

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

From: Catherine Butterfield, Media and Communications Consultant, Mercy Health

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Chance reunion reignites friendship after 57-year hiatus

After 57 years without seeing one another, Mercy Place Keon Park residents, 95-year-old Betty Moore and 94-year-old Marg Crane, instantly recognised each other when they were fortuitously reunited at the residential aged care three days before Melbourne's coronavirus lockdown last year.

Betty walked into the home's dining room on her first day as a Keon Park resident in March 2020, and was "blown away" to see her old friend sitting down to dinner. The pair has been inseparable ever since, reigniting their friendship and supporting one another through the difficult past 12 months.

"I saw Marg sitting at a dining table on that first day and said, 'I know you. It's Margaret isn't it? I know you from the milk bar,'" Betty recalled. "I knew it was her from the second I saw her. She looks the same now as she did back then."

Betty and Marg first met when Marg worked at her brother's milk bar and delicatessen in Keon Park during the 1960s and '70s. Both local to the area, Betty would regularly visit the shop and the pair formed a lovely friendship.

"We were about the same age and both of us lived in the area so we knew a lot of the same people," Marg said. "We would always have lovely chats, and I'd look forward to her coming into the shop. But then when my brother got out of the business, I stopped working there and we lost touch."

The timing of Betty's arrival at Mercy Place Keon Park could not have been better. As coronavirus spread around Victoria this time last year, residential aged care homes enforced strict visitor restrictions, which made relationships inside the home even more critical.

"It's helped me so much, 10 out of 10, having Marg here, especially when we couldn't have many visitors," Betty said. "Now, wherever you find Marg, you'll find me too."

Marg loves that their friendship has been reignited, and is grateful that she has the "greatest neighbour" in her long-time friend Betty.

"We play bowls and bingo together and we like to do our word quiz books with each other every day," Marg says. "We also like to go out and sit at the front here at Mercy Place Keon Park and chat with everyone who comes past. It's a lovely neighbourhood and just around the corner from the shop where we met. We organise our days and our outings around each other and feel very lucky that we found each other again after so long apart."

Sunday 28 March was Neighbour Day, a day that celebrates community connections and relationships to help stimulate health and mental wellbeing.

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For interviews and photo opportunities, please contact:

Catherine Butterfield

Media and Communications Consultant

Mercy Health

M: 0490 429 457

Email: CButterfield@mercy.com.au