



LION TALES



JULY 2011

The Quarterly Newsletter of
St. Mark's Community Centre
(A partnership between St. Mark's, Fitzroy and
Anglicare Victoria)

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ROBIN ELLWOOD WRITES:

Welcome to the second edition of Lion Tales for 2011 – once again I have had some computer issues due to a nasty virus which has taken a while to remove, hence the delay in publication. I am grateful to all in the IT Department of Anglicare for getting everything up and running again.

01st to 07th August marks **National Homeless Person's Week**, which is promoted by **Homelessness Australia**, the national peak body representing and advocating on behalf of the vast array of people who are homeless at any one time. At the Centre, we marked this by holding a special barbecue with the clients, which proved to be popular. My thanks to all involved with the preparations, including clients Mark and Felix who worked hard behind the scenes.

The **Melbourne Streets to Home** Project has been working hard over the past ten months with clients considered to be the most vulnerable in Melbourne in the category of Primary Homeless (i.e. those living rough/on the streets). We have been supporting the case managers who have been very successful in recent weeks and months in finding permanent accommodation for 35 longer term clients, people who have been homeless for 10 plus years. After so long, naturally a long period of adjustment is needed once they have been housed as they have little or no experience of paying the bills or of looking after themselves properly.

Another complication is that many of them have been housed further afield in suburbs such as Reservoir, Williamstown and Dandenong and so further adaptations have to be made as all their familiar support networks are no longer to hand. Where we are able, we have been assisting with the necessary household items such as bedding and kitchenware. Merely accomm-odating people does not make them any less vulnerable and most need considerable encour-agement not to give up as well as respecting their new homes and their neighbours.

On the subject of the homeless, on average we are now gaining five new clients per week at the Centre which just goes to prove that the problem is not going away.

Recently we have met with representatives from the Yarra Community Homeless Network & North Yarra Community Health Service to improve our networking and communication with these bodies and to make sure that St. Mark's is included. Also as we expand our service and outreach, we want to avoid a duplication of services. We are now also holding fortnightly team meetings with all involved in Anglicare's Homeless Services, as well as Mission House, Fitzroy, and Dixon House, Clayton, so that we can support each other and share good practice. These meetings are already proving to be essential.

The Drop-in aspect of our work continues to thrive and has become the most important feature at the Centre now that we are open for the full five days. Clients are often waiting for up to an hour before we open, having come straight from the Breakfast Programme at St. Peter's, Eastern Hill. They have already worn out one toaster - we had to buy a new heavy duty toaster as a replacement! We try to provide hot food when we are able, soups, pies, quiches, sausage rolls etc. Recently we have entered into an arrangement with The Vine Hotel, in Collingwood, to provide a hot meal on two days per week as we had difficulties trying to find a cook to co-ordinate a community lunch facility.

Pool and table tennis continue to be popular, as has chess. We have recently moved the pool table to the George Street end of the hall in an attempt to prevent other hall users from moving the slate based table and damaging it. We are grateful to David Evans of Harry Evans and Son, for undertaking major repairs twice in recent months.

Not long ago we received a very generous donation which will enable us to rebuild the disabled ramp into the building thereby not just improving access for the clients who come in wheelchairs, but also those who bring their entire lives' possessions in trolleys. We will also be fulfilling the obligations of disability laws due to come into force early next year.

Our thanks, as always, must go to Foodbank Victoria (formerly VicRelief), Second Bite and Fare Share who make considerable efforts to prevent good foodstuffs from being wasted and going into landfill sites. Centres such as our own reap the benefits of the Feed Melbourne Campaign and we have twice-weekly deliveries of fresh fruit and vegetables and make a weekly visit to the Foodbank to collect essential supplies, including some material aid for the clients moving into full time accommodation.

Thanks also to Monty Stevens and his team at Brighton Grammar School for their May delivery of foodstuffs. Once again the school broke all their previous records with a total of over \$7109 worth of goods.

As always, we are grateful to the many individuals, parish communities, schools, organisations and trusts who support us regularly, both with foodstuffs, clothing and financial donations. We were particularly pleased with how well our winter clothing appeal was supported. Most importantly, thanks, too, to those who assist us together at the Centre and the Opp Shop with their time – without them we could not operate.

Thanks, as ever, to Lyn Wilson for editing Lion Tales and making this into such a professional looking publication.

GOODBYE/HELLO:

Sadly three of our clients have died in recent months due to unforeseen circumstances:

**“Bluey” Laith Purtell-Harrison,
Benson Nugent and
Renato-Cesare Ieraci.**

Please remember them, their families and loved ones in your prayers.

Welcome to students from the University of Melbourne, **Daniel Dadich** and **Amanda Robins** who are spending time with us on placement as part of their Master of Social Work, also to **Kate Clark**, as part of the Community Volunteering for Change.

Daljit “DJ” Singh, from Cambridge College, Adelaide spent time with us on placement as part of his Diploma in Community Welfare – he integrated himself so well into the Breakfast Programme and St. Mark’s that we were very sad to send him back to Adelaide.

We were also sad to say farewell to **Nicole Gould**, our Friday Receptionist for the past two years who has relocated to Brisbane. She is now engaged to fiancée Patrick and they are busy making wedding plans for next year after Patrick has served overseas with the army. We wish them both well for the future and look forward to seeing the wedding photos in due course!

As many of you will know, **Tim Clark** is retiring as Sports and Recreation Co-ordinator after nearly 20 years. We will miss his kindly and gentlemanly way of working alongside the clients and his support of all the staff. Tim is having a farewell afternoon tea on **Tuesday 16 August from 3 p.m.** If you would like to attend and haven’t already let us know, please ring **9419 3288** as soon as possible so that catering numbers can be finalised. After a well deserved break in Europe with his parents, Tim will be coming back in a voluntary capacity, freed from all the administration of the sports programme and we look forward to his return.

On Friday 22 July we finally welcomed **Fr. Stuart Soley** as our parish priest. Fr. Stuart comes to us from Sunshine and Braybrook and has had a long association with Anglicare. We are all looking forward to working together with him.

ST. MARK’S IN THE MEDIA

Alex, one of our popular clients at the Centre assisted Michelle Griffin of *the Age* to compile her article **“Home loss often trigger for mental illness, study finds”**, which came after a survey of mental health and homelessness published by RMIT’s Dr. Guy Johnson and Professor Chris Chamberlain.

You can read the article in full on line at: <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/home-loss-often-trigger-for-mental-illness-study-finds-20110605-1fnf2.html>

SWAGS FOR HOMELESS:

Recently we were visited by Tony and Lisa Clark, founders of ‘Swags for Homeless’, a charity which *“distributes the world’s ONLY FIRE RETARDANT Backpack Bed™ (swag) to homeless around Australia and the World.”* They are indeed a remarkable product – lightweight, fire retardant, mosquito proof, windproof, and anti-mildew. Tony and Lisa are looking for sponsors so that they can make more swags available to the homeless throughout Australia. \$68 buys a swag and \$13 buys a polar fleece blanket. Quick drying towels are also available.

We were able to buy 12 due to a generous donation and they have been very popular with the clients. If you would like to sponsor a swag and/or the associated items for some of our clients, please contact Tony or Lisa direct, letting them know that the items are for St. Mark’s. Please contact them at:

**Swags for Homeless
PO BOX 5171
Studfield
Melbourne Victoria 3152
Tel: 0411 279 289
Email: admin@swags.org.au
Website: www.swags.org.au**

Please also read an interesting article which appeared in the Age. This can be accessed online through the following link: <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/when-a-swag-for-the-night-brings-a-little-dignity--and-safety-20110625-1gkj1.html>

DARE WE MENTION CHRISTMAS??!

In case you are beginning to plan for Christmas, we will of course be having our usual Christmas appeal to provide special Christmas parcels for the clients so will be looking out for the following:

- **100g** Christmas Cakes and Puddings
- **340g** tins of ham, turkey or chicken
- Packets of Shortbread
- Mince Pies
- Sweets/Lollies
- Chips/Chocolate/Cans of soft drink
- **Small** jars of coffee
- **Small** packets of teabags (e.g. 25)
- **200ml** cartons of long life milk
- Toothbrush/Toothpaste
- Flannel/Soap/Shampoo
- Razors/Comb/Talc
- New socks and Underwear

Remember – the clients are predominantly **single homeless people** so larger items are really unsuitable and cannot be distributed.

We also hope to have a pre-Christmas lunch with the clients so will be looking for extra help and foodstuffs. Please contact Robin if you would like to know more.

FROM FR. GRAHAM REYNOLDS – GENERAL MANAGER OF PARISH PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, ANGLICARE VICTORIA

As we head into a very cold winter we all need to be aware of the increased difficulties our homeless clients face as they seek to get through the season.

At the Community Centre we seek to provide a safe and warm environment where clients can spend the day, resting, having some nutritious food, playing pool, read a paper, having a game of chess etc.

Through a grant from the Anglican Men's Society we have been able to provide a number of clients with Swags – which have been a great hit; as well as packs of new underwear and socks. (Very basic but so important!)

Our staff have been actively working to establish strong links with other service providers which has meant that our clients now have better access to allied health and legal services.

When people ask me about homelessness and its cure – the answer at one level is very simple: we need more housing – be it units, hostels or . . . the simple fact is there are more people than beds. In Australia there is a severe shortage of public housing, and there seems to be a lack of Government will to address the level of need that exists.

This is a matter that you could address with your local Federal and State Members. At Anglicare Victoria we advocate for the homeless at every opportunity, but we need your voice as well.

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Our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/stmarksfitzroy) can be accessed directly from the parish website and includes photos from the Centre

OPPORTUNITY SHOP:

298 Smith Street, Collingwood, Victoria. 3066 Telephone: 9417-2965

NEW ABN: 97 397 067 466

**ST. MARK'S RECYCLED -
OUR OPPORTUNITY SHOP, FROM ROBIN CROTON**

WINTER TALES

Winter is always a difficult time for people who are homeless especially in Melbourne because it is cold and wet. This is reflected in the increased number of vouchers issued by the Centre and the number of men and women who we see in the Shop who are clearly cold and living rough. The regular workers in the shop get to know some of these people and we often send them to the Centre. This service has increased significantly with the increased hours that the Centre is open.

The renovations in the shop seem to have had one interesting result which we had not anticipated, we are getting more goods and clothes of a better quality. A year ago we were all aware that many of the clothes that came to the shop had been worn too much to be sold or to provide much wear for people on the streets. This is a problem that all charities have experienced and many of them are faced with significant expense in taking clothes and goods to the tip. But having a clean and well presented shop seems to have had the interesting consequence of discouraging people from dropping off things that are past their use by date.

There is always a lack of particular clothes and goods such as men's warm clothes and men's shoes. I think this is because men seem to form particular attachment to some items and resist all efforts to be parted from them!

The shop is also developing its own character as we now have some our best customers being four legged. They usually, but not always, bring their owners with them and particularly enjoy treats handed out by staff. We hope to expand this client base as the weather improves.

**TO: The Co-ordinator, St. Mark's Community Centre,
250 George Street, FITZROY, Victoria. 3065**

[Tel: (03) 9419-3288; Fax: (03) 9417-5398; Email: robin.ellwood@anglicarevic.org.au]

*"INASMUCH AS YE HAVE DONE IT UNTO ONE OF THE LEAST OF THESE MY BRETHREN,
YE HAVE DONE IT UNTO ME." [Matthew 25:40]*

Here is my gift of \$..... to support the work of St. Mark's Community Centre
(Gifts of \$2 and above are tax deductible)

Name:

Address:

..... Post Code:

If you do not wish to contribute at this time, please ignore this form.

ABOUT DONATIONS

ON-LINE BANKING

With the new St. Mark's/Anglicare partnership, we have a new bank account, so should you wish to make a donation via your bank rather than sending cash or a cheque, the procedure has changed:

1. Go to the Anglicare Victoria website: www.anglicarevic.org.au
2. Click on 'Get Involved'
3. Click on 'Donate online'
4. Complete the 'Major Appeals Donations' page
5. In the box marked: Where did you hear about Anglicare Victoria? Click on 'Other'
6. And on: 'If other, please specify' type in "St. Mark's Community Centre"

A receipt will be issued as is the current practice. Rest assured that all monies intended for St. Mark's will come to us here and will not be sent to a general pot for other programmes.

ST. MARK'S RECYCLED

DO YOU HAVE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS
WHICH ARE ALWAYS IN DEMAND FOR THE SHOP??

GOOD QUALITY CLOTHES
PICTURE FRAMES
VASES
PLANTS
PERFUMES
BLANKETS
BOOKS
BAGS
CD'S, DVD'S AND VIDEOS
LUGGAGE
SHOES
JACKETS
BELTS
KITCHENWARE
HATS
READING GLASSES & SUNGLASSES
JEWELLERY
SHOPPING TROLLEYS
WALLETS
LAMP SHADES
SMALL ITEMS OF FURNITURE E.G.,
BOOKCASES, BEDSIDE TABLES, CHAIRS,
POSTERS, PRINTS, PAINTINGS . . .

298 Smith Street,
Collingwood,
Victoria. 3066
Telephone: 9417-2965

The shop is now open from
Monday to Saturday,
10 a.m. – 3.30 p.m.

OUR HOMELESS CLIENTS OFTEN ASK US FOR TIN OPENERS
SO IF YOU HAVE ANY SPARE, DO PLEASE PASS THEM ON. THANKS.

The following items are always welcome contributions for our food parcels:

Weet-Bix type Cereals
400g Tins of Baked Beans/Spaghetti
400g Tins of Vegetables, Tomatoes, Fruit etc.
400g Tins of Soup/500g Tins of 'Chunky' Soup
400g Tins of Stew/Curry/Bolognaise/Pies etc
Tins of Fish/Meat
Packets of Cuppa Soup/Packs of Pasta Meals
Bags of Pasta/Spaghetti & Jars of Pasta Sauce
Packs of Flavoured Noodles
Bags of Rice
Own brand Coffee/Tea/Milo/Sugar – for the Lounge
Long life milk – for the Lounge
Soaps/shampoo/toothbrushes/toothpaste/razors
(Hotel/in-flight type toiletries are always useful)
New underwear and socks

[Remember that our clients are predominantly single, homeless men,
so **NO** BABY FOODS or FAMILY SIZED ITEMS. Thanks]