

## COMMUNITY SPIRIT SHINES AT FUNDRAISING EVENT

The inaugural VMCH Art and Craft Exhibition and Cocktail Event was a great success, with more than 300 turning out to support St Paul's College.

It was a true community fundraising event, with VMCH staff, supporters, friends and the wider community all coming together to help ensure the students of St Paul's have access to the best educational outcomes at their new site in Balwyn.

The event kicked off with a launch Cocktail Evening on Friday, November 16. Around 120 guests were greeted by the dulcet sounds of the harp played by renowned Therapeutic Musician Carla Whiteley upon arrival at the Hawthorn Arts Centre, where they enjoyed drinks and delicious canapes while learning how their support will help fund a Discovery Centre of Imagination at the soon-to-be-relocated St Paul's College.

A vibrant performance by members of Gateway, a VMCH program for adults with disability, was a crowd favourite, before guests opened their hearts and chequebooks for the main event; the auction of 12 amazing pieces by first-time and professional artists alike.

Mark Verrocchi from Nelson Alexander kept momentum running for the auction, which garnered much interest for all pieces, particularly Kumbuka The Gorilla which attracted a winning bid of \$1750.



The following day was a little more laid back, with the open exhibition attracting art enthusiasts, VMCH community members and the general public to view and purchase some of the fantastic art, craft, photography, knitted items, and more on display.

Visitors perused various stalls set up around the majestic Hawthorn Arts Centre main hall, including a kids' station and St Paul's College area featuring plans for the new school and student artworks.

Features to be included in the new school including Lumes LED panels (digital wall imagery) also gave visitors an idea as to what their support would help achieve.

VMCH Fundraising and Events Manager Dianne Taylor said she was overwhelmed by community support for the inaugural event, including those who donated artwork, volunteered their time or talents at the event, or attended the cocktail evening and exhibition.

"We've had such incredible support from the outset.

The incredible donated art and craft items unveiled the amazing talent within our communities and wider to the families, friends and carers. That generosity enabled us to contribute to the appeal and to date we've raised \$45,630 for St Paul's College and we are eternally grateful to all involved!"



### VALE GORDON JAMES

One of Villa Maria Catholic Homes' most loyal and generous supporters has passed away, aged 99.

Gordon James was a life member of VMCH and his beloved wife Vera, who passed away 15 years ago, was a volunteer. Over the past 40 years, the James' donated more than \$200,000 to the organisation. Their generosity continues in memorium, with the couple leaving their Estate to VMCH.

VMCH Grants and Bequest Officer Sandra Rosano first met Gordon at his home in Queensland two years ago.

"We were able to have a cup of tea and quite a few chocolates - Gordon had a sweet tooth," Sandra reflected. "He was a man with an amazing memory who loved Collingwood, reading the paper and telling stories. He loved and honoured his late wife Vera, always speaking so highly of her. He also had a cheeky sense of humour."

Gordon grew up on a wheat farm in the small town of Yorkrakine (Perth) and lived through WWII, serving in the Australian Air Force. He met Vera at a town dance and they married shortly after the war. The couple later moved to Melbourne where Gordon worked with the weather bureau as an instrument maker, and later, a statistician.

Sandra said Gordon and Vera's contribution to VMCH, and in particular St Paul's College, had made a significant impact in the success of many appeals and capital works.

"Now he will continue to be remembered and his legacy will live on."

**R.I.P GORDON JAMES**  
9.2.1919 - 24.8.2018

Christmas/Summer Edition 2018

# SEASONS

## KEEPING YOU CONNECTED



### WELCOME TO SEASONS - OUR CHRISTMAS EDITION

Christmas is a time of celebration and reflection with loved ones. But it's also important to acknowledge that it can be a time of sadness for some people who may be lonely and isolated in our community. Each year, VMCH distributes Christmas hampers to the people vulnerable in Affordable Housing, Disability and Community Services. Through projects like this, we hope to make a small difference, so they can enjoy the festive season.

This year, VMCH is focussing on social connections and in particular, the difference we can all make in improving the lives of others. Why not consider giving someone you know who might be on their own this holiday season a call? Or drop in on a neighbour? You never know how much difference a small gesture like this can make.

Christmas is also a great time to look forward to the year ahead. We have many exciting projects happening in 2019, including our new retirement community in the regional town of Trentham, and the renovation and extension of Providence Aged Care Residence in Bacchus Marsh. Due for completion at the beginning of 2019, the addition of 41 places will meet much-needed demand. And of course, a major project for next year will be our new school site for St Paul's College. The students and teachers are very excited to begin the 2019 school year at their new home in Balwyn.



I'd like to take the opportunity to wish you all a very happy and safe Christmas and New Year. I look forward to seeing you all in 2019.

**Sonya Smart**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Villa Maria Catholic Homes

## HAMPERS LIFT SPIRITS

The festive season will be a little brighter for 500 people this year with the delivery of VMCH's annual Christmas hampers.

The hampers, packed and delivered by VMCH staff members, are given to people accessing our services, including people who live in affordable housing units.

The hampers are part of the award-winning VMCH Arts in Action program, which sees aged care residents use their artistic skills to make crafts for the hampers.

For the past few months, around 100 residents have been busy creating 2,500 items including decorations, soaps, notepads and pens. The process is popular among residents, who benefit from social connections, a sense of purpose through giving to others, hand dexterity and joint movement and mental stimulation.

As a way of thanks, a group of affordable housing residents also joined together on November 12 to create some beautiful Christmas wreaths to give back to the aged care residents who've worked so hard on their hamper items.

Balwyn affordable housing resident Michael Cutler (pictured) said he was thrilled to have received a hamper for the past two years.

"We all (residents) really appreciated the hampers and were very pleased to get one. I think it means a lot to a lot of people, especially if they're on their own (around Christmas)."

The hampers are funded through workplace giving programs from within VMCH and the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne (CAM).

Arts in Action was awarded a 'highly commended' notation as a finalist in the 2018 Meaningful Ageing Australia Quality in Pastoral and Spiritual Care Practice Awards in September.



Affordable housing resident Michael with his hamper



Aged Care Resident Joan with volunteer Marianne

## BRIGHT START TO 2019

VMCH's Young Carer Mentor Program (YCMP) received an early Christmas present with a \$6,000 grant from Menzies Aviation. The YCMP pairs young people (aged eight to 25) who care for their loved ones with volunteer mentors who give them emotional support, life skills and social opportunities. The YCMP relies on donations and community support to stay alive, so the funding has come as welcome news. This is the third year Menzies has supported the program.



Young carer Tammy with her mentor, also named Tammy.

## MAKE YOUR DRIVE COUNT

Fancy a hit of golf in the summer sun, all for a great cause? Registrations are now open for our 2019 Charity Golf Day!

Green Acres Golf Club in Kew East will be the new home of the event, to be held on Friday, February 15.

All money raised through this popular event will go towards our Donate to Create appeal; supporting the relocation of our specialist school St Paul's College.

The popular Golf Day is a great chance to enjoy a day on the green with friends and colleagues.

If you are interested in supporting our Golf Day activities via sponsorship, raffle prize donation, or as a player, please call Dianne Taylor on 9926 2440 or email: [dianne.taylor@vmch.com.au](mailto:dianne.taylor@vmch.com.au)



## ZOE'S FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT

Zoe is a vibrant, sociable and loving 17-year-old who makes her parents Edmond and Natasha extremely proud.

Her development over the last ten years at Villa Maria Catholic Homes' specialist school St Paul's College is nothing short of extraordinary, her Dad says.

"We visited so many schools who wouldn't accept Zoe. She was a handful with some challenging behaviors

and didn't 'fit the categories' many schools had. Then we found St Paul's."

Edmond says with love, patience and compassion shown by teachers, by the end of Zoe's first year at St Paul's, she'd "transformed".

"Zoe went from a seven-year-old who would kick and scream to a student who couldn't wait to get to school each morning. In her earlier years she went to class knowing three words, and 18 months later could approximate 37 words – it was incredible."

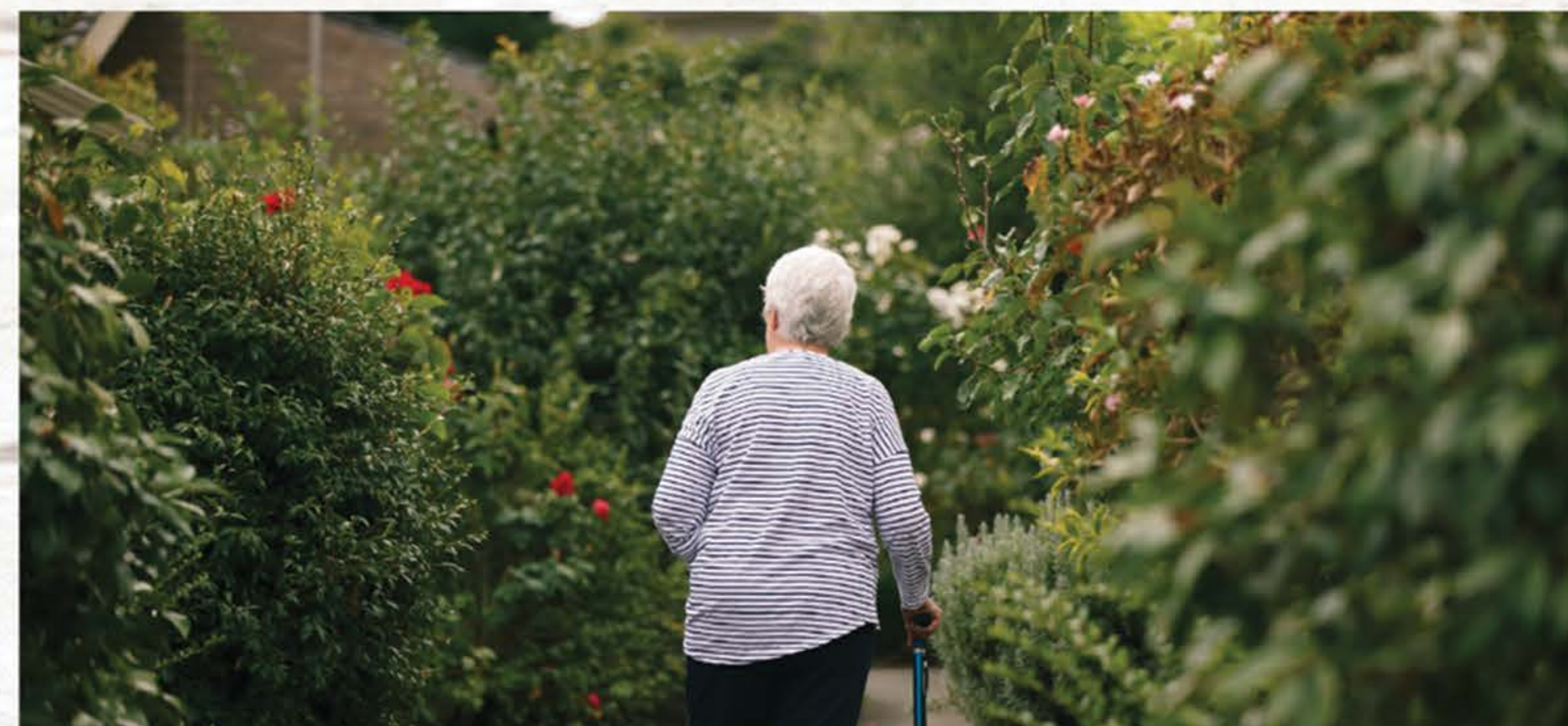
Fast-forward ten years and Zoe is gearing up for her final year at St Paul's. Before she moves on, the family is excited about the school's impending move from Kew to a new site in Balwyn, where educational opportunities are set to soar.

**Zoe is one of the faces of the VMCH Donate to Create appeal, raising funds for the school's new Discovery Centre of Imagination; an integrated learning environment where each child is given the best possible springboard from which to learn to live as independently as possible.**

For Edmond, the only downside to the move is that Zoe will be there just one year before she graduates. But he takes heart in what it means for generations to come.

"I personally believe that St Paul's is second to none in Victoria. It's fabulous for the development, care and compassion shown for the children – who are given full dignity and met with kindness. We're blessed for the time Zoe's had there and we can't wait for her final year to be the best yet."

If you would like to support the appeal, visit: [vmch.com.au/donatotocreate](http://vmch.com.au/donatotocreate)



## REACH OUT

As Christmas and the holidays approach, many begin to feel a sense of joy and excitement as they prepare for the festive season. For others who experience social isolation, the holidays highlight feelings of loneliness and anxiety.

A 2016 Lifeline survey found that 60 per cent of respondents "often" felt lonely. The organisation also revealed that 55 per cent of callers to its crisis line lived alone, "often without strong support networks".

Older people in particular are susceptible to social isolation. Research shows that risk increases with age as people experience significant and ongoing life changes like retirement, bereavement, divorce, illness and relocation to aged care.

The health impacts of loneliness are serious and can include:

- increased risk of heart disease and stroke;
- mental health and wellbeing issues such as anger, depression, worthlessness, resentment, pessimism and suicidal thoughts; and
- higher risk of cognitive progression towards Alzheimer's disease.

VMCH Pastoral Care Services Senior Manager Mary McInerney estimates about a third of VMCH affordable housing residents and 20 per cent of aged care residents are alone over the Christmas period.

"At Christmas time the feelings of loneliness can often be intensified, due to seeing and hearing others' experiences or memories of the past good times that are

now not the same – often due to loss of family and friends who have died. Sometimes people do not want to feel a burden on others and lack of transport can be another barrier for people connecting."

Mary said some affordable housing sites put on a pre-Christmas gathering for residents and neighbours kept an eye out for each other over the holidays.

In VMCH aged care residences, more than 350 volunteers play an important part in connecting with older people through social visits.

### What can the community do to help?

'Ageing is everyone's business – a report on social isolation and loneliness among senior Victorians', says: "social contact is an important protective factor against social isolation and loneliness".

While some people choose to be alone and enjoy solitude, there are others who struggle with social connection and therefore are alone, not by choice.

Simple gestures like checking in on a neighbour, saying hello to people in the street, visiting an older relative or friend, taking a Christmas meal to someone in need, or volunteering to visit someone in aged care.

"We can often be caught up in the festive celebrations and it is important that we do not forget those less fortunate in the process," Mary said.

If you'd like to join the VMCH volunteering team and help make a difference in 2019, call 1800 036 377.