

Our Voice



Mercy Health
Care first

THE GROUPWIDE NEWSLETTER OF MERCY HEALTH
WINTER 2018

Passion & perseverance wins the race

Swimming champion and
Mercy Place Westcourt resident
Thelma Bryan serves those in
need with her winning spirit

Words of wisdom

Mercy Mental
Health students
putting pen to
paper to combat
first-day fears

Easter Fair fun

Wyndham locals
come in droves to
support Werribee
Mercy Hospital at their
annual Easter Fair





A different type of giving

Following the birth of her son Albert ('Bertie'), new mum Bernie Jennings discovered she and Bertie had something incredibly valuable to offer sick and premature babies: donated breastmilk.

Determined to provide her son with the health benefits of her nutritious milk, Bernie persevered through a period of pain and discomfort as her body adjusted to breastfeeding. She was then screened to become a volunteer breastmilk donor with the Mercy Health Breastmilk Bank.

The Mercy Health Breastmilk Bank provides sick and vulnerable babies at Mercy Hospital for Women with access to pasteurised, donated

“I felt I could have fed every premature baby in the state”

breastmilk when their mothers have trouble with their own supply in the days following a premature birth. Screened and

pasteurised donated breastmilk is made available with the parents' consent for babies born before 32 weeks' gestation or weighing less than 1500g at birth. On occasion, there may be another medical reason why they would benefit from donated breastmilk rather than formula.

“I had such an ample supply of milk that I felt like I could have fed every premature baby in the state — it seemed such a shame to throw it down the sink,” Bernie recalls.

Bernie empathised with mothers facing premature birth, illness or complications. “As a mum, one of the things I worried about was getting sick and being unable to breastfeed,” she says. “I’d also heard that it can take time for milk to start if you have a premature baby.”

With friends who have struggled to both conceive and breastfeed, Bernie is grateful for every moment spent with her son. “I am privileged to be able to breastfeed and enjoy it as a special time with Bertie,” she says.

Bernie donated her breastmilk until Bertie was six months old — the recommended limit for donations to the Mercy Health Breastmilk Bank. She is one of about 50 women a year who are approved to donate milk since the Mercy Health Breastmilk Bank opened in 2011.

Mercy Health Breastmilk Bank Founder and Head of Unit Dr Gillian Opie says every single drop of donated breastmilk is precious. “The babies in our Special Care Nursery and Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) have small, immature tummies so they can only digest tiny volumes of milk,” Gillian explains. “Some start on as little as 0.5ml every four hours.”

“You might have a NICU donor mother with a great supply

who is expressing 100ml every three hours. If her own baby only requires a small amount every couple of hours, she then has an excess which she can donate if she wishes. Our donors often tell me how grateful they are that their breastmilk is not going to waste. It is also a lovely experience to get to know each donor mother.”

Established in 2011, the Mercy Health Breastmilk Bank remains the only one of its kind in Victoria — for now. This year, the Breastmilk Bank is collaborating with the Royal Women’s Hospital, Monash Children’s Hospital and the Royal Children’s Hospital to establish satellite sites. This is expected to triple the number of recipient babies and the need for donated breastmilk in Victoria.

Gillian says the prospect of being able to help even more mothers and babies in need is wonderful. “I am excited that very premature and sick babies in other Victorian nurseries will soon be able to have the benefit

of pasteurised donor breastmilk in circumstances when their own mother is not able to supply sufficient breastmilk,” she says.

For more information visit mercyhealthfoundation.org.au/our-main-causes/mercy-health-breastmilk-bank/

Bertie Jennings, born at Mercy Hospital for Women (opposite); precious pasteurised breastmilk stored at the Mercy Health Breastmilk Bank (opposite); Mercy Health Breastmilk Bank donor Bernie Jennings and her son Bertie (above).



About Our Voice

Our Voice is the quarterly newsletter of Mercy Health, an Australian Catholic organisation founded by the Sisters of Mercy. Each year, we provide care for more than 92,500 people in health services, almost 4,000 people in our 35 aged care homes and 4,500 people in their own homes or in the community. Each season in **Our Voice**, we share inspiring

and thought-provoking stories from the people we serve and the 8,500-plus people who work for Mercy Health. These stories demonstrate the Mercy Health values of Compassion, Hospitality, Respect, Innovation, Stewardship and Teamwork. To share your own story or provide feedback, contact:

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---Crafting--- a brighter future

For two decades, Shepparton resident Jan Wright was a foster carer, opening her home and heart to 197 children. After becoming a client with Southern Cross Care (Vic) Home Care Services, Jan realised something was missing. That was when the pastoral care team stepped in to help Jan continue her meaningful connection with the community.



Jan's community care worker, who helps out around the house once a week, picked up on her need for meaningful connection. She suggested to Care Manager Lisa McLeod that Jan may benefit from the Home Care Services Pastoral Care Program run by Pastoral Care Associate Liz Grogan.

Jan quickly struck up a relationship with the warm and gregarious Liz. It was during one of their many conversations over a cuppa at Jan's home that Liz noticed a big box in the corner of the apartment. It was filled to the brim with exquisite articles of knitting and crochet — all created by Jan. This got Liz thinking.

"Jan has great empathy for people and when I was talking to her about my work at Ave Maria Village, she responded with genuine compassion," Liz says. "I realised I had a number of people at Ave Maria who love craft but feel a sense of loss at not being able to do it anymore."

It then occurred to Liz that Jan would be the perfect person to start a craft group at Mercy Place Ave Maria (Shepparton), formerly known as Southern Cross Care

Shepparton (Ave Maria)*. "When Liz asked me to start up the craft group, I jumped at the chance," recalls Jan.

Word has already spread at Ave Maria about Jan's craft group and piqued the interest of a number of residents. One such person is Irene Leaf who used to make patchwork quilts but is now eager to master knitting and crochet.

“There are lots of people who need her help.”

While pastoral care is well-established in Residential Aged Care, the Shepparton program is a first for Home Care Services. Pastoral care at Southern Cross Care helps clients with issues of the heart, whether it be exploring faith, dealing with change, facing loneliness or struggling with the loss of independence. Liz is passionate about pastoral care, particularly because it gives her the chance

to "create connections and friendships for other people".

In Jan's case, this resulted in the creation of a weekly craft group. "When I first met Jan I sensed that there was a real loss about contributing to people's lives; she was really missing that. But we've turned that around. I've opened her up to the fact that there are lots of people who need her help," Liz says.

It also enriches Liz's own life. "I learn from people," she continues. "I'm a different person from all that I witness — the resilience and courage of the people that I come in to contact with. It is a real privilege to be let into people's lives and to be trusted."

Opposite page L-R: Southern Cross Care (Vic) Home Care Services client and volunteer Jan Wright with Mercy Place Ave Maria (Shepparton) resident Irene Leaf. Top left: Jan with Southern Cross Care (Vic) Pastoral Care Associate Liz Grogan. Top right: Jan is looking forward to sharing her knitting skills.

*Southern Cross Care Shepparton (Ave Maria) assumes its new name, Mercy Place Ave Maria (Shepparton), as of 1 July 2018. This is a key step in the ongoing integration of our two organisations.



Love blooms at Mercy Place Rosebud

*formerly known as Southern Cross Care Rosebud**

Wedding and aged care are words not normally associated with each other. But following a whirlwind romance, Mercy Place Rosebud (formerly known as Southern Cross Care Rosebud) residents Alana Kirk and Norman 'Norm' Kingston will say 'I do' this November in front of friends, family — and of course, their pet guinea pigs Chucky and Milo. "They are the other loves of our lives," Alana says.



Alana and Norm with their wedding rings in the garden at Mercy Place Rosebud



Alana and Norm were friends and neighbours in the units for 16 years before their relationship blossomed into a romantic one on the back of a health scare.

In September 2017, 71-year-old Norm was diagnosed with squamous cell carcinoma — a common skin cancer.

"It was worse than they first thought," Norm says.

"It was a long operation. [They] had everything standing by, from blood transfusion to chemotherapy; everything."

These were some of Norm's darkest days and it was during this time Alana realised her feelings for Norm had changed.

"I saw a different side to him," says Alana. "Kind, caring and loving."

After Norm's health improved and several months of dating, Alana decided to pop the question.

"I just said 'do you want to get engaged?'" Alana recalls. "He thought for a minute and said 'yeah, alright'."

Alana and Norm will tie the knot on Friday 2 November 2018. The wedding ceremony will be held in the garden at Mercy Place Rosebud and the reception will follow at the local RSL.

"We are going to invite a lot of the staff. The Service Manager has been really respectful and is very excited for us," Alana says.

A staff member will prepare canapés and the friend of another staff member has offered to do the photography.

Work preparing the home's garden has already begun.

"We've installed a lovely archway where Norm and Alana will say their vows," Mercy Place Rosebud Lifestyle Coordinator Aeron Melbourne says.

"We will plant wrap vines around the arch so they should blossom in time for the ceremony."

The home will also host craft sessions for residents to create some of Alana and Norm's wedding decorations.

"The residents think it's lovely that two people managed to find love in aged care," Aeron says.

Meanwhile, Alana and Norm have been busy selecting their bridal party and Alana's dress, which is a stunning orange hue.

"I'm too old to be a traditional bride," Alana says with a smile.

"I saw a different side to him. Kind, caring and loving."**"**

This page clockwise L-R: Norm and Alana enjoying each other's company at the Rosebud Senior Citizen's Centre; the couple's pet guinea pigs, Chucky and Milo; Norm and Alana's rings

*Southern Cross Care Rosebud assumes its new name, Mercy Place Rosebud, as of 1 July 2018. This is a key step in the ongoing integration of our two organisations.



*Make sure you take advantage
of your time here*

*... bring a
smile on
your first day
tomorrow!*

Paying it forward

"It's normal to feel anxious, I was too during the first week... The staff are always happy to help with whatever you need. Try to use a lot of your time sitting down with your patients and talk to them, you can learn so much from them and hearing their stories can be very inspiring." (Clare Moore placement)



"Make sure you take advantage of your time here — learning about medications, illnesses, the mental health act, mental state examinations and most importantly spend most of your shift talking to your patients" (Clare Moore placement)

"Try not to stress about your first day or assessments, everything will work out" (Mother Baby Unit placement)

"Make sure you always ask questions and put your hand up for everything and anything" (Saltwater Clinic placement)

"You're probably feeling anxious and nervous going to Wyndham BUT don't be!! I've had 5 weeks at Wyndham and it's probably one of the best mental health placements! You will be FINE! ... Don't forget to bring a smile on your first day tomorrow!" (Wyndham placement)

These are just a handful of extracts from hundreds of de-identified 'pay-it-forward' letters written by Mercy Mental Health undergraduate students to reassure and encourage the cohort and provide a valuable assessment tool for staff.

At any one time there are about 14 undergraduate students undertaking placements at Mercy Mental

*Make sure you
always ask questions...*



Health sites, including the Clare Moore Building at Werribee Mercy Hospital or Saltwater Clinic in Footscray. Students are usually in their second year of studies and the one-month placement is sometimes their first experience of mental health.

"We've all been nervous on a first day at a new job," says Clinical Nurse Educator and Undergraduate Coordinator Mark Mott, who devised the letter project seven years ago. "Students are no different."

"In mental health especially, students often don't know what to expect. The letters are a way of reassuring students, but not having this come from a supervisor or staff member. It's actually having a peer — who has been through the same program, the same experience — telling them it's going to be OK."

Mercy Health Registered Nurse Graduate Pauline Razos received a pay-it-forward letter during her placement at Saltwater Clinic and wrote her own when she left.

"I didn't know what to expect before my placement at Saltwater, so the letter I received

gave me a brief insight into what lay ahead," Pauline says.

"When it was my chance to write a pay-it-forward letter, I included the importance of taking initiative by getting involved in everything. I wanted to help

"We've all been nervous on a first day at a new job, students are no different."

students have a memorable experience in mental health, just as I did".

"The support here at Mercy Health is incredible, which is why it was my first preference for my graduate year. No matter how challenging my shift has been, I'm always looking forward to the next day."

Senior Psychiatric Nurse Nicole Ali says the letters can play an

important role in encouraging students to consider a career in the field.

"Students often come in quite apprehensive," she says. "These letters help destigmatise mental health and make students more comfortable. For our staff who do an amazing job supporting our undergraduates it is also touching to read the overwhelmingly positive feedback."

Mark agrees that the letters reflect everyone at Mercy Mental Health — students, staff and workplace culture. "The letters are a seven-year snapshot of what outsiders think of our workplace and our staff, who live the Mercy Health values on a daily basis," he says.

L-R Senior Psychiatric Nurse Nicole Ali, Clinical Nurse Educator and Undergraduate Coordinator Mark Mott, Graduate Nurse Pauline Razos (opposite); A collection of Pay It Forward letters (above).



Giving body & soul to those in need

In her room at Mercy Place Westcourt, Queensland, Thelma Bryan sits back with a cup of tea in one hand and the other arm outstretched to reveal a powerful bicep. “Not bad for almost 88,” she says with a laugh.

Thelma’s muscles are a legacy of decades of swimming and yoga. A masters swimmer, the octogenarian has set more than 60 national and 300 state records in her age group since 1983. In the 400m individual medley she was ranked first in the world in her age group (85–89 years) for almost two years. Her 100m and 200m butterfly were both world seconds.

Nowadays Thelma needs a four-wheel walker to get about due to deteriorating health, but she is happy to share her secrets to peak health and fitness: “Eat wisely; don’t eat fattening foods; eat plenty of vegetables and a little bit of meat; watch your diet; start small when you begin exercising and increase gradually,” she says.

The Cairns swimming champion was born in Kingston on Thames near London and lived in Nigeria before emigrating to Australia in 1972. Over the years she has balanced her physical pursuits with her other passions: teaching and volunteering. She taught at Cairns State High School from 1972–88, was involved in multiple charities and served on various committees including

the Arthritis Foundation of Queensland. In September 2017, Thelma was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation in recognition of almost 26 years’ service as a Far North Queensland Hospital Foundation volunteer teaching yoga to mental health patients at Cairns Hospital.

“It was something I felt I could offer,” Thelma says. “It was so relaxing for them; it really helped them to unwind. I like helping people; I would help anybody if I could. Nowadays I’m on the receiving end.”

Thelma has faced many personal and health challenges including a recent broken arm, six hip replacements, having a pacemaker fitted, battling emphysema and just last year losing the love of her life: her husband Michael, to whom she was married for 58 years.

Thelma was proud to be a batonbearer during the relay through Cairns in the lead up to this year’s Commonwealth Games. She looks forward to being able to swim again when her strength has built up.

Mercy Place Westcourt Service Manager Angela Cox says women like Thelma were trailblazers who deserve recognition and admiration.

“We have many female residents who really did blaze a trail for women in their younger years,” Angela says. “Many of them carved out careers at a time when it wasn’t always acceptable for women to focus on their work. In addition to working and volunteering, Thelma has had an incredible career in swimming — she is an inspiration to us all.”

Left: Thelma as a Commonwealth Games batonbearer, with Mercy Place Westcourt Nursing Assistant Nikira. Inset: Thelma with her friend Graham (rear) and Far North Queensland Hospital Foundation volunteers Alison and Elaine



“I would help
anybody if
I could”





Out & about in support of your local hospital

Undeterred by wild weather, more than 1,000 enthusiastic Wyndham locals ventured out to support the annual Werribee Mercy Hospital Fair on Sunday 25 March at the Victoria University campus in Werribee.



Families enjoyed an exciting array of stalls and activities run by members of the community and staff. The day included an Easter market selling handmade crafts, gifts and goodies. There was also live entertainment, rides, food trucks, a petting zoo and a jumbo slide. The Easter egg hunt and drumming workshops by Afrobeat were favourites among children and adults alike.

First held in 1994 as a community fair, this family-friendly event has been a regular fixture for staff, patients and the local community for more than 16 years. After a short hiatus, the fair returned in 2015 and remains a popular event in the community calendar.

Funds raised at this year's fair will be used to support Werribee

Mercy Hospital's new Intensive Care Unit (ICU). The eight-bed ICU is an exciting new addition to the hospital and part of an \$85 million expansion made possible thanks to the Victorian Government. The expansion will be enhanced thanks to a \$2 million commitment from Mercy Health Foundation, which is supported by the Freemasons Victoria Foundation, Gandel Philanthropy and the Werribee Hospital Foundation. Set to open this winter, the four-storey redevelopment also includes 56 inpatient beds, six additional operating theatres and a new central sterile supply department.

As the only public hospital in Wyndham, it is vital that we provide intensive care services. The new ICU will mean that Wyndham families can remain closer to each other during

L-R: Kids enjoyed pony rides at the fair; the Easter bunny; the eggs-tremely popular Easter egg hunt; Chief Executive — Health Services Adjunct Professor Linda Mellors with one of the fair's feathered attractions; Mercy Hospital operating theatre nurse Jin Bo (Jane) Han and her children selling hot cross buns.

challenging times. Currently, the average distance to a hospital with an ICU is 35km from Wyndham.

"We are so thankful to the community who came out to support the event and to the volunteers and staff who made it all happen," says Chief Executive — Health Services Adjunct Professor Linda Mellors. "We would also like to thank our sponsors for their ongoing generosity and commitment. A special shout-out to John Fastuca from WynFM, who kept guests entertained and informed while we battled the wild weather."

Thank you to our 2018 Werribee Mercy Hospital Fair sponsors:





Stepping forward with Footprints For Success

Overwhelmed by the prospect of bringing home a new baby after a challenging birth, single Aboriginal mum Carrie Bath was relieved to discover the range of supports available to her through Werribee Mercy Hospital (WMH).



WMH Maternity and Neonatal Social Work teams along with Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer Cherie Houldcroft put the mother of four in touch with Footprints For Success, a program supporting the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children in Melbourne's western suburbs.

Funded by the Department of Health and Human Services, Footprints For Success is led by a consortium of health and welfare agencies including Mercy Health.

Footprints For Success supported Carrie through her weekly maternal child and health nurse visits; helped her navigate new housing applications; and connected her to other services and support groups for Aboriginal mothers. Carrie, who is from the Djabugandji mob in Queensland, can continue accessing the program until her son is six years old.

Carrie has three older children aged 17, 16 and 13, and was worried about how she would cope with her fourth, Onyx, with the others now well into their teens.

"Everyone reacts differently to new and challenging circumstances," Carrie explains. "I'm a single mum and I was worried it might become overwhelming; I was worried about losing control."

"It is a huge relief just to be able to reach out and talk to someone — to know I'm not alone."

Onyx was born premature at 34 weeks and four days, with Carrie in and out of hospital for monitoring and treatment in the week leading up to birth. It was a frightening experience, but she felt supported the whole time.

"The staff at Werribee are all fabulous and supportive," Carrie says. "Cherie visited me and helped with anything I needed; people were there for me. It felt like a second home."

Cherie joined the WMH Aboriginal Hospital Liaison team this year after working in the Footprints For Success program. She has seen how valuable the program is for Aboriginal women and families.

"Footprints has given women more confidence to access both mainstream and Indigenous services and supports," Cherie says.

"Families appreciate any support when they are expecting a new baby — this program is specifically helpful as it is culturally safe."

Baby Onyx was born at Werribee Mercy Hospital (top); Carrie Bath with her newborn son Onyx.

For more information, contact the Werribee Mercy Hospital Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer on 03 8754 3000.

Making strong community connections

Husband, father and passionate Wyndham local Kapil Thakkar joined the Werribee Mercy Hospital Community Advisory Group (CAG) two years ago and relishes the opportunity to give back to his community.

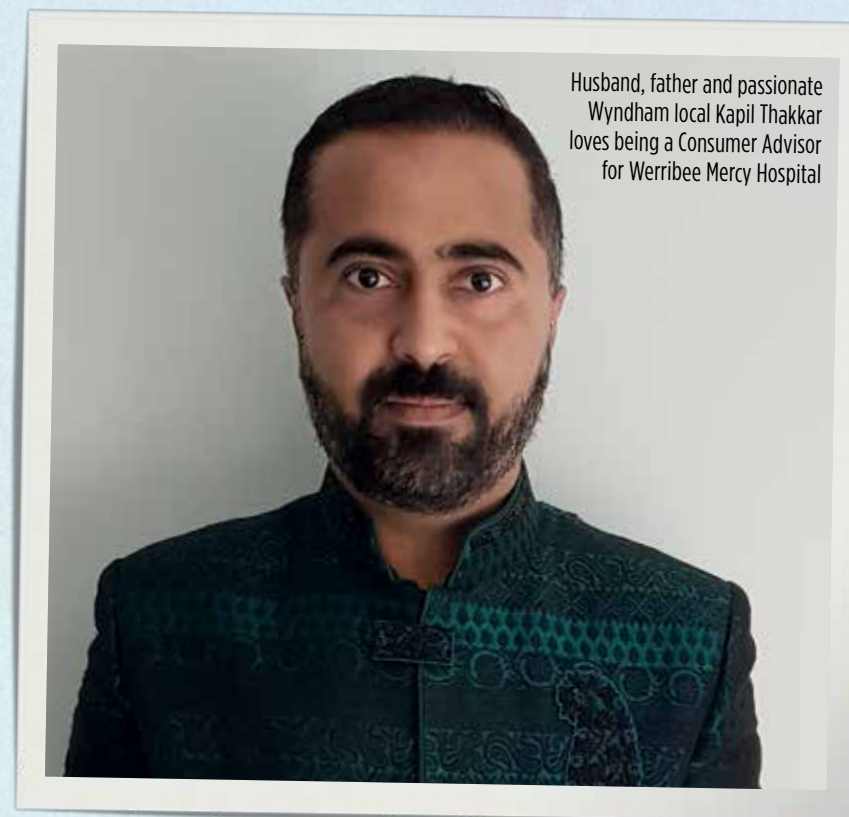
He took up the role because he recognises the vital part hospitals play in community life. "I'm passionate about bringing a community voice to Werribee Mercy Hospital and, at the same time, taking hospitals to the community so there is a better understanding between the two," Kapil says.

Having immigrated from India 11 years ago, Kapil knows that it is not easy settling in to a new country. This is part of the reason he is keen to help the hospital understand the needs of different multicultural groups — something particularly important in Wyndham.

Every two months, Kapil meets with other Werribee Mercy Hospital consumer advisors and staff to learn about the hospital and provide input on a range of issues, from fundraising to wayfinding.

"As a Consumer Advisor, I get to make suggestions on wayfinding. Is it legible and easy to understand? Will people from different ethnic backgrounds understand it?"

"I also make recommendations to the hospital about how they can engage with the local community, like getting them involved in Mercy Health's fundraising opportunities. I then take these opportunities to the community and make the connections happen," Kapil says.



Husband, father and passionate Wyndham local Kapil Thakkar loves being a Consumer Advisor for Werribee Mercy Hospital

Kapil has many links to the community, including as a Community Ambassador for AFL Victoria, a columnist at The Indian Press Club, and a Public Relations and Multicultural Officer for the Gopio Melbourne Chapter, so his contribution to the CAG is invaluable.

The appreciation is mutual: "Mercy Health does community and consumer engagement really well," Kapil says. "The organisation always listens to our feedback. I really appreciate that Mercy Health is so community-focussed."

If you would like more information about becoming a Consumer Advisor, please email the Consumer Participation and Experience team at getinvolved@mercy.com.au or phone 03 8416 7872. You can also find out more about becoming a consumer advisor on our website: mercyhealth.com.au/our-structure/consumer-engagement/



Have your say...

Mercy Health is recruiting for our COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUPS.

Do you want to be more involved in our care?

Do you want to help represent the needs of patients, clients, families and carers?

Do you have ideas to help improve our services?

Mercy Hospital for Women • Werribee Mercy Hospital • Mental Health • Albury (NSW) • Young (NSW)



Applications are now open for 2018.

Contact our Consumer Participation and Experience team at getinvolved@mercy.com.au or 03 8416 7872.

For more information, visit www.mercyhealth.com.au/CommunityAdvisoryGroup

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



Our Voice will be back in September with our spring edition. In the meantime you can keep up to date with current Mercy Health news at mercyhealth.com.au/news

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