

The **Bethany** brief

issue No. 1 april 2003



Bethany brings Christmas cheer to Geelong

More than 600 clients who are supported by Bethany attended Bethany Community Support's 2002 Children's Christmas Party at the Geelong Botanic Gardens on Friday 29th November last year.

Partygoers included 330 children between the ages of 3 months and 17 and more than 300 parents, guardians, carers, aunties, uncles or grandparents.

This is the first year Bethany has been able to provide a Christmas Party for all the children who access our services. The event was made possible by the generosity and support of local businesses like Bay FM, KFC, Target and Kevin Paisley Fashion Eyewear. It was their commitment and enthusiasm, which made the event entertaining and enjoyable for all involved.

Bethany's Chief Executive Officer, Aileen Ashford said it was fantastic to see the faces of all of the children in sheer wonder at the adult characters, especially the Cat in the Hat, the excitement of running egg and spoon races and three legged races, searching for the treasure hunt and the sheer joy of Santa arriving.

"The highlight for me was meeting the families many of whom I do not get to see in my role and this gave me a real sense of the people that my staff work with. Many adults and children told me of how much they like and have appreciated their workers and the support they receive," Aileen said.

Earlier that day, more than 80 community leaders, politicians and welfare organisation staff decorated 25 Christmas Trees at the launch of Christmas in Geelong at the 21st Century Garden at the Geelong Botanic Gardens.

Bethany Community Support and Bay FM initiated Christmas in Geelong in the aim to highlight the meaning

of Christmas and its significance to the people in Geelong and the surrounding districts. In particular, the event demonstrates community partnerships between the local and state government, businesses and the welfare sector.

Each decorated Christmas tree at the launch was transported to various locations within the region and acted as Giving Trees. Bethany Community Support and Bay FM allocated the Giving Trees to Barwon Family Resource Centre, BAYSA, Glastonbury Child and Family Services, MacKillop Family Services, St Laurence Community Services, Kardinia Women's Service, Salvation Army, Zena Collective, Community Connections and BYAS.

More than 800 gifts were donated to the Giving Tree Appeal ensuring that individuals and families who were experiencing difficulties in their lives had something for Christmas.

Bethany Community Support would like to thank the following organisations for their support of the Children's Christmas Party and/or the Christmas in Geelong Giving Tree Appeal: Bay FM, Kevin Paisley Fashion Eyewear, Target Australia, Bunnings Warehouse, Corio, United Way, Surf Coast Shire, Golden Plains Shire, Waterfront Carousel, City of Greater Geelong, Geelong Botanic Gardens, Christian College, Bendigo Bank, KFC, Cadbury Schweppes and Bulla Cream.

In addition, Bethany would like to say a special 'thank you' to all the individuals in Geelong who contributed to the appeal.

Plans for the 2003 Children's Christmas Party and the Christmas in Geelong Appeal are underway.

New Innovative Family Support Service for Geelong

In November last year, the Department of Human Services awarded Bethany Community Support funding for the Geelong Supporting Vulnerable Families Innovation Project. This project is a significant initiative by the Government as a step towards the revision of the way family services are to be delivered in the future.

With this funding, Bethany will have the opportunity to both enhance the direct services for vulnerable families and work towards the improvement of the network of services that support families within Geelong.

In particular, Bethany will work closely with the Department of Human Services' Protective Services staff to decrease notification of families to Protective Services, as well as to prevent the re-notification of clients back into the system.

The program works with families who have children aged 0 -18 years where the family is experiencing difficulties. It builds on family strengths to support the family to care for their children and meet their children's developmental needs, as well as to enhance their resources.

The Intergrated Family Support Service (IFSS) is a child-centered, family focused program, paying particular attention to the safety and well-being of children within the family context.

Families using this service may have a broad range of issues that affect parenting including: child behavioral issues, substance abuse issues, family violence, homelessness, emotional health and financial.

An exciting part of the IFSS program will be the development of the Family House. The Family House will provide clients, in particular women, with a safe environment to seek information, advice, skills and support for themselves and their families.

The house will act as a hub for various activities for the families, including gardening, cooking, hobbies, group activities and parenting programs.

It is hoped that the Family House will be operating mid year. Currently Bethany is seeking funding, support and sponsorship to enable the Family House to be implemented.



A Message from Bethany's Chief Executive Officer

Aileen Ashford

Welcome to the first edition of the Bethany Brief. We hope that this newsletter will provide you with some snapshots of the work that Bethany does to strengthen and support the community.

Christmas was a very special time with the launch of Christmas in Geelong. In conjunction with businesses and welfare organisations we supplied the community with giving trees, which enabled them to give to those people who have limited means enabling them to truly celebrate Christmas.

The enormous generosity and commitment of Geelong businesses to Bethany was reflected in their support of the Children's Christmas party, which was a true celebration of the joy and magic of Christmas through children's eyes.

To support vulnerable families, we have established an innovative family support service which helps provide families with the skills and necessary confidence to care for and nurture their children. The challenge for us will be to connect many of these isolated families into the community. We hope to do this through the development of the Family House. If you, your community group or workplace would like to partner us in this vision we invite you to contact me through Melita, Community Relations Manager on (03) 5278 8122.

As an organisation we look forward to the challenges that lie ahead and continuing our work in the community. We also embrace the opportunity to develop a partnership with you and welcome new relationships that assist us, both financially and in kind, in building a cohesive, just and compassionate community.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aileen Ashford'.

Former Deputy PM to award Geelong Father of the Year

Plans are underway for the 2003 Geelong Father of the Year Award. Last month Bethany secured former deputy Prime Minister and National Party Leader, Tim Fischer, as this year's keynote speaker.

Chief Executive Officer, Aileen Ashford said she anticipates that Mr Fischer will capture the attention of the Geelong community, in particular the business community.

"Mr Fischer's retirement from the position of Deputy Prime Minister because of family reasons, prompted many members of the community to reflect and review their work and family priorities. We were delighted when he agreed to share his experiences with the people of Geelong," Aileen said.

Bethany Community Support initiated the award four years ago as a way to celebrate the important role men play in families and to promote Bethany's Men and Family Relationships Program. The award is a community partnership between Bethany, the Rotary Club of Geelong and the Geelong Advertiser.

Each year children from the region are invited to submit in one hundred words or less why they think their father, or father figure, deserves to be Geelong's Father of the Year. Last year the award attracted more than 500 entries from children as young as 4 and as old as 34.

The Geelong Father of the Year Award is the only event of its kind in Australia and was identified as a 'best practice example' in the Family Relationship Skills Training Program Report by the Commonwealth Government.

The success of the award reflects the increasing support and need for Bethany's Men and Family Relationships Program. Last year more than 700 men had accessed the program, which is seven times the number of men in 2000.

The program offers men individual counselling and group based support for a variety of issues, including: anger management, communication skills, fathering skills, divorce and separation, loss and grief, and family violence.

For more information about the Men and Family Relationships program or the Geelong Father of the Year Award contact: Community Relations Manager, Melita on 5278 8122.

2003 GEELONG FATHER OF THE YEAR AWARD. Friday 5 September 2003, 7.00am for 7.30am, Alex Popescu Room. Tickets on sale August.

Volunteering at Bethany



Family Support Volunteer, Kelly Hyland, was so inspired from working as a volunteer at Bethany Community Support that she applied for a place at Monash University to study social welfare.

"I was inspired from working as a volunteer at Bethany and it helped me to decide what I wanted to do with my life when my children start school. So last year I applied for a place at University and this year I am entering my second year of study," Kelly said.

At 32 years of age, Kelly is the youngest Family Support volunteer at Bethany and has been working with families who access the program for two years.

Kelly says her motivation sprung from receiving Centrelink payments, as she felt like she should be giving something back to the community.

"I couldn't just sit on my back side and take the money. I had to do something," Kelly said.

All volunteers at Bethany are required to participate in training to equip them with skills to help within the program.

This training includes: confidentiality, communication skills, teamwork building, positive parenting, nutrition, loss and grief, legal issues, drug and alcohol abuse and commitment.

"I loved the training and learnt so much," Kelly explained, "But the beauty of being a volunteer is that you are always learning. The benefits of volunteering goes both ways, I'm putting in and helping a family, at the same time I am getting a lot back."

Kelly is married with two young girls, aged three and six. She said that her work at Bethany has taught her many parenting skills and it has reinforced that parenting is very hard work.

"I don't think that anyone can say that parenting is easy. For the families who access Bethany's service, it can be a lot harder because they have several other issues to deal with in their life," Kelly said.

The volunteer training staff at Bethany make it very clear that the volunteering is not always easy and Kelly explained that the work can be quite draining and frustrating.

"That's why we meet regularly with the other volunteers and our family key worker at Bethany. They are a fantastic supportive group. Without each other we would not be able to deal with the issues that some of our families face," Kelly said.

More than 36 families benefit from volunteers at Bethany each year. Currently Bethany has 14 active Family Support volunteers, but are in need of at least another 16.

If you think you are volunteer material please contact Bethany's Co-ordinator of Volunteers on 5278 8122.

Message from the Community Relations Manager

Melita Mansfield

As Aileen mentioned, this is the first edition of the Bethany Brief. At Bethany, we believe it is important to inform the community about what we are up to and what we have planned for the future. This newsletter has been made possible by the support and generosity of the teams at Creative Force and Snap Printing.

As a not-for-profit organisation, Bethany is dependent on the goodwill and contributions from people in the community. On behalf of the board and staff, I would like to extend a special thanks to the individuals and organisations who have contributed to Bethany in the last quarter, in particular:

- Geelong Chapter Harley Owners Group
- Bay FM
- Buckley's Entertainment Centre
- Target Australia
- Sphinx Entertainment Centre
- Maxwell Collins Real Estate
- Jack Brockhoff Foundation
- Tuckers Funeral and Bereavement Service
- Wighton's Lawyers
- Ryan Carlise Thomas
- Geelong Performing Arts Centre

The board and staff at Bethany recognize we are one of many not-for-profit organisations in Geelong, thus we always try to give back to the community in some way. Last month's World's Greatest Shave for a Cure is an example of this.

More than half of the staff at Bethany coloured or shaved their hair in the aim to raise funds for the Leukaemia Foundation. We were inspired to participate in the event because one of our staff members was recently diagnosed with a blood disorder called multiple myeloma.



The board and staff at Bethany Community Support were proud to support the 2003 World's Greatest Shave for a Cure.

Thanks to Price Attack, Bay City Plaza, who donated cans of blue and orange hairspray and Melanie Hynes from Shapes Hair Design who donated her time to shave off two female staff members' hair. Together the staff raised more than \$1,000 for the cause.

I would also like to take this opportunity to wish United Way a happy 50th birthday. Since 1954 United Way has raised more than \$25 million for health and human care services throughout the Geelong region.

Bethany has been a beneficiary of United Way since its inception. In its first campaign, United Way (known then as the Community Chest) raised 26,150 pounds, with 2,234 pounds going to the Bethany Babies Home. I encourage you all to support the special events arranged by United Way as part of the 50th Campaign Celebrations.

If you are interested in finding out more information about Bethany you should consider having one of our staff members present to your community group or organisation, or I can meet with you personally. You can arrange a speaker or meeting by contacting me directly on tel: 5278 8122 or send an email to: mmansfield@bethany.org.au

About us

Bethany Community Support is a dynamic and diverse human services organisation that has a significant presence in the Geelong community and the wider welfare sector. The organisation is more than 130 years old and in this time has evolved to adapt to community needs.

The agency offers a broad range of services to families and individuals in the areas of family support, men and family relationships, parent education, problem gambling, relationship education, disability and special needs, families and single women who are homeless, children's contact for estranged parents, domestic violence, and support and information for victims of crime.

How can you help?

You can help Bethany to continue to work in your local community by becoming a partner or making a donation. For more information contact Community Relations Manager, Melita Mansfield, on 5278 8122.

Proudly sponsored by:



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