

# Our Voice



Mercy Health

Care first

THE GROUPWIDE NEWSLETTER OF MERCY HEALTH  
SUMMER 2016

## Friendships by firelight

Hands and hearts are warmed  
on the first Community Care  
Unit camping trip

## A flowering tribute

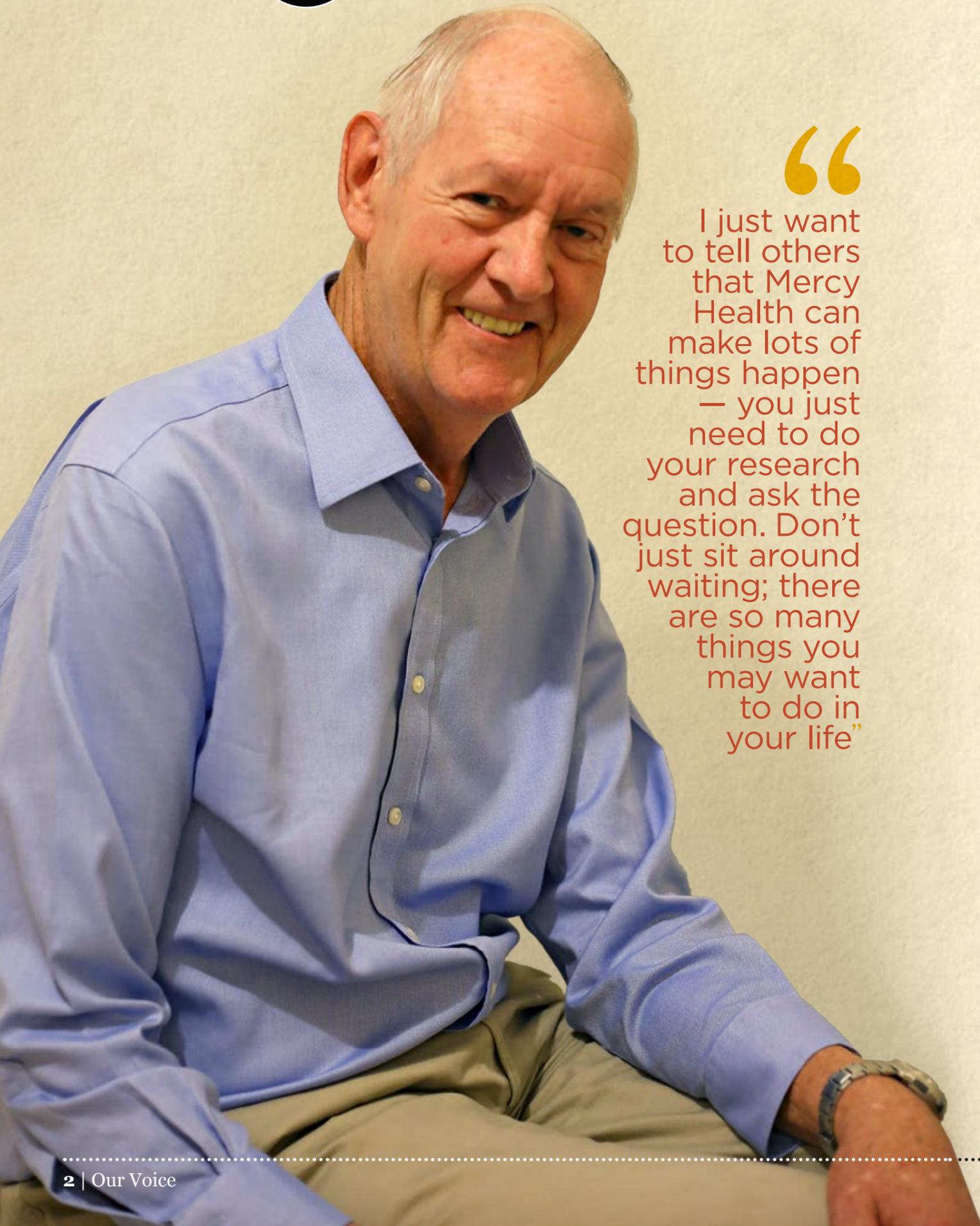
A new sensory garden at Mercy  
Place Colac helps residents care  
for our common home

## A fair day out for Wyndham

Christmas comes early to  
Werribee Mercy Hospital

Werribee Mercy Hospital Nurse Unit Manager  
Carmela Joyce with Chief Executive-Health  
Services Linda Mellors





# Embracing life after loss

“  
I just want to tell others that Mercy Health can make lots of things happen — you just need to do your research and ask the question. Don't just sit around waiting; there are so many things you may want to do in your life”

Accepting help from others, including Mercy Health Home & Community Care (MHHCC), was not an easy decision for a former Anglican minister more accustomed to comforting others. But with the right support, Canberra grandfather and photography enthusiast Norman Kelley is beginning to overcome a personal tragedy and embrace a new chapter in his life.

Norman's wife, Julie, was the light of his life. They were married for 52 wonderful years, working together as Anglican ministers and raising three sons and eight grandchildren.

When they retired, the Kelleys moved to Tasmania where they bought a pretty little house nestled in the bush and overlooking the bay. Typical of her generosity, Julie soon volunteered to run the local church. Norman recalls his wife sharing the news. “You're still retired, aren't you, Norman?” she said. “Well, I'm now running the church.”

In late 2014, Julie developed chest pain and died unexpectedly of heart disease. Julie's death aged 71 left Norman grief-stricken. After 28 years of ministering to others, he suddenly found himself on the receiving end. His psychologist uttered wise words: “Instead of giving help, Norman, you need to accept help,” Norman says.

Norman moved to Canberra to be closer to family while he underwent treatment for a serious medical condition. After a few months he decided to rent his own home because he wanted to maintain his

independence. But he's far from alone: MHHCC carers, and his Care Advisor Nadine Knight, visit regularly to clean and monitor Norman's health — and importantly, listen.

“The Mercy Health staff are outstanding,” Norman says. “They help clean and do the washing, but they are also ready to listen. They ask me how I'm feeling today and what I've been up to. It's nice to share; it means a lot to me.”

MHHCC has also provided Norman with a social outlet. There are times when Norman can't get behind the wheel, and in those cases, MHHCC arranges for a driver to take him somewhere. More often than not, it's the local Men's Shed — his wife's idea.

“My family took me aside and said, ‘Dad, we spoke to mum about you when she was in hospital, and she told us to make sure you have plenty of people around you’. Well, it's no good sitting at home by myself,” Norman says. “The Men's Shed has just been terrific. I've met men who have similar experiences to me, and we share our thoughts and ideas. We're making model boats now — that was my idea.”

Another of Norman's ideas has also been floated: passing on his newly honed photography skills. Norman learned photography from his father, first with a box camera, then a Canon film camera and eventually a digital camera, which soon became worn and outdated. In a creative move, MHHCC managed to help Norman purchase a new digital camera through his Home Care Package (HCP). “It has given me a whole new activity in my life, one that is incredibly exciting and interesting to me,” Norman says. “I am in the process of joining a photography club for extra tuition.”

Nadine says HCPs can be incredibly flexible. “You just have to get to know your client and help them think outside the box,” she says. “Mercy Health can provide great ongoing care through an HCP, but people can also use their HCP funds towards items or activities that might help them enjoy life more.”

Norman simply wants to encourage others to explore their options. “I just want to tell others that Mercy Health can make lots of things happen — you just need to do your research and ask the question. Don't just sit around waiting; there are so many things you may want to do in your life.”



# Leading the quest for global mother-baby wellness

The last place Renée Knight expected to spend any of her new motherhood was in Werribee Mercy Hospital's Mother Baby Unit. But when postnatal depression struck hard, the unit became a gateway back to wellness — and experts from around the world want to know more.

“By the time I entered the unit, my depression and anxiety were so bad that I had endured nine out of 13 days without any sleep whatsoever, and most of those in a row,” Renée told a delegation of doctors and researchers from the International Marcé Society who visited the unit in September. The delegates were in Melbourne for the Society's Biennial Scientific Conference, drawing together perinatal mental health experts from across the globe to advance understanding, prevention and treatment of mental illness around the time of childbirth.

“Initially I didn't recognise that I was unwell,” Renée continued. “Then at six weeks my symptoms spiralled out of control, which was a total shock to me and my husband Sam. I was so debilitated that it became obvious there was no way I could recover at home.

“The main thing that kept me going was how much I loved

my son Hamish. Even so, I really started to believe there was only one way out. I told Sam he and Hamish would be much better off without me. We knew then I was seriously ill and needed appropriate treatment.”

Renée completed an eight-week stay at the unit with Hamish and, when possible, Sam also staying in. Through an integrated program of therapy, medication, group discussion and practical parenting guidance, the new family emerged stronger and more optimistic about the future.

“The overwhelming feeling I experienced when I was admitted was one of relief,” Renée says. “I was able to recover from my illness in a safe and secure environment, and to develop my confidence as a mother.

“Critical to my recovery was the unit's specialist medical and nursing team. As well as the care I received, I learnt more about being a mother here than

I have anywhere else. If we could use some of that education in antenatal classes, it would be a huge help to parents.”

While stories like Renée's may have been familiar to the assembled guests, including midwives and nurses from Werribee Mercy Hospital's maternity team, the unit's lifesaving programs are a revelation to many.

“We had some real heavy hitters here in the delegation — from Yale University, Columbia University, King's College Cambridge, all over Australasia, in fact from more than 10 different countries — all very interested in what we do,” says unit psychiatrist Kristine Mercuri. “In the US, there are no inpatient units due to their lack of public healthcare. The best they can offer now is accelerated day programs. So they were very eager to gather information to take back and pitch the concept of residential units.”



Mother Baby Unit Nurse Unit Manager Jess Barnes with Renée, Hamish and Sam Knight

“The delegates found it very helpful to have that direct, firsthand feedback from a consumer,” agrees Nurse Unit Manager Jess Barnes. “We also invited a consumer and a carer to lead the delegates on a tour of the unit. I think we can all learn from what consumers and carers tell us about the experience of being inpatients, particularly at such a critical transition in becoming parents as well as facing mental illness.

“The visit allowed us to showcase our work on an international stage. Our American colleagues particularly are thinking about service design and how they can accommodate carers, which we have a strong focus on here.

“The delegates were also impressed by the work we do on infant mental health: not just supporting the mother's wellbeing but also the developing relationship between mother and baby. Infants have their own care

plan here; they are seen as a patient in their own right, not just in the context of the mother and child relationship.

“We consider that early intervention work: people talk about adolescent mental health, but you've got a definite head start if you can engage people during pregnancy and early infancy.”

“It's a trajectory thing,” Kristine adds. “When you put in the effort when a family is first experiencing difficulties, in five or 10 years we don't see severe family dysfunction.

“Renée may have gone to an adult unit without her baby; she may have harmed herself; she may have suicided. There could have been attachment difficulties because of the trauma around postnatal depression. But look how well things have come together for her even two months later.

“We're developing plans for the unit's future; we'd love

“I was able to recover from my illness in a safe and secure environment, and to develop my confidence as a mother”

to set up a 'step up and step down' day program. These programs are meeting a real community need. They're an investment for the community; they're an investment for our health dollar.”

Renée puts it even more simply: “To say that this experience has changed my life is a big understatement, and I'm very grateful.”



# Friendships by firelight

Images: Photos from the Great Ocean Road camping trip in June, and (left) CCU residents Kevin and Ke gathering produce in the vegetable garden.



Hands and hearts were warmed by the campfire and mental health battles set aside for three unforgettable days in June. The Great Ocean Road camping trip was life-changing for Mercy Mental Health Community Care Units (CCU) residents Kevin Maloney and Ke Johansson.

“It felt like we were a world away from anything clinical, it was just so freeing,” recalls Ke, who suffers from crippling depression and social anxiety. “I’d put my name forward because I thought I needed to try new things. Right up until the day, I wasn’t even looking forward to going. I had anxiety about being away from my bedroom and my car — my ‘safe spaces’. But I had the best — time — ever.”

Kevin, who has schizophrenia and an Acquired Brain Injury, says being out of his regular environment silenced the voices in his head. “It was just amazing. Some of us went to the Twelve Apostles; I went fishing and caught my first ever fish. It was this big,” he says, holding his arms wide and laughing.

“I was excited and shouting; my fish fell in between the rocks and Dean jumped down to get it out. Our friend Dean, may he rest in peace, passed away here a month ago. He was just a beautiful person.”

Not even steady rain could dampen their spirits. “My tent flooded and there was water all through it,” Kevin says. “Luke went and slept in the van but Dean and I stayed in the tent and when we woke up we’d step into water. But none of that mattered.”

“It was amazing,” Ke agrees. “We were so close to the beach that you could lie in your tent listening to the waves crashing; it was so nice.”

For Ke, the highlight of the trip was connecting with other CCU residents and staff. “Here, there’s walls and opportunities for people to hide. There, you spend a lot more time together and get to know one another, even if you’re not talking.

“We also met two other people who were camping, and they treated us as equal. We were open about mental health, and they were open in return. It opened up a dialogue for us.”

In Ke’s view, the camping trip was an extension of what has

already proved a transformative experience in living at the CCU for the past five months.

“This place has absolutely changed my life,” Ke says. “I have depression; I tend to isolate myself and don’t feel good enough, so I don’t normally socialise with anyone apart from my family. Here, I’m more social than I’ve ever been before. All it takes is one person to say ‘I believe in you’ — it makes all the difference. Once, I might have thought that was really cheesy. But I’ve lived through it. I really can’t speak highly enough of the CCU.”

“You know that someone cares,” Kevin adds.

Acting Nurse Unit Manager Helen Hill says the winter camping trip made a world of difference to the CCU residents, something Mercy Health is hoping to replicate in a second camping trip this summer.

“I could see a difference in everyone when they came back,” Helen says. “It was a real bonding experience.”



# A fair day out for Wyndham

Fine weather and an even finer cause drew thousands to this year's Werribee Mercy Hospital Fair.

**R**un to help raise funds for the hospital's planned (and much needed) critical care unit, the 2016 Fair was supported by generous sponsors, local businesses, council and community.

Volunteers and hospital staff were also out in force to welcome attendees, including Fair perennial and Nurse Unit Manager Carmela 'Mrs Claus' Joyce.

"Being a part of the Fair's organising committee for many years, I have always taken great delight in seeing firsthand how so many members of the community and hospital give their time, or donations of services and goods, so generously to our hospital," Carmela says.

"It's fantastic to see the smiles on the children's faces as they enjoy the rides, petting zoo and meeting Santa... it's a

great way to keep the hospital and staff connected to the local community."

Families from the Wyndham region and beyond enjoyed face painting, food trucks, gift stalls, children's craft activities and performances from Step N Out Dance school, Rob Sturruck's Dance School, Goss Community Choir and High Voltage Rock School.

Chief Executive—Health Services Linda Mellors was thrilled by the event's attendance figures. "I'd like to acknowledge everyone who helped organise the day and all of the staff who enthusiastically volunteered their time or attended with their families," Linda says. "The success of the day really demonstrates the community's enthusiasm for the new unit, which will benefit the entire Wyndham area by opening eight

**“**It's a great way to keep the hospital and staff connected to the local community**”**

critical care beds, 56 inpatient beds and an additional six operating theatres."

Carmela has no doubt that community spirit and the carnival atmosphere will see staff and visitors alike flocking to the 2017 event. "I'm looking forward to next year's fair already!" she says.



**W**hen doing battle with some of the oldest foes of women's health, where better to launch your campaign than among the ancient inhabitants of the Melbourne Museum?

This was the dramatic setting in which professors Sue Walker and Stephen Tong brought the 'pre-eminent and prehistoric' together to officially launch Mercy Perinatal in front of colleagues, philanthropists and Mercy Health board members in early December.

Mercy Perinatal's mission is to improve the health of mothers and babies now and into the future by reducing the causes of morbidity and mortality that have plagued humanity for millennia.

"The future for the mothers and babies of tomorrow — and indeed for their sisters and their daughters — lies in asking, and answering, the big questions in research, then translating those answers into clinical practice and education," Sue says.

Proudly sponsored by:



Supported by the Manor Lakes Community Fund 2016



“  
 Mercy Perinatal’s mission is to improve the health of mothers and babies now and into the future by reducing the causes of morbidity and mortality”

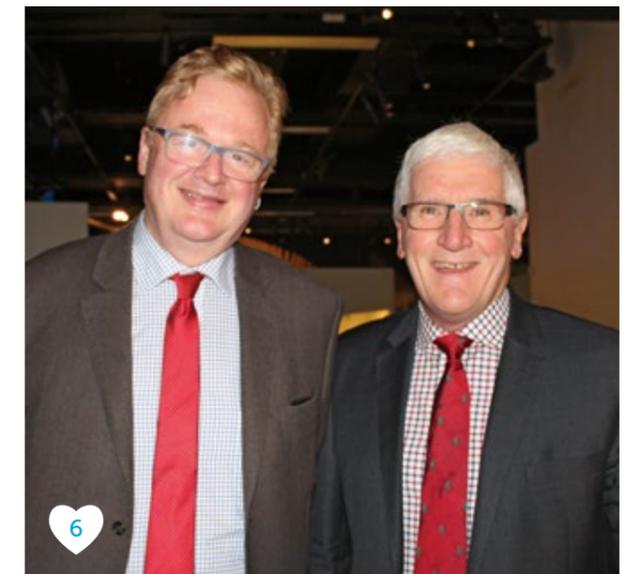
“Stephen and I share the bold aim of reducing stillbirth through better detection of babies destined to be born small or sick, and combatting prematurity, preeclampsia, ectopic pregnancy and other serious threats to maternal and fetal wellbeing.”

“I’ve had clinician academics from across the globe speaking to me about our team and the outstanding model we have established for success across clinical care, research and education,” Chief Executive-Health Services Linda Mellors affirms.

“Through initiatives like Mercy Perinatal we can lead the world in keeping mothers and babies safer.”

Victoria’s Parliamentary Secretary for Medical Research, Frank McGuire MP, represented the Minister for Health at the launch and was suitably impressed by the research already being carried out by the Mercy Perinatal team.

Comedian and star of the Australian TV series Offspring Lawrence Leung also entertained guests with a Rubik’s cube routine.



**IMAGES:** 1 Researchers Vi Nguyen, Sally Beard, Ping Cannon and Heather Hansen | 2 Mercy Health Foundation Executive Director Simon White with JBwere Investment Advisor Peter Iwaniw and Sarah Iwaniw | 3 Researchers Natalie Hannan, Tu’hue Kaito-Lino, Claire Whitehead and Roxanne Hastie | 4 Group CEO Stephen Cornelissen, Chief Executive-Health Services Linda Mellors, Parliamentary Secretary for Medical Research Frank McGuire MP, Professor Stephen Tong, Professor Sue Walker | 5 Sue addresses a rapt audience | 6 Dr Michael Rasmussen and Mercy Health Board member Martin Day



7



8



9



10



11

**IMAGES:** 7 Solving the age-old puzzles of maternal fetal health | 8 Linda Mellors, Mercy Health Foundation Board member Margaret Bounader, Mercy Health Board member John Corcoran, General Counsel Simon Cooke | 9 Comedian Lawrence Leung entertained guests | 10 Genetic Counsellor Jo Kelly, Chief Social Worker Jane Middleton, Research Midwife Anna Middleton | 11 Stephen with Professor Sue McDonald, Frank McGuire MP, and Sue.

WERRIBEE MERCY HOSPITAL

# Christmas Fair



Just a few of the many Fair highlights



# A flowering tribute

The woman after whom Mercy Place Colac's new sensory garden is named, Jean Howard, has been gardening ever since she was old enough to dig in the dirt.

The lifelong green thumb loved her garden so much that when she married, aged 40, she and her husband had to come to an agreement.

"My husband had never had anyone interfering in his garden, and nor had I," Jean recalls.

"So we decided I would have my own flower garden, and he would have his own vegetable garden, and never the twain should meet."

When Jean's husband died, and her sister Kathleen's husband passed away, the two moved in together. In 2012 the pair moved into Mercy Place Colac.

When Kathleen died last year, Jean wanted to plant a rose in her memory. But the Service Manager, Karen Watkiss, and Lifestyle Coordinator Mandy Dawes had other ideas.

"We had a courtyard full of tanbark that we never used, where the chooks lived for a

while," Mandy recalls. "It was the perfect spot for a new garden, and for Jean to plant a rose for her sister."

Colac Secondary College students helped prepare the space, and with a sizeable contribution from Jean, plus help from some other residents, the new sensory garden was populated with an herb box, passionfruit climber, box hedges, roses, golden diosma and other beautiful flowers. It was officially opened on Mercy Day 2016, with the words 'Jean's Garden' painted on the entrance doors.

The Mercy Day unveiling was particularly fitting, given Pope

Francis' Laudato Si is centred on the theme of caring for 'our common home'.

The environmental message of Mercy Day resonated with Jean.

"Without the environment, there is no us," Jean says. "We have to look after it."

For some residents of Mercy Place Colac, actually tending to the garden — weeding, planting and watering — is no longer possible. But the garden enlivens their spirits.

"Back in the day they might have sat on their veranda with a cup of coffee, listening to the birds," Mandy says.

"Jean's Garden gives them the opportunity to do that again. It is such a peaceful, tranquil area with beautiful sunshine."

It also proved the perfect place for Jean to remember her sister, with a special Peace rose planted in her memory. Jean has planted four other roses around the bird bath to remember close friends who have since passed away: Old Bunny, Firefighter, Heaven Scent and Big Purple varieties.



Mercy Place Colac resident Jean Howard



# Home for the holidays

Our aged care communities are counting down to Christmas with celebrations as unique as they are. Here a just a few of the festivities.

## Festive fun at Mercy Place Lathlain

Dancing, singing, fun and laughter was in abundance at Mercy Place Lathlain when a dozen youngsters from a local dance school entertained residents during a specially choreographed festive performance.

The 5-10-year-olds from the Kiddy Groove dance studio performed songs, dance routines and jazz numbers with a Christmas flavour.

Regional Manager Western Australia and Queensland Vicki Fitzgerald notes

intergenerational experiences are fun for old and young alike, in addition to helping dispel negative stereotypes of ageing and having a positive effect on both children and residents.

“Interacting with older people enables children to develop positive attitudes towards ageing, a sense of purpose and a strong community focus,” Ms Fitzgerald said.

“On top of that, there is a very special bond that exists between children and seniors of their grandparents’

generation, and that really shone through during the festive performance.”

Charmaine Hauptle, Owner of Kiddy Groove, says the children rehearsed for weeks before the mini-concert and were excited to be performing in front of residents around Christmas time.

“It was very special for them to know they brought some Christmas cheer to residents; they were really proud of the warm reception they received,” Charmaine says.



Getting together around a festive table



Resident Alma gets into the Christmas spirit



Dawn decorates the tree

## Celebrations at Mercy Place Albury

Mercy Place Albury residents, staff and volunteers opened seasonal proceedings with tree trimming and cookie decorating. Lifestyle Coordinator Michelle Phillips says the entire household looks forward to taking part in decking the halls.

“Decorating the lounge areas together and sharing a Christmas-themed morning tea really creates a ‘family Christmas’ feeling,” Michelle says. “We take every opportunity to celebrate special moments and this is one that residents enjoy each year.”

The tree features personalised baubles for each resident — a sweet reminder that each person is cherished for their unique contribution to the home.



Resident Norm enjoying morning tea



Kiddy Groove performs at Mercy Place Lathlain





Jo, Jenny and Michelle at the conference

# Setting Nangnak Baban Murrup centre stage

In early December the team from our maternity care program for Aboriginal mothers, Nangnak Baban Murrup (NBM), headed to Cairns to present at the high profile National Indigenous Health Conference.

Senior Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer Jo Pappas, Associate Nurse Unit Manager Outpatient Midwifery Jenny Fielding and Social Worker Michelle Hawke updated delegates from across the country on the improved outcomes the program has seen in key Closing the Gap indicators of health and pregnancy care for Indigenous women.

"We took the opportunity to describe how listening to the suggestions made by patients helped us to restructure our model of care, allowing greater flexibility and continuity of care, which has made a huge positive difference to our outcomes," Jo says.

"We received a lot of positive feedback from the conference attendees and organisers, including from conference facilitator Clinical Associate Professor Peter Shine, Director Aboriginal Health Northern Sydney Local Health District, who remarked, 'I have been attending forums for many years to hear about how we should Close the Gap. Today, I can honestly say that your team has Closed the Health Gap.' Our session generated further discussion after the presentation into the afternoon tea break, which was rewarding for the team.

"We also had the opportunity to absorb ideas from international speakers on how to expand our NBM service and to network with other Indigenous health professionals to build new links to other services."

Taking centre stage is something the NBM team will have to get used to.

"The experience we have gained in presenting to such a large forum will be very beneficial, given we've now been asked to present at the World Congress on Public Health in April 2017," Jo confirms. "It's exciting to receive that recognition and interest."



## Christmas message from the Group CEO

Across the country, Mercy Health staff are busily preparing for this special time of year. Preparations are as varied as the roles our people fulfil: from setting up celebrations in aged care, to organising special pastoral care visits to patients in our hospitals and community care, to delivering hampers to families in palliative care, and many other unseen but highly meaningful acts.

Our people embody the Mercy spirit: serving others before themselves and reaching out to those in greatest need. While every one of our staff has exemplified that same spirit throughout the year, I wish to particularly acknowledge those working through the Christmas period.

A look back at this year's issues of *Our Voice* reminds us of the impact of our work and rich diversity of ways people experience our care. We have met John, an artist who uses support from Home & Community Care to stay active and creative; Miriam, a volunteer living with Down Syndrome who has been working at Mercy Hospital for Women for five years; aged care resident Tony who has created a fairy garden for residents living with Alzheimer's; Sandra and Viktoria, our Consumer Advocates who have shared their experience of loss to make a positive difference to others... and these are just a few of this year's stories.

Each story recognises the value of the unique individuals whom we are privileged to serve and work with, in the tradition of our Foundress and today's Sisters of Mercy.

On behalf of all at Mercy Health, I wish you and your loved ones a peaceful and joyful Christmas and a rewarding New Year.

**Stephen Cornelissen**  
Group Chief Executive Officer



# Get ready to push again in 2017...

A huge thank you to all of our Pram Jam participants, sponsors and organisers: we have raised a **grand total of \$114,000** to help bring mums and bubs safely home!

**Pram Jam will be back next year.**

Keen to support us again, or missed out on taking part this year? You can register your details for 2017 right now! Let's make 2017 even bigger and better.

Just email [pramjam@mercy.com.au](mailto:pramjam@mercy.com.au) with your name and contact details, or feel free to pass the message on to colleagues, family and friends.

[mercypramjam.org.au](http://mercypramjam.org.au)

## *We're online!*

Help us go green and get your copy of *Our Voice* delivered to your inbox!

Visit [issuu.com/mercyhealthaus](http://issuu.com/mercyhealthaus) to subscribe today or email [ourvoice@mercy.com.au](mailto:ourvoice@mercy.com.au)

We hope you've enjoyed the summer edition of *Our Voice*, Mercy Health's groupwide newsletter.

Please send your feedback and stories to [ourvoice@mercy.com.au](mailto:ourvoice@mercy.com.au)

Mercy Health acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the first Australians. We acknowledge the diversity of Indigenous Australia. We respectfully recognise Elders both past and present. This report was produced on Wurundjeri Country.



*Our Voice* will be back in March with our autumn edition. In the meantime you can keep up to date with current Mercy Health news at [mercyhealth.com.au](http://mercyhealth.com.au)

### Follow us on...

 [facebook.com/MercyHealthAus](https://www.facebook.com/MercyHealthAus)

 [@MercyHealthAus](https://twitter.com/MercyHealthAus)