

The **Bethany** brief

issue no. 7 Winter 2005



Geelong footballers, Henry Playfair and Tom Harley meet the kids at St Francis Xavier Primary School.
Picture courtesy of The Geelong Advertiser

Feeling Safe, Being Strong

Geelong footballers, Henry Playfair, Tom Harley, James Rahilly, David Haynes went back to school to help promote Bethany's "Feeling Safe - Being Strong: Building Healthy Relationships," project, aimed at providing all children with an understanding of and the skills to deal with violence.

The players were on hand to assist Bethany project officer, Joy Schmidt and teachers as they conducted a series of activities in the classroom to encourage healthy ways of dealing with violent situations including bullying and violence in the home.

The "Feeling Safe, Being Strong" program is being delivered to children in grades three and four in Rosewall PS, Corio PS, Corio West PS and St Francis Xavier PS and is based on the 'Schools Domestic Violence Preventative Strategy' which is broadly implemented in the United Kingdom.

The three year UK pilot programme (Trangham Debonairre - 2002) found that by offering skills, support and assistance through

activities specifically designed to prevent violence, healthy children were more able to learn and to participate in school life.

The Bethany Community Support project works in conjunction key local primary schools and relevant community service organisations to support children who may experience some degree of violence and to promote healthy relationships.

Bethany Project Officer, Joy Schmidt, has been working with local teachers in the four identified schools and is seeing a positive impact on child development.

"In our Australian project delivery, we use the Australian Echidna as the symbol or mascot. The strong protective spines of this animal enable it to feel safe when threatened. Children can take this image and be encouraged to develop skills to enable them to build stronger healthier relationships," she said.



VALE - BILLIE KIRBY

It was with great sadness that we heard the news of the passing of one of Bethany's much loved volunteers. Billie Kirby has been a Volunteer Family Support worker with families at Bethany since 1999. We remember Billie as a wonderful, caring and honest person who touched our lives and the lives of our families. Billie's contribution to Bethany helped us all learn more about ourselves and was always completed within the generous spirit of volunteering.

Police Commissioner Launches Victims of Crime Program

Victorian Police Commissioner, Christine Nixon was in Geelong on Friday 3 June to launch the new Barwon Victims Assistance and Counselling Program.

The program is a partnership between Barwon Centre Against Sexual Assault and Bethany Community Support and provides a wide range of information advocacy and support services to victims of reported and unreported violent crime.

The new service was established in November 2004 as a result of the Review of Services to Victims of Crime and the subsequent recommendations made by the Victim Services Taskforce. Victims of violent crime who accessed the program during the first six months of operation were 72% female and 28% male, with three predominant crime types presented:

- Sexual Assault 35%
- Assault 25%
- Family Violence 14%

Other crime types included: aggravated burglary, homicide, attempted murder, kidnapping, threats to kill, culpable driving and stalking.

The program aims to assist victims to make informed choices and to enable recovery from the effects of violent crime.

Below: Victorian Police Commissioner, Christine Nixon with Aileen Ashford, Bethany board members, Brian Edward; Sarah Leach and Bethany President, Gerard Mulally



Parenting Support For Mums And Dads With A Disability

Parenting is a learned skill that we keep developing as our children grow older. Having other parents to talk to about raising our children is often something many of us take for granted. But for some parents, who may be experiencing difficulty in other areas of their lives, this support network is not naturally there.

Bethany Parent's Group began as "mum's group" in 2004 for mothers with learning difficulties and different needs that weren't being catered for in mainstream parenting groups. As the group was consistently well attended and enjoyed, the program has been extended to include fathers and now is attended by up to 25 people.

The group meet fortnightly over lunch, in a friendly and supportive setting of a community centre. Discussions focus on effective parenting skills and the group provides an opportunity for positive interaction between mums, dads and their young pre-school aged children and babies. It also gives the parents a chance to share examples of how they use these skills at home and often generates other useful ideas for group members to try.

Bethany Group Facilitator, Helen Grant said including fathers in the group work has proven to be a useful tool to enhance the growth of positive family relationships.

"Group members certainly enjoy the social aspects of getting together and seem to thrive on the fun time with their own children and partners. The women certainly enjoy having the men involved, but more significantly, the interaction between dads and their children is proving extremely effective in learning parenting skills," Helen said.



Above: Margaret Bee (third from left) in the kitchen with the NEWPIN mums

Volunteer Profile - Margaret Bee

Margaret joined the Family Choices team as a volunteer worker in 2003 and has made a big impact in her time at Bethany. Coming from a large family network of her own (Margaret has 4 daughters and 10 grandchildren), Margaret brings a wonderful life experience and empathy to share with young mums involved in Bethany's NEWPIN program.

"Raising 4 daughters, I know the importance of self esteem in young women. You need to build their confidence by developing trust and celebrating their success - no matter how big or small," Margaret said.

Since coming to Bethany NEWPIN, Margaret has been instrumental in developing the cooking program with the young mums. Margaret attends the program every second Tuesday, working side by side with the women, allowing the mums to show their care for their children by providing nutritious meals made with love.

"I have shared some of my own family recipes with the girls and at the moment we are cooking with themes, which is great fun," Margaret said.

Bethany Volunteer Coordinator, Sue Dicker, said Margaret's smiles and gentle words of wisdom had endeared herself to many.

"Margaret is a wonderful, committed and gentle woman with many years experience in caring and assisting families in need. We are very grateful for Margaret's positive outlook on life and her belief in people's abilities," Sue said.

Bethany volunteers provide invaluable assistance to families in our Family Choices Program, who have children aged between 0-18, where the family may be experiencing difficulties. This work may include practical support with transport, parental guidance and assisting in group-work.

Bethany Community Support will be holding an information session for people who are interested in becoming a Volunteer Family Support Worker on 12th July 2005. RSVP Essential

If you would further information please contact:

Sue Dicker
Volunteer Coordinator

Ph: 5278 8122

CEO's message



We have had a busy couple of months with the launch of new programs and the involvement of the Geelong Football Club players in the work that we do. This is possible due to the Murray Nugent Charity Program co-ordinated by the Geelong Football club and United Way, we are grateful for their support. The players are encouraged to actively participate in programs which has provided them with unique insights into the social issues that our community faces.

One of the major issues in our community is men seeking assistance for emotional health issues. Over 600 men access Bethany's men's program each year. Our new feature "What's happening in our back yard" (Page 4) provides you with an insight into these issues.

As part of our work with men we have commenced a new program with primary schools to encourage Dads (father figures) to develop stronger relationships with their children.

I hope that you will join with us in celebrating the role of men in families at our Annual Geelong Father of the Year Breakfast on Friday, 2nd September 2005.

Finally, I ask that you take the time to fill in our readers survey enclosed in this edition. This will ensure we keep you informed on what is happening at Bethany, but more importantly in our community that we all share.

Aileen Ashford
Chief Executive Officer

Below: The Geelong Chapter of the Harley Owners Group presented Bethany Community Support with a cheque for \$1000, raised by its members through the sale of commemorative pins and raffle tickets. The Harley owners group has been a long time supporter of the Geelong Community, well known for its annual Christmas toy drive from the Bellarine Peninsula and through Geelong. Pictured on bikes is Brett Garlepp, Brian Brownnett and Rob Lochrie and from Bethany, Robert De la Lande and Kathryn Howe.



WHAT'S HAPPENING IN OUR BACKYARD.

Bethany Community Support and its clients are YOUR neighbours.

We share the same concerns about our community and recognise the importance of working together to build a better place to live for our children and families. Bethany runs a number of programs in the Greater Geelong region that assist our community's most disadvantaged.

Did you know that over 600 men access support each year from Bethany's Mens program, of these:

- 47% have emotional health issues
- 37% have relationship difficulties
- 17% have family violence issues
- 50% live alone separated from their families
- 80% are in the 25-35 year old age group
- 90% feel socially isolated
- 52% are in full time employment

The majority of these men cherish their relationships with their children and want to be good fathers, the most important thing to them is to be a better father than their own father was to them.

We Want To Hear From You!

Enclosed in this edition of the Bethany Brief, you will find a Reader's Survey. Please take a minute to fill it in and tell us about what you want to know in regards to Bethany and its programs. You can also complete the survey on-line. Go to www.bethany.org.au And Click On The Reader's Survey Link.

Advance Notice-

Make sure you have Friday 2 September marked in your diaries for the Geelong Father of the Year breakfast, to be held at Skilled Stadium. In the next couple of months, children from across the region will be invited to send in their entries for why their dad should be Geelong's Father of the Year and the announcement will be made at a special breakfast on the 2nd September. Keep an eye out in the Geelong Advertiser for more details.

Geelong **Advertiser**

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Please accept my cheque of \$ _____ or debit my credit card for \$ _____ Bankcard Visa Mastercard

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I would like to be kept informed about Bethany Community Support initiatives and programs

Please contact me to discuss how I may help Bethany Community Support

Name _____

Address _____ Postcode _____

Telephone Home _____ Business _____ Email _____

Bethany Community Support PO Box 324, North Geelong 3215

ABN 38 633 820 168

If you would like to support Bethany Community Support and are unsure how you may contribute, or if you have any questions or would like further information, contact Simone Bellears Community Relations Manager on **03 5278 8122**

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