby Expo will be held on Sunday 4 February 2018 at Ringwood's Karralyka Centre.

All profits raised from the event will go directly to Heartfelt, to support its work in providing the gift of photographic memories to families who have suffered stillbirths or premature births, or who have children with serious and terminal illnesses.

Knox Private Hospital is a major sponsor of the event, and will have a stall providing information about its services. Other sponsors are Weleda, the Whitehorse and Yarra Ranges *Your Child* magazines, and Anything Baby Canterbury, which specialises in baby equipment hire.

The family-friendly event will run from 9 am to 2 pm and will include a wide variety of exhibitors, providing information about birthing, natural therapies and other topics relevant to expectant parents. There will also be hands-on

When Jo Fullerton was expecting her first child, there was no local event which provided information about babies and baby products in the eastern suburbs. By the time Jo was pregnant with her second child, the eastern suburbs had its own baby expo—thanks to Jo and three of her friends.

demonstrations and stalls selling goods and services such as photography, toys, clothes, and eco-friendly baby products. There will also be giveaways, show bags and children's entertainment. The \$5 adult admission fee includes entry into the raffle to win one of the door prizes. Entry for children is free.

Putting the expo together for the last three years has taken a lot of time and effort for the organisers, but they believe it's a worthwhile commitment. "It seems to be something that is needed out this way," said Jo. They are also very excited to be able to contribute, once again, to non-profit organisation Heartfelt. The first expo in 2016 raised more than \$2,900 for Heartfelt, and almost \$5,000 was donated after the expo in February this year—an amount that will enable 75 families to benefit from Heartfelt's services.

"Because I am a midwife, I have looked after many families who have lost their babies and I have seen Heartfelt's beautiful photos," said Jo. "I know how important it is for the families to have those lovely photos, and the fact that they offer that service for free is really special."

Janet Van Dijk

For more information, take a look at the expo's website or Facebook page:

facebook.com/EasternPregnancyandBabyExpo
easternpregnancyandbabyexpo.com



Gavin Blue and Adrienne Gilligan of Heartfelt receive a cheque for nearly \$5000 raised by the 2017 expo. Presenting the donation are Nicole Higham, Lauren Stockley, Jennifer McCartin, and Jo Fullerton.

Partnering with the Community

Sometimes people ask why Mooroolbark Christian Fellowship publishes the *Living Today* magazine, or why we are involved in providing free family activities and contributing in various ways to the local community.

It's simple. Mooroolbark and its surrounds have a lot to offer, and its residents lead busy and interesting lives. Our magazine aims to shine a light on the good that is happening and the wonderful—but not always well-known—people who call the Yarra Ranges home.

Too often we may be all too willing to offer a critique of what is going on around us in

the local community. However, we know that there is much good to celebrate, which may often go unnoticed. So, in order to help build the community and make others aware of the good things in the neighbourhood and the tremendous people that call this area home, we offer this magazine as a gift, no strings attached.

Each of us has a story to tell. We all have dreams. In highlighting local people and their stories and dreams, we hope to help strengthen the community, both locally and further afield.

Stories in *Living Today* focus on locals who are doing extraordinary things, or

residents who are simply living what may seem like ordinary lives year after year, yet with remarkable outcomes. We also write about community needs and issues, about local businesses and about community groups that add their unique flavour to the area. Many of our articles, ideas and photos come from readers—so thank you for your involvement! We would love to continue receiving your ideas and input.

We look forward to continuing to partner with you in fostering the positive spirit of this wonderful community!

Matthew Gudze
Lead Pastor, Mooroolbark Christian Fellowship

No Barriers—Future Possibilities...

Andrew Lang, who has been the chairperson of the Celebrate Mooroolbark committee for the last eight years, stepped down from that position this year, but will continue to coordinate the talent quest—Red Earth Unearthed—which will take place on Friday night 23 March before the festival the following day.

During Andrew's eight years of leadership, we have seen festival attendance grow from 500 to 10,000 people! Big changes have occurred in the running of the festival over the years, including the festival becoming an incorporation, and establishing our own website and Facebook page. Many of our functions have also moved to the internet—we now have online application forms for the stalls, the parade and the talent quest, as well as online banking and online advertising for volunteers to help with the organisation of the festival. So thank you, Andrew.

While some key members of the committee have resigned due to ill health or other issues, we also have committee members who have been with us year after year. One such member is Yolande Pickett, who was hired in 2010 as our administrator, and last year was promoted to festival coordinator. Yolande has been the driving force behind Celebrate Mooroolbark, and much of the success of the festival must be attributed to her.

Without Yolande's flair and enthusiasm, her seemingly endless energy, her organising skills and her constant encouragement, the festival would not be where it is today. As we thank Andrew for his commitment and calm demeanour in times of crisis over the years, we also take this opportunity

to thank Yolande for her part too.

This year we are building the festival around the theme of *No Barriers—Future Possibilities...*

Mooroolbark is a diverse community of people of different ages, socioeconomic positions, needs and capabilities, and ethnic and cultural backgrounds. In 2018, we will be working

towards accessibility to the festival for all members of our community. We are seeking groups that care for differently abled individuals or minority groups to come on board to educate and assist us to discover better ways to practice inclusion and encourage involvement.

We will be placing a strong focus on advancements in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines, and the way they have developed and interrelated with our lives to open up future possibilities and break down barriers we face. For children, we are highlighting the fun in learning with robotics, coding, engineering and animation. The world as we know it is changing to make it easier for people to overcome the barriers that limit them—what is the future going to look like?



Yolande Pickett, Celebrate Mooroolbark's festival coordinator

Barbara Austin
Chairperson Celebrate Mooroolbark

■ Croydon Citizens' Bands

Carissa Sianidis

The Melba College Theatre was filled with music and congratulations on 11 November as the Croydon Brass Band held a special event to celebrate its win at the Australian National Band Championships earlier this year. Under the musical direction of Melina Benger, the band won the championship's D-grade competition in Launceston in April. This is the band's first win at the national competition.

"I'm still smiling even now," said Melina, who has been involved with the band for 15 years. "With the concert we just wanted to share with our family, friends and community a bit about our journey to Nationals."

In fact, the Croydon Brass Band's win was just one of several successes for the Croydon Citizens' Bands in 2017. The Croydon Wind Symphony also won both the B and C grade competitions in the Victorian State Band Championships. These were exciting accomplishments for the bands, which usually focus on community performances rather than competitions.

The Croydon Citizens' Bands are a collection of local musicians organised into three bands: the Croydon Wind Symphony, Croydon Brass Band, and Croydon Concert Band. The three bands and their 70 members are a regular fixture at local concerts, community events and festivals. In December they will be



The Croydon Brass Band after its national win earlier this year

performing at various carols nights in the lead-up to Christmas, including the Carols by Candlelight in Mooroolbark.

Since 1962 the Croydon Citizens' Bands have been growing and welcoming musicians of all experience levels. The group aims to provide "an enjoyable musical, organisational and social environment in which members of the community may participate." The bands offers a low-cost opportunity for people to get involved with music, hire instruments, and be part of a community that loves music. "What we're really about is people having a good time together by making music. In Croydon we pride ourselves on being the 'friendly

band'," said Melina with clear enthusiasm.

In addition to being a celebration of their success, the concert in November kicked off the Croydon Brass Band's fundraising efforts as they look towards their next challenge. The 2018 National Band Championships will be held in Melbourne, and the band is hoping for a hometown victory to follow its success this year. The band is already in rehearsals for the competition, but the focus remains on enjoying the process. As Melina said, "The most wonderful thing is the people. Music is meant to be shared."

Gilbert Langford (Gil) met Joy five years ago and because of a dream they both had of starting their own business, they connected with each other. After years of talking and planning together, the couple created Langford's Patisserie in Manchester Road.

The Langfords Patisserie staff, including Gil and Joy, are highly trained and skilled in their field. Among the staff are trained baristas, a cake decorator, a chef, and pastry chef. There is also a qualified baker in artisan bread—the bakery has a sour dough culture which they call Matilda and which they 'feed' every day! The patisserie makes its own cakes, quiches, pies and sausage rolls with natural ingredients such as top-quality flour, Belgian butter, and chocolate. The display windows under the counter in the shop are full of mouth-watering cakes of different shapes and sizes, all reasonably priced. There are also plans ahead for other ventures!

Gil, who comes from New Zealand, originally moved to Australia at the age of 18 to try gold prospecting. As he was interested in cooking, Gil eventually decided to do an apprenticeship and trained at the William Angliss Institute, after which he worked and

travelled in Europe as a chef for 12 months. On his return to Australia he worked in many places, finally staying at the Cuckoo Restaurant in Olinda for 23 years.

Besides running their business, Joy and Gil have six children between them, ranging in age from 17 to 24. They have also registered with Make-a-Wish, an organisation that helps children with cancer or other life-threatening illnesses to realise their wishes. One little boy wanted a birthday cake with a strawberry theme, so they carved and decorated a cake to look like a large strawberry, bringing a lot of pleasure to the little boy.

Langfords Patisserie also donates its end-of-the-day bread to underprivileged and homeless families and gives cakes to Nourish Network, which also assists such families. On special occasions such as Easter and Mothers' Day, Joy and Gil bake and decorate fresh themed cakes to give to Nourish Network.

Gil and Joy wouldn't have mentioned their involvement in community outreach if I hadn't already been aware of it. With such a generous and caring spirit, they are sure to be a welcome part of the Mooroolbark community for a long time!

Barbara Austin



Gil Langford in front of some of the delicious items offered by the patisserie

Langfords Patisserie is located at 48 Manchester Rd, Mooroolbark and is open Monday to Friday from 6 am–6 pm and Saturday 8 am–4 pm.
Ph: 9727 0022

Website: langfordspatisserie.com.au
Facebook: facebook.com/langfordspatisserie

Food and Fun

The Mooroolbark shopping precinct was the place to be on 2 September as the second annual Mooroolbark Food Festival took place. The event, in the heart of Mooroolbark, allowed retailers and community to connect together over food and entertainment.

The festival, which was organised by the Mooroolbark Traders and Community Group (MTCG), encouraged locals to learn more about the fantastic food offerings in Mooroolbark. The relaxed setting encouraged residents to stroll through the shopping precinct, exploring local food outlets, meeting the vendors and sampling their creations. There were a variety of food tastings on offer, from local to international cuisines, and meat and vegan options. Many cafés showcased their sweet treats, with Langfords Patisserie hosting a Donut Day.

Although the focus was on food, there were plenty of other activities for both adults and children. Children were invited to complete a 'trail chart', collecting stamps when they found matching pictures in shop windows along the main streets of Mooroolbark. At the end of the trail, children submitted their

completed charts for the chance to win one of several prizes. Other free activities for children included origami making, yoga, and a toddler gym provided by Gymbaroo. There were interactive demonstrations of yoga and Bollywood dance, as well as product demonstrations, market stalls, and information about topics like sustainability and ethically sourced food. Funds were also raised to help preserve the dignity of homeless women.

On the veranda of The Terrace shopping centre, award-winning jazz-folk group The Bean Project kicked off the music festivities. Later, contemporary singer-songwriter Kimberley Wheeler and three-part harmony and acoustic group SPARKS performed for the crowds. Other entertainment was provided by Alizarin Belly Dancers and Bimbadeen Primary School's Chinese dragon. Flambé the Chef also provided a light-hearted diversion as he mingled with the crowd.

"We loved seeing The Terrace so alive and filled with people again, and with live music filling the streets and roving performers dotted around," said coordinator Yolande

Pickett. "Mooroolbark enjoyed a bit of a buzz on the street. Next year we'd love to see more food outlets involved and increased activity on the streets."

MTCG President, Geoff Earney, called the food festival "a great success." He continued, "With some small changes next year's festival will be even bigger and better than this year."

Janet Van Dijk

If you'd like to be involved in next year's event or have ideas to contribute, please share them on the Mooroolbark Facebook page or message the page directly. You can also write to info@mooroolbark.vic.au or Mooroolbark Traders and Community Group, PO Box 131, Mooroolbark VIC 3138



**Lions Club
of
Mooroolbark**

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Living Today in Mooroolbark

The Statues That Walked



We've probably all seen pictures of the famous half-buried monumental stone statues on Easter Island. But have you ever seen them move? It seems impossible, doesn't it? Yet clearly they didn't arrive at their present locations by magic. So how did they get there?

As it turns out, they got there by walking.

That's right. Archaeologists have concluded that the islanders actually 'walked' these massive monuments to their final destination from the quarries where they were carved, by using ropes and teams of workers to rock them from side to side, slowly moving them inch by inch across the island. All it took was a few ropes and a few dozen people working together, and something that would seem impossible became possible.

And that got me thinking. There are so many tasks in our lives today that can seem the same way. To one person, they're overwhelming. Taking on the planning, coordination, or the execution of tasks can seem like staring at a massive, Easter Island-sized statue, and being told to move it. That can look impossible! Yet Paul reminds us: "So let us not grow tired of doing what is right, for in due time we will reap, if we do not give up."¹

Paul understood the persistence it often takes to see any results. He knew that it is imperative to keep going through the setbacks that are often inevitable in carrying out the tasks life sets before us. But Paul also knew and trusted in the continuing support of Jesus by his

Spirit. And so he remained faithful, whatever the task before him.

He also knew that we can't 'go it alone'. That weariness he talks about kicks in much more quickly if we try to. That's why it's such a blessing that we are all able to be supported and helped by others and from above. Just like moving a statue across Easter Island, what seems impossible becomes possible. That's how Christ works, and it's how we should work too.

So the next time you're facing an 'immovable statue' of a task, don't just stand there staring at it. Grab some ropes, and some help, and see that statue walk!

Joseph Tkach
from *Speaking of Life*

¹ Galatians 6:9

A Great Contribution to Community Life

It is with sadness that we farewell St Francis in the Fields Anglican Church, which held its last service in October this year, and extend our thanks to Fr Andrew Lang and his wife Louise for their service to the community.

Many Mooroolbark residents were disappointed to learn that the Anglican Church had decided to close St Francis in the Fields, in Hull Road. This was reportedly due to falling numbers in the congregation and also to a decision to incorporate the buildings and grounds of the church into plans for the redevelopment of St John's Park Hostel, the residential aged-care facility in Reay Road.

Andrew Lang has been vicar of St Francis since September 2007. In the ten years since his appointment, Andrew's presence has been strongly felt, not only through his parish relationships and pastoral responsibilities, but beyond these parameters. Many local residents have come to know Andrew and his wife Louise very well through their extensive involvement in various aspects of community life.

Andrew and Louise have both enjoyed a long association with the Scouting movement, and have had a considerable impact on our local scouting group. There has been a significant growth in the number of young people

participating in the Mooroolbark Scouting Group during that time. For five years Andrew has held the position of Group Leader, which includes responsibilities such as training and overseeing the work of other leaders within the group. During the same period Louise has held the positions of Cub leader and District Commissioner for the Yarra Ranges District. In addition their daughter, Esther, has worked closely with Venturer Scouts (aged 14-18). Although the family has now moved to Donvale, they plan to continue their contributions to the scouting community until the end of this financial year.

During the past ten years Andrew has also become well known locally for his extensive involvement in other community activities. He has been a member of the Celebrate Mooroolbark committee for most of that time and has been committee chairman since 2009. Since 2008 the festival has grown from an attendance of 2,000 to over 10,000 in 2017. Andrew has enjoyed working closely with so many dedicated participants in that committee and the way that different people and groups were able to contribute so much to this major community event. He has also been actively involved in the Mooroolbark



Umbrella Group (MUG) since its inception and has made considerable contributions to Mooroolbark's Annual Planting Day, to the Kids Hope Aus mentoring program and the Red Earth chaplaincy at Bimbadeen Heights Primary School. He has also been involved in the local Ministers' Fraternal, a regular meeting of church leaders in Mooroolbark.

We look forward to hearing where the next stage of Andrew's life leads, and wish him well. Our best wishes also go to Louise in her ongoing role as coordinator of Homeless Services for Anglicare. Eventually, the couple plans to return to their home state of Tasmania and to enjoy their long-held dream of retirement life in their beachside home in Scamander.

The Lang family's significant contribution to community life in our neighbourhood has been very much appreciated by all those who have come to know them. They will be greatly missed.

Doug Lewis

Consider the Consequences

Do you as a parent or carer have a particular piece of advice that has become your 'call sign'? Something that you say frequently that people think of as 'your' saying? Perhaps it's a pithy comment that expresses a truth, or a core principle for living. My mum used to tell me, "Honesty is the best policy." I don't know why she felt she needed to often remind me of that!

I quite like the old adage, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it!" But there's a better one that's well suited for today: "Just because we can, doesn't mean we should."

One saying that is never out of date is "Consider the consequences". We live in such a fast-paced world that sometimes we don't slow down enough to give proper thought to what we are doing. In Australia, we have access to the internet almost everywhere, and phone calls are just a button press away. We can take a picture and send it wherever we want in just a few seconds, or stream a movie or song. Really, it's amazing what we can do with our connected devices.

Everything seems to be 'smart' these days—our phones, TVs, cars, Myki. Everything, it sometimes seems, except us! The more we rely on technology, the dumber we get. Or, perhaps

I should say, the more we have technology in our world, the less inclined we are to choose, design or even imagine our own future. Don't you sometimes feel less empowered to call your own shots, make your own decisions and set your own path—or the path for your children? The future seems increasingly uncertain, and somehow, less relevant to much of the population.

A wise person told me recently that one of the most common mistakes people make is failing to consider the consequences of their decisions or actions. With current technology we can make things happen very quickly, so it becomes increasingly important to carefully consider how to respond to various situations. We need to stop ourselves and think before we act: to get into a frame of mind that is calm so that we can then weigh up our next step. Many times, when faced with a demanding situation, we make it worse by rushing in and reacting in an emotional way instead of *responding thoughtfully*.

So, what does all that have to do with the future? Our personal future is influenced by both the world around us (including the choices of others), and the outcome of our own decisions. While we often have little control of our surroundings or the decisions of other people, we can put careful thought into the

consequences of our own choices.

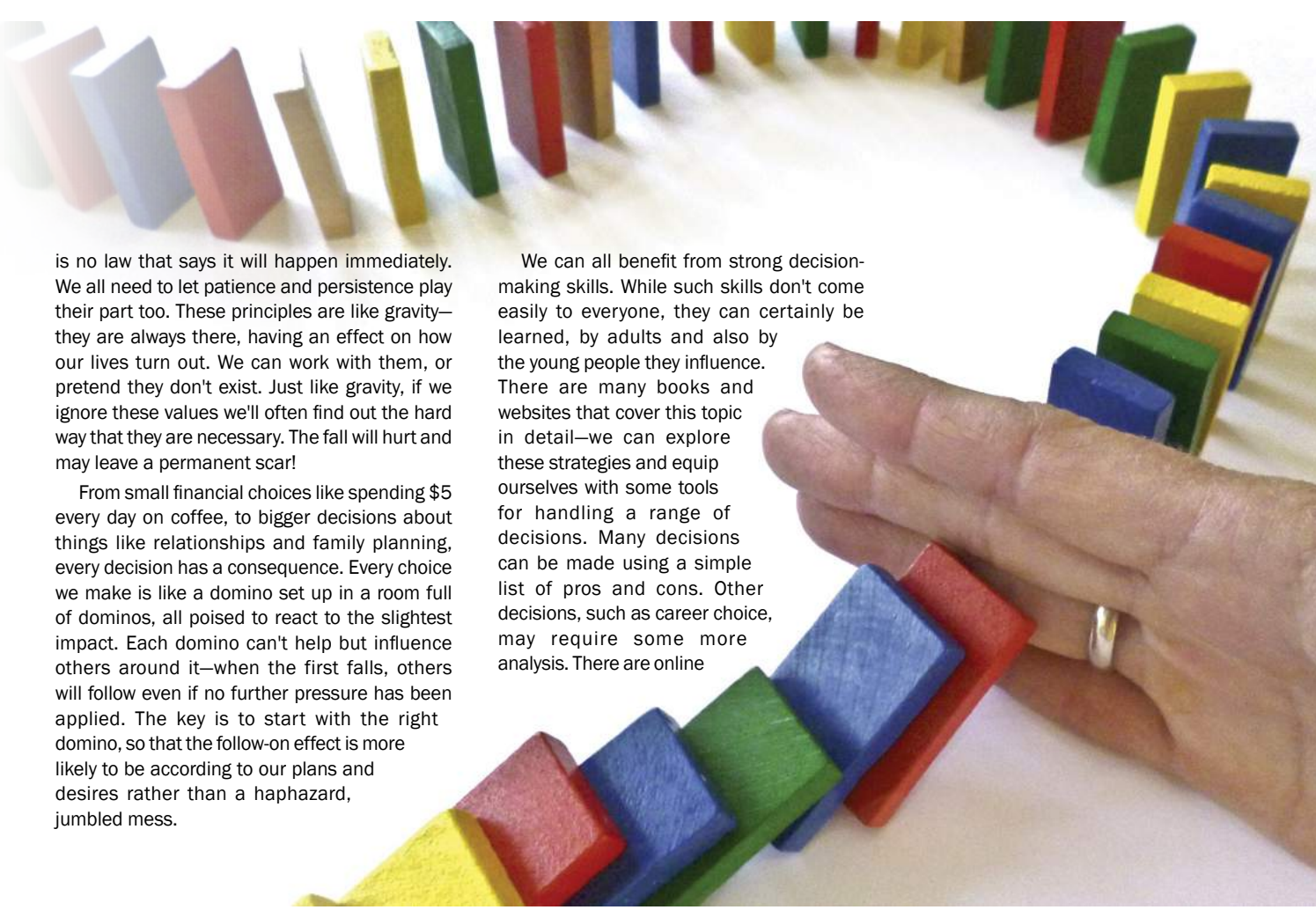
My mother passed away recently, at 96. She had stopped telling me about honesty decades ago—however, her words have remained with me. Her repetition of this important truth when I was younger has been something that has helped me throughout my life. Likewise, we can implant the idea to "consider the consequences" in the minds of our young people. What a great concept to grow up with—one which is likely to positively affect the lives of our children and those around them for years to come.

Youth is a period of life when we encounter many important crossroads in quick succession. Some of our choices are minor and need little thought, but other decisions can have long-ranging effects. This makes it a prime time to help our young people learn skills for making careful, thoughtful and deliberate choices about their lives. We can help them to establish the habit of taking some time to pause and calm themselves, to weigh up the pros and cons of any plan and carefully consider how their choices will influence their future as well as that of other people.

Every action has an outcome. If we do nothing, we often get nothing back. If we put in effort, eventually we'll get a reward. There



PHOTO LEFT: PRAWNY/CHRISTINE SCHMIDT PHOTO RIGHT: PRAWNY/CHRISTINE SCHMIDT



is no law that says it will happen immediately. We all need to let patience and persistence play their part too. These principles are like gravity—they are always there, having an effect on how our lives turn out. We can work with them, or pretend they don't exist. Just like gravity, if we ignore these values we'll often find out the hard way that they are necessary. The fall will hurt and may leave a permanent scar!

From small financial choices like spending \$5 every day on coffee, to bigger decisions about things like relationships and family planning, every decision has a consequence. Every choice we make is like a domino set up in a room full of dominos, all poised to react to the slightest impact. Each domino can't help but influence others around it—when the first falls, others will follow even if no further pressure has been applied. The key is to start with the right domino, so that the follow-on effect is more likely to be according to our plans and desires rather than a haphazard, jumbled mess.

We can all benefit from strong decision-making skills. While such skills don't come easily to everyone, they can certainly be learned, by adults and also by the young people they influence. There are many books and websites that cover this topic in detail—we can explore these strategies and equip ourselves with some tools for handling a range of decisions. Many decisions can be made using a simple list of pros and cons. Other decisions, such as career choice, may require some more analysis. There are online

Our children look to our example. So, how do we respond when we've got a decision to make? Do we seek advice from those around us—maybe older people who have been in similar situations before? Do we carefully consider our options? Or do we go by gut feeling and do the first thing that comes into our minds? Do we make snap decisions and worry about how it will work out later? Do we delay our response so long that other people or circumstances make the decision for us?

guides that can make it easier to weigh up multiple factors of importance. It may also be helpful to seek further information, guidance or professional support in some situations.

By setting an example and providing support, we can help our young people establish skills and confidence for dealing with a range of challenging circumstances. The potential for success or failure is immense, affecting almost every area of life: health, wealth, mind-set, self-worth,

employment, and relationships.

Taking the time to think through our actions is not only better for us as individuals, but also for those we interact with. If we teach our children and teenagers to anticipate the consequences of their actions, the outcome of their careful choices will benefit our families, our communities, and even our nation.



● Steve Steel

Carols by Candlelight

**Hookey Park
Friday 8 December**

6:30 pm Dinner in the park—food van on site or BYO
7:50 pm Enjoy the sound of Croydon Citizens' Brass Band
8:00 pm Community carols, including performances by local schools

Food for sale at family-friendly prices—including the famous Lions Christmas Fruit Cake. Bring your own rug or chair. Battery-operated candles for sale. Parking available at rear of the Terrace Shopping Centre, Mooroolbark.



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In July, Pembroke Primary School in Mooroolbark welcomed Megan Ganter as its new principal. In addition to nine years' experience as an assistant principal, Megan has worked for the Chemical and Biological Science faculty at the University of Queensland, developing innovative science curriculum. Megan is passionate about Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education, and has led initiatives such as Primary Connections Science, BullyStoppers and eSmart accreditation, and Scientist in Schools partnerships with CSIRO, Deakin and Swinburne University. She has also been involved with the implementation of the new Victorian technologies curriculum, which includes engineering design challenges, computational thinking, cybersafety principles, and coding and robotics. She is looking forward to sharing her expertise with the students and teachers at Pembroke, inspiring the next generation of scientists, engineers, inventors, entrepreneurs and mathematicians. Megan has shared with us her excitement about the future of Pembroke Primary School:

■ It is an honour and a privilege to be appointed as the new principal at Pembroke Primary School. The school, nestled in beautiful natural surroundings on Pembroke Road, is a place where students are encouraged to reach their potential, and to learn and play in a safe and supportive environment. Our school motto is 'Learning Together with Pride, Passion and Purpose.'

Since opening in 1965, Pembroke Primary School has seen many changes. Most recently, the school was the recipient of a \$2.2M School Pride building grant, which has provided an opportunity to build state-of-the-art teaching and learning spaces. The project includes new classrooms, library, a STEM classroom, and new staffroom and administration spaces. There are also basketball/netball courts and landscaped outdoor play areas and amphitheatre.

program called Alphabeenies. The program, which was developed in conjunction with Monash University, invites all local kindergarten children to attend our school each week to learn about school and develop early literacy and numeracy skills.

At Pembroke Primary School we aim to develop the whole child, emphasising the reinforcement of English and mathematics skills, enhanced further through inquiry learning and specialised instruction in the arts, physical education, health and STEM. We value both academic achievement and each student's ability to develop social, interpersonal and 21st-century learning skills that will enable their future success.

Most importantly, we want school to be fun! We organise many great activities such as Jellybean Café in the STEM room where students love working

much loved by all the students and are cared for by families on weekends and school holidays. They have just begun to lay eggs, much to the delight of our students!

Links to the community. We are very fortunate to have many local community members, volunteer groups, local businesses and dedicated parents who generously give their time to support the school.

One such group of volunteers are the Kids Hope mentors, who come each week to work with individual students and help them with their learning. Many of our mentors have had a long-standing relationship with Pembroke and are passionate about our school community.

Local community organisations and businesses such as Candlebark Nursery, Conservation Victoria



The school upgrade included new classrooms and library

Our students love our new classrooms and facilities. "The classrooms are spacious so there is plenty of room to do your work," said Finn, while Imi referred to the new facilities as "more modern and professional." Johnathan and Austin were among the students who commented that they like the STEM room, where they can act and film in front of the green screen. Students also like the shady, sun-smart outdoor areas.

It was immediately obvious to me when I first came to Pembroke Primary School that there are three elements that make it such a special place:

We care about our students! At Pembroke Primary School, students are at the centre of everything we do. Our highly dedicated teachers and support staff work tirelessly to ensure that all students are challenged to do their best in a safe and happy environment. We invest in the professional development of our staff to continually improve our teaching practices and, as a result, we have a number of successful programs which positively enhance the engagement, wellbeing and academic success of our students.

Pembroke runs a very successful Prep transition

on their Minecraft worlds and other technology projects, Tiggy Club, book-swap afternoon, dress-up days and school choir. We also listen to what our students would like to do and encourage student-led initiatives such as our student BEE ECO club.

Beautiful natural surroundings to enjoy. Our extensive grounds create lovely natural play spaces where students can engage in imaginative play, building cubbies and amazing creations in the sandpit. Having such an amazing yard also allows our students to learn about their natural environment and care for the plants and animals which share our school. I am so lucky to be able to look out my office window and enjoy the cockatoos and rosellas nesting in our large trees and watch the bees buzzing by!

Led by community member Yolande Pickett, we have established a Diversity Garden, an area we have beautified with rock garden edging, native plants, and plants which are traditionally grown in the gardens in Burma, which is where many of our families originate. A popular addition this year to the Diversity Garden was the conversion of an old bike shed into our chicken coop! Our chickens are



Plants indigenous to Mooroolbark were donated to the school by Candlebark Nursery

and Boral have also played an important role in supporting ongoing projects such as the Diversity Garden and Bush Regeneration Project. We recently held a working bee and built 35 metres of rock wall to create a border around our Bush Regeneration area. What an amazing achievement!

Each year we participate in Celebrate Mooroolbark and have a reputation for our beautiful parade costumes. Our students also engage with the community through events such as the Montrose Rotary Speech competition, in which one of our talented students won first place this year for her inspiring speech titled "It's OK to be Different."

In November our school held a Twilight Market and Community Open Night, with local stall holders and community groups, as well as fun activities for everyone. It was a great chance for us to showcase what a wonderful community we have at Pembroke Primary School.



Megan Ganter
Principal
Pembroke Primary School

On an uncharacteristically warm day in October, a crowd of students, teachers and guests gathered on the grassy banks of Billanook College's Brushy Creek to celebrate the official opening of the school's newest building, the \$1.75M Mastery Centre. Beneath a vivid blue cloudless sky, Board Chairman Dr Gerard Calnin anticipated that the new centre would be a place of wonderment, an area where students could grow and share the beauty of the world. He encouraged students to be accomplished and inquiring learners. "Your teachers, your parents and the board hope that it becomes a centre for aspiration," Dr Calnin told the students. "We hope that it inspires you to learn, and motivates you."



Billanook College



PHOTO: JANET VAN DIJK

The Mastery Centre, which looks out onto spectacular views of the natural landscape of the campus, is the fourth of seven major building developments at the college as part of the Strategic 7 Year Building Program. The centre focuses on key teaching and learning spaces and is set to become a vital learning hub for students in years 7 to 9, who will have a true middle-school precinct for the first time in Billanook's history.

Middle School Captains Marc Feltham and Keely Zentgraf also addressed the assembled crowd. Keely mentioned the importance of middle school students "learning, playing and collaborating" with one

another in the same location. Mark noted that already, after just a week of using the new centre, the friendship bonds between students of different year levels were growing stronger.

Principal Roger Oates commended staff and students for their patience during the construction phase and thanked those involved in the project, including those benefactors who donated to the building fund. Principal Oates then introduced former Billanook College Board Chair Chris Brown to officially open the Mastery Centre. As the birds warbled overhead and the breeze gently stirred the leaves of the native trees, Mr Brown referred to the Billanook campus as "paradise" and spoke of his honour in being able to witness another step in



the life of the college.

At the close of the ceremonies, students and teachers returned to their usual activities while guests had the opportunity to tour the state-of-the-art Mastery Centre. A group of students from years 7, 8 and 9 conducted guests through the facility, which incorporates classrooms, open-plan learning areas, staff offices and a new purpose-built library together in a contemporary, spacious building filled with natural light. The Mastery Centre is certainly, in the words of Principal Oates, a fabulous addition to the school.

■ Janet Van Dijk

Schools Unite for Friendship



Edinburgh
College
Primary



PHOTO: EDINBURGH COLLEGE

Caitlin sits on the friendship seat, which was built by Jaymie, Lachlan, Aidan and Ben

A collaboration between two local schools has led to the building of a special seat for students who are feeling lonely or sad.

Caitlin Campbell, a Year 5 student at Edinburgh College, learned about 'friendship seats' from her mother. Caitlin loved the idea and spoke to her school principal about the possibility of having such a seat at her school. The friendship seat concept originated in Britain and has since been adopted in schools throughout the world. The seat, which is usually brightly coloured, is a place children can go if they are feeling sad or left out. When someone sits on the seat, other students can invite the child to play with them, or teachers can check whether everything is okay. The seats promote a sense of inclusion by increasing friendship and kindness among students.

Building the seat was the ideal task for a group of Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) students at Mooroolbark College. The students were looking for a project for their Personal Development Skills class, which required them to undertake a community project. A BBQ at Mooroolbark College raised funds for the building materials, and the VCAL students went to work making and painting the seat. In September, the bright yellow seat was presented to Edinburgh College.

Caitlin thinks the friendship seat will be especially helpful for prep children and for those who are new to the school. "I think other schools should do the same thing, because kids would probably make more friends," she said, "and if everyone made friends, there wouldn't be any bullying."

A Jewel in the Terrace

Early in our married life, when our finances were stretched, my wife and I used to pick fruit from a couple of trees that grew about where Terry's Meats has its premises now. We'd get out the Fowlers bottling kit and, as a family, wash the bottles and prepare and preserve the fruit for winter use.

We were sad to lose those trees when the block of land was cleared to make way for The Terrace shopping centre¹, which was built to allow the expansion of Mooroolbark's thriving business and shopping precinct.

In its heyday, The Terrace was a vibrant shopping complex that attracted Brett and Lois Clarke when Brett, a fully qualified manufacturing jeweller, decided to start his own business close to home in 1986.

Brett grew up in Victoria, living in Port Melbourne as a child before his family moved to Forest Hill. Brett went to school

Brett completed a four-year apprenticeship, working with jeweller Geoff Ince in Elizabeth Street in the city, in what was then known as the Beehive Building. A Google search for 'Ince Jewellers' reveals a line advertisement from *The Age* newspaper in 1980. The text reads: "JEWELLERY WORN OUT? Engagement rings remade, general jewellery repairs. Geoffrey Ince. Flr. 5, 94 Elizabeth St., Melb. 63 2957"². It seems such a long time ago that Melbourne phone numbers were six digits!

At the conclusion of Brett's apprenticeship, a great job opportunity opened up for him in Perth. "The Perth contract with the large firm of Ian J. Brown gave me the opportunity to learn more, by working with a larger number of other qualified jewellers," said Brett. It also gave him the opportunity, as a fully qualified jeweller, to help train two new apprentices. "I enjoyed the change of scene

talking and went on a date and the rest is history. I enjoyed her laugh—she's a very vibrant, funny person, and we found that we had a good friendship going."

For a time, Brett worked from home doing work for retail shops, before deciding to try retailing himself. He remembers looking for a suitable premises close to home.

"I was attracted to Mooroolbark in the first place, because it was a very community-minded place and it had that 'country' feel about it," said Brett. "It felt good, was well established—like a village—and The Terrace at that time was a really nice little centre."

"I think The Terrace was about three years old when I started. The centre was full. It was buzzing. It had a Treasureway, Half Case Warehouse, Leo's Menswear, a shoe shop, record shop, butcher, baker, fruit shops and many others. Eventually, Half Case Warehouse was taken over by Tuckerbag supermarkets—later becoming Festival for a while and finished up as IGA."

Now, sadly, the interior of The Terrace echoes to the footsteps of occasional shoppers visiting the few remaining businesses. In spite of the loss of foot traffic, Brett's 31-year-old business, Terrace Jewellers, continues to do well. "We're still going OK," Brett said. "We're hopeful that the supermarket will be filled sometime next year, although at this stage there's not much more to go on than a bit of hearsay. We just need to wait and see."

"The first two years starting out with the business were the hardest years, and then we had a bit of a lull in the nineties, but ever since then, it's been good, despite the decline of much of the local retail sector. For example, there's no longer a menswear shop in Mooroolbark, or a shoe shop or newsagent, but I've witnessed an increase in the number of coffee shops and hairdressers in the town. There's been a small increase in business due to the development of more units around the shopping precinct."

"When my time is finished as a jeweller here in perhaps five or ten years—and I wouldn't want to set up anywhere else—I would like to leave the way I came here. I'd like to leave seeing The Terrace once again as a vibrant shopping centre. I think most traders want the same kind of outcome! There's a lot of feedback and suggestions



at Parkmore and then Vermont High, and in 1975 took up a jewellery apprenticeship. Jewellery making seemed a good fit for Brett, who had been very good at metal work at school and wanted to do something with his hands.

and the adventure that my two years in Perth provided."

Returning from Perth, Brett met and soon married Lois, who has now been his wife for 32 years. He said, "We met in the city one night when I was 22. Lois was with a girlfriend and I was with a friend. We got

¹ Regular readers may recall that I referred to the property (Mundai) and its Edna-Walling-designed garden in issue 41 pp. 2-3.12. livingtoday.org.au/uploads/LivingTodayIssue41.pdf

² newspapers.com/newspage/121361624/



travel, music, and breeding goldfish.

I hope you'll take the time to visit Brett at his shop. According to his website, "Since establishing Terrace Jewellers in 1986, Brett Clarke has been designing and manufacturing custom jewellery for thousands of satisfied customers in Mooroolbark and the surrounding areas. Brett will work closely with you to develop and

about how to get the Terrace up and running again—updated and modernised as a village centre, rather than a 'monstrosity' like Eastland."

I asked what Brett meant when he described Mooroolbark as "a community-minded place." His answer not only describes his own business philosophy but also highlights something that is frequently missing when the quest for profit leads to the creation of ever bigger retail warehouses. This, in turn, often results in depersonalised shopping experiences, which can lead to an unintentional reduction in the health and vigour of local communities.

When I asked Brett what 'community' means to him, he responded, "Loyalty! People become not just your customers; they become your friends, as you identify with people. People aren't just 'numbers' who walk into your shop and walk out again after you've made a sale. Through my work, I like to help people feel good about themselves and feel happy with what we do, rather than simply selling them something as an end in itself. And this loyalty works

both ways—as you care for people, in turn, people loyally keep coming back to you. And that was the vibe I picked up from other traders in the centre when we started out."

One way that Terrace Jewellers enjoys contributing to the community is by providing vouchers to local groups for school trivia nights and other fundraisers.

While I interviewed Brett at his shop, several customers came in. It was instructive watching the interaction. Brett has an easy amiability about him: a relaxed, genial friendliness and obvious desire to be helpful. It's my belief that Brett's business has survived because he's good at what he does—skilled in his trade, but also wanting to build a friendly relationship with his customers.

Business success doesn't come without hard work. I was surprised to learn that most days Brett arrives at eight in the morning and leaves twelve hours later at eight in the evening. On Saturday, he works until about 2 pm. It's no wonder, then, that on Sunday he enjoys a complete break and plays golf. His other interests include family,

design a piece of jewellery that meets your every need. Whether you're looking for something classic, modern, simple or detailed, Terrace Jewellers can help you find the perfect piece to match your style and your unique personality."³

When you visit, you'll discover that the layout of the business is interesting, too. Brett works in full view of the customers. His workspaces provide extra fascination, with tools and bits and pieces adding to the overall atmosphere. In the nicest possible sense, it's an old-fashioned kind of shop. There's an absence of 'slick', but in its place is Brett's engaging helpfulness. Here's a man who obviously enjoys creatively practising his craft in this small—hopefully soon reinvigorated—shopping centre where he can know his customers by name.



Randall Bouchier

³ terracejewellers.com.au/

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PHOTO: PHARM/TEEL.COM.AU

The Circle of Life

Intergenerational Playgroups

■ Kate Chivers

Watching a child dance, sing and laugh is, for many of us, one of life's chief delights. For some elderly people, however, especially once they make the move to an aged-care facility, there is limited opportunity to engage with children. They may not have the health or mobility to spend time in the community, or their families may live interstate or overseas, reducing the opportunity for visits. There are also many children growing up without spending much time with their grandparents or other older relatives.

The idea to bring seniors and small children together for their mutual benefit has led to the formation of playgroups throughout Australia which are attended by young children, their parents, and elderly people. These 'intergenerational playgroups' give both children and senior citizens the opportunity to play and socialise together in a way that is enjoyable for everyone.

Intergenerational playgroups are often conducted in a retirement village or aged-care facility, and draw together

up to three generations to participate in activities centred around play, music and having fun. The sessions are structured in a way that promotes interaction between the

children and residents: for example, children will hand out musical instruments or puppets to the senior citizens, who will help the children to learn the songs and actions.

Relationships are forged to familiar musical favourites such as "Do Re Me", "Rocking Robin" and "The Hokey Pokey". Children, parents and residents sing along, play percussion instruments and dance or tap their feet to the tunes. The joy and enthusiasm that the children experience during play becomes

contagious, making the sessions an uplifting occasion for everyone involved.

There are many benefits for the elderly residents, some of whom experience memory loss or other health concerns. The classic children's songs are often remembered from their youth and are therefore more easily retained, giving residents with memory loss a feeling of competence and mastery. As well as enjoying the new experience, the residents often find that the time with children can reignite recollections of time with their own children or grandchildren—helping to keep these memories active for a little longer. Being with joyful, bubbly and enthusiastic young people also helps to lift the mood of the residents, making the day a little brighter. The children and residents energise each other.

Intergenerational playgroups help children and older people understand each other better. Mum-of-three Kate Gobbe attends

an intergenerational

playgroup in Montrose, run by hey dee ho music.¹ For Kate, one of the advantages of the playgroup is that it changes the stereotype that children sometimes

have of older people. Kate's children enjoy being able to see the senior citizens "having fun and getting just as involved as them, playing instruments, singing and dancing." After her first session, Kate's daughter Imogen said, "I loved to see the old people so happy." Kate commented that in fact some of the older people start out "looking anything but happy," but by the end of the session "they are joining in and loving it."

~ Paulo Coelho

A child can teach an adult three things: to be happy for no reason, to always be busy with something, and to know how to demand with all his might that which he desires.

We didn't realise we were making memories; we just knew we were having fun.

~ Winnie the Pooh

Claire Slattery, who attends an intergenerational music playgroup with her son at a Freemasons Aged Care Centre, has been surprised by her emotional response to seeing her child forming connections with the residents. She described the experience as

"truly heart-warming". Claire continued, "It's hard not to think about how they, too, were probably once young parents with gorgeous babies of their own, and their lives ahead of

them. It really makes you think about the circle of life."²

There are also many advantages for the children who attend, some of whom may have very little involvement with older people. The children can enjoy 'performing' for the residents, revelling in the extra attention and praise they receive. As they get to know the residents over time, they can come to see certain favourite residents as their friends, and look forward to catching up at the group next time.

Lisa Dangerfield attends a playgroup based in an elderly care facility in the Yarra Ranges with her daughter Mia. Lisa has noticed how much Mia enjoys learning about the residents and sharing in their lives. She said, "We get to sing and dance and play music with the residents and there are just smiles all around... We make new friends and Mia gets such a great life experience."

Intergenerational playgroups create community connections that promote health and wellbeing across three generations. Through music, dance and play, the older people have an opportunity to engage with and influence the next generation.

² Claire Slattery, "Experience Pure Enjoyment at an Intergenerational Music Playgroup". *The Weekly Review*, 20 June 2016. theweeklyreview.com.au/live/intergenerational-music-playgroup

¹ heydeeho.com.au/programs/intergenerational-classes

Spend Your Summer Indulging in the Arts

We all love the weather as it warms up, making it easier for us to venture out into longer days and pleasant nights. The Mooroolbark Community Centre is a wonderful hub for craft groups, art at the Red Rock Gallery, school holiday activities and terrific performances.

Don't miss **The Melbourne Welsh Male Choir** this December. With sold-out performances for five years running, Australia's most acclaimed male choir is returning to the Mooroolbark Community Centre for the much-anticipated annual Christmas celebration. This truly splendid 60-voice ensemble delivers a world-class program, having toured the USA, Canada, and the UK, including the Royal Albert Hall and Wales' own Cardiff Arms Park, where they performed with Tom Jones and Dame Gwyneth Jones.

Professor Jan Highfield, of London's Guildhall School of Music and Drama, called it "the best choir I've heard in Australia" and said the

choir has a "unique ability to engage and hold its audience."

There will be two performances on Sunday 17 December, at 11am and 3pm. Come along and also enjoy a complimentary afternoon tea at interval.

Summer also means the kids are on holidays, so drop in and keep them happy at Mooroolbark Community Centre's **children's pottery classes**. Let the kids get their hands terrifically dirty, have some fun and create a masterpiece to take home. Also—no screens involved—perfect! These workshops, held in the last week of the school holidays, are ideal for children between the ages of 5 and 12 and are about 45 minutes long. Bookings open on 18 December. Please call 1300 368 333 for more information.

If you want to venture further afield, there's a not-to-be-missed exhibition at the Yarra Ranges Museum in Lilydale. **Charity: Melba's Gift Book of Australian Art and Literature** will celebrate the work of some of Australia's most important and well-known artists and authors. Come along and discover how they helped our 'Queen of Song' create *Melba's Gift Book of Australian Art and Literature*. Original works from this popular book, published in 1915 in aid of the Belgian Relief Fund, will be showcased. Explore the idea of charity, what it meant in wartime and what it means today.

"Among the many 'Gift Books' published by eminent personages in aid of the different war funds, Madam Melba's book, issued by the great songbird... is easily the best." *Blue Mountain Echo*, 13 August 1915.

Brook Powell

For more information on the activities listed here, and those still to be listed, please go to www.culturetracks.info or call into Mooroolbark Community Centre at 125 Brice Avenue, Mooroolbark.



PHOTO: YARRA RANGES COUNCIL

School holiday craft sessions are always popular

Protecting and Reviving Green Community Space at Montrose

Anna Chisholm



PHOTO: PATRICK KIRKBY / CREATIVE COMMONS 2.0 GENERIC (CC BY-SA 2.0)

Eastern rosellas, along with other birds and wildlife, have been returning to the Richards Reserve

Four years after 500 towering pine trees were removed, Richards Reserve has regenerated with feathered friends, possums and echidnas returning to call the Montrose site home.

Pinus radiata continues to be one of Yarra Ranges Council's significant weed threats, with winged seeds that can travel from a parent tree. Following requests from residents and environmental volunteer groups, the council's Trees and Bushland team removed the pine trees in May 2013.

Yellow-tailed black cockatoos have returned to feast on the seeds of blackwood trees. The native plant cherry ballart has naturally appeared and eastern rosellas have been spotted since the removal.

More than 6000 native indigenous plants from volunteer-based Candlebark Community Nursery have been planted by council employees, contractors, environmental volunteers, schools and families over the past few years. The Friends of Richards Reserve and Montrose Environmental Group have supported weed control and planting works. Mount Evelyn Christian School and Montrose Primary School also participated in planting.

Councillor Len Cox said a network of trails had been developed at the reserve following community consultation, enabling locals to walk through the reserve and connect to nature.

"The grassy area provides locals with a designated dog off-lead area," Cr Cox said. "Wetlands have been established here to manage drainage

and to provide a habitat for frogs and birds. We have heard reports of an echidna taking up residence in the reserve and scratchings along the trails show their daily routine search for ants."

Cr Cox said council harvested the pine logs which were sold to a local mill in Millgrove and overseas, offsetting the tree-removal costs.

The state government supported the project with a revegetation grant through a peri-urban weed program. Friends of Richards Reserve members Robyn and David Dobson advocated to Monbulk MP James Merlino with council to secure the funding.

Cr Cox and the Friends of Richards Reserve group are continuing to remove a small number of pines which are still on the site.

Upcoming works include fencing renewal and trail maintenance, ensuring the reserve is safe for walking.



PHOTO: YARRA RANGES COUNCIL

Cr Len Cox, Friends of Richards Reserve member David Dobson, and Council Bushland Management Officer Jess Baillie.

Community Events Calendar

First Sunday of each month	Farmers Market: Bellbird Park, Swansea Road, next to Lillydale Lake. Combined Rotary Clubs. All proceeds to local and overseas projects. Contact Bill Sutherland: 9727 0037.
Friday nights during school term	Fridays@Kids Domain: Activities for primary school age kids. 4-6 pm. Oxley College stadium. Details: phone 9726 8111 or www.lmc.org.au
Monday evenings each week	Scottish Country Dancing: Mondays 8 pm (except public holidays). Beginners and experienced. Minimal charges. St Margaret's Uniting Church, Hull Road. Enquiries: 9725 9074.
Second Monday of each month	Mooroolbark Country Women's Association: 1 pm at St Margaret's Uniting Church, Hull Road. New members always welcome. Contact Helen Linnie: 9726 0477.
Thursdays during school term	Music Together Program: 0-5 years. Run by trained music therapist. St Margaret's Uniting Church 9:45 am. Morning tea & playtime included. \$12.50 per session per family. Call Yvonne: 9726 9347.
Thursday evenings each week	Maroondah TOWN Club: (Take Off Weight Naturally). Weekly, starting at 6:30 pm. St Margaret's Uniting Church. Hull Road. For more information call Kaye: 0414 984 062.
Wednesdays during school term	Kilsyth Primary School Playgroup: Painting, story time, activities and games for children birth - 3½ years. 9:15 am. More info: 9725 4320 or kilsythps.vic.edu.au
Tuesdays & Thursdays	Mooroolbark Men's Shed: 9 am-3 pm. 91 Swansea Road, Montrose. For more information please contact President John Lowry on 9726 9970 or 0419 366 969, or via Facebook.
8 December	Community Carols: Hookey Park, Mooroolbark. Picnic dinner from 6:30 pm, carols start 8 pm. 7:50 pm Croydon Citizens' Brass Band. BYO rug or chair; food & battery-operated candles for sale. More details page 8.
9 December	Carols at the Lake: 6:30 - 8:00 pm Lillydale Lake, near the community house. Free. Hosted by Mooroolbark Salvation Army.
15, 16, 18, 20, 22, 23 December	Photos with Santa: Outside Mooroolbark Library, by the Hookey Park playground. BYO camera and snap away! Free. For times & dates see: mooroolbark.vic.au/event/christmas-in-mooroolbark-2017
17 December	Santa's Fire Truck Tour: From 10 am. Mooroolbark CFA will chaperone Santa through the streets of Mooroolbark. Dependent on weather, so check Facebook for updates: facebook.com/MooroolbarkCFA
17 December	Melbourne Welsh Male Choir: 11 am & 3 pm, Mooroolbark Community Centre. Tickets \$18/\$15 concession. Bookings phone 1300 368 333 or online: culturetracks.info .
25 December	Christmas Day Service: 9 am, St Margaret's Uniting Church, 219 Hull Road, Mooroolbark. Enquiries: 9723 7323.
21-28 January	Children's Pottery: Time TBA. Ages 6+. Cost \$12/\$6 library member. Mooroolbark Community Centre. Tickets \$18/\$15 concession. Bookings phone 1300 368 333 or online: culturetracks.info .
4 February	Eastern Pregnancy & Baby Expo: 9 am-2 pm Karralyka Centre, Mines Rd, Ringwood. Entry \$5 (kids free); all proceeds to Heartfelt. Stalls, information, demonstrations, give-aways. More details page 4.
23 March	Red Earth Unearthed: Talent Quest. Mooroolbark Community Centre; commences 7:30 pm. Entry \$5 per person.
24 March	Celebrate Mooroolbark: Your local community festival. 10:00 am - 4:00 pm. Red Earth Community Park, Brice Avenue.
January, February, March	Urban Harvest: Backyard fruit and vegetable growers—swap your excess produce. Red Earth Community Park, second Saturday each month, 10-11:30 am. Enquiries: Claire Coutts, 0425 700 280.

Our Community Events calendar offers a free service to local clubs and organisations.

To include entries for your group's community events in future issues please contact Doug Lewis on 9761 1121 or email calendar@livingtoday.org.au

Note: *Living Today* is distributed quarterly—in the first week of March, June, September and December. Calendar entries need to be submitted one month prior to the distribution date.

LIVING TODAY in Mooroolbark

Production

Living Today in Mooroolbark
is produced by Mooroolbark Christian Fellowship, with the help of local volunteers



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Publication

Published quarterly
as a service to our community
by Mooroolbark Christian Fellowship

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Distribution

11,500 copies distributed throughout Mooroolbark
in March and September and 2,500 copies
distributed in June and December. Also
available online at livingtoday.org.au

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Like to contribute?

If you have a good news story about people or groups
who are an inspiration to the community, please contact
the editor on our church-office phone number or by email
(details above)

PDFs of this issue and all past issues
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MISSION STATEMENT

To contribute towards and to help to foster
a *growing community spirit* within our
neighbourhood.

We seek to achieve this by:

- highlighting the many positives within our community
- encouraging partnership in community initiatives
- contributing to the process of identifying and addressing community needs and concerns

OUR SPONSORS

Living Today greatly appreciates the valuable
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through this magazine. Their financial sponsorship
makes the magazine possible, and we gratefully
acknowledge those partners in each issue.