

# SEASONS

KEEPING YOU CONNECTED

ISSUE **58**

**Pool renovation  
dream comes true**

**A volunteer with  
a difference**

**Golf Day a  
great success**

**A lasting  
family legacy**



**FIND OUT HOW  
ORLANDO ENJOYED  
HIS FIRST SWIM IN  
THE RENOVATED POOL  
ON PAGE NINE...**

## THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING SPONSORS OF OUR 2017 CHARITY GOLF DAY

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## CONTENTS

03

Welcome

04

A lasting family legacy

06/07

Close to realising renovation dream

08

Charity Golf Day a hit

09

Revitalised pool brings joy

10

Heat won't stop playtime

11

Seniors are wild about Harry

## SEASONS

We welcome your feedback and contributions to Seasons.

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## WELCOME TO 2018 AND OUR AUTUMN EDITION OF SEASONS

While many have been on holidays or taking a break, the VMCH Fundraising team have continued fielding enquiries from people who want to support our work.

It's heartening to know, almost every day, we receive calls from individuals, community groups, schools and organisations who have been personally touched through using the services of VMCH. They might know someone who has benefited from one of our programs or are passionate about developing further opportunities for people with disability or older people in the community.

The Fundraising team love their jobs' as they have the opportunity to meet our donors and hear their wonderful stories. People like Sandra Rosano who says the best part of her job is getting out and meeting people.

Many of the people Sandra meets were students at St Paul's College as young children. Now as adults, they tell her the experience meant so much, they want to give back. Or the families of parents or loved ones who live at one of the VMCH residences or receive in home support. Sandra says she is always touched by the stories of how our services have meant so much in their lives. This includes Barbara, whose mother "Nell" held the Villa Maria Society for the Blind, close to her heart. Her story is in this edition of Seasons.

If you know of someone who has had a long association with VMCH, why not contact Sandra.

In the meantime, there are many more stories to read about in this edition of Seasons.

We look forward to bringing you more of these wonderful moments in 2018.



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



**IT'S HEARTENING TO KNOW, ALMOST EVERY DAY, WE RECEIVE CALLS FROM INDIVIDUALS, COMMUNITY GROUPS, SCHOOLS AND ORGANISATIONS WHO HAVE BEEN PERSONALLY TOUCHED THROUGH USING THE SERVICES OF VMCH.**



## A LASTING FAMILY LEGACY

**Did you know four out of five Australians give financially to charities and not-for-profits? And of those who give, 68 per cent choose a particular charity because they 'know and trust' the organisation?**

For VMCH donor Barbara Duncan, both of these statistics ring true. The 78-year-old's ties with VMCH go back four decades. Barbara's mother, Ellen "Nell", was a supporter of Villa Maria Society for the Blind (VMCH as it was formerly known), back in the 1970s and would help out on fundraising days and functions.

In the early 1980s, Nell developed macular degeneration and was unable to live independently. Given their history with the organisation, Villa Madonna Nursing Home (now closed) in Prahran, was an easy choice.



Barbara Duncan's ties with VMCH go back four decades.



**WHEN NELL SADLY PASSED AWAY, BARBARA STAYED CLOSE TO VMCH. AS WELL AS MAKING DONATIONS WHEN SHE CAN, BARBARA HAS DECIDED TO LEAVE A GIFT IN HER OWN WILL AS A "TRIBUTE" TO HER MUM.**

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**WHILST 87 PER CENT  
OF AUSTRALIANS SUPPORT A CHARITY  
IN THEIR LIFETIME**

**SADLY ONLY 7.6 PER CENT  
LEAVE A GIFT IN THEIR WILL**

A gift in a Will acknowledges the values that are closest to one's heart.

"The diagnosis of macular degeneration wasn't as good as it is now," Barbara explained. "And because of Mum's connections with and support for visually impaired people, we chose Villa Madonna."

When Nell sadly passed away five years later, Barbara stayed close to VMCH. As well as making donations when she can, Barbara has decided to leave a gift in her own Will as a "tribute" to her mum.

"Because of the care that was given to her, that's why I've continued on," she explained. "She was a supporter of it (VMCH) and I think that she'd like to take it further."

A sense of social justice also factors in Barbara's decision.

"Sometimes the aged get left behind a little bit, particularly ones who don't have family support. Their needs are greater than ours and I'd like it used where it can do some good."

One of Barbara's major life passions – growing orchids – was also inspired by her mum.

"Mum had a couple of orchids in the back garden for years and we could never flower them," she said. "Now I grow them and also judge them at orchid club shows. I thought golf was obsessive and expensive until I took up orchids and golf paled into insignificance!"



Barbara's mother Ellen "Nell".

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THEIR NEEDS ARE GREATER THAN OURS  
AND I'D LIKE IT USED WHERE IT CAN  
DO SOME GOOD." – BARBARA DUNCAN**

## **HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

**If you are  
considering leaving  
a gift to VMCH in  
your Will, please  
contact our Grants  
and Bequest Officer,**

**Sandra Rosano, on (03) 9926 2407  
or email [sandra.rosano@vmch.com.au](mailto:sandra.rosano@vmch.com.au)**







Lachie is one of the hundreds of people who enjoy visiting VMCH's Flexible Respite Service on weekends.

## CLOSE TO REALISING RENOVATION DREAM

Lachie, aged 13, is cheeky, lots of fun and loves a joke.

**One of his favourite things to do is visit VMCH's Flexible Respite Service on weekends and during school holidays; getting out and about in the community, trying new activities, and making friends.**

If he gets a little bored, Lachie can get anxious and up to a bit of mischief. That's one of the reasons why VMCH is hoping to raise \$120,000 to transform the tired and outdated indoor and outdoor respite space into a fun, engaging and welcoming environment for Lachie and his friends to enjoy.

**AS A NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANISATION, VMCH RECEIVES NO FUNDING FOR CAPITAL WORKS AND RELIES ON COMMUNITY DONATIONS TO HELP SEE THESE PROJECTS COME TO FRUITION.**

Launched in December 2017, the Appeal has so far raised around \$83,000 towards its target. As a not-for-profit organisation, VMCH receives no funding for capital works and relies on community donations to help see these projects come to fruition.

Lachie's mum, Fiona, is one of hundreds of parents who benefit from valuable respite while their children, who have disabilities, are in VMCH's care. She says she'd love to see the area given a facelift.

“At the moment it really is just a spot to drop off and pick up. There’s nothing really there to stimulate the kids; there’s space but it’s not really utilised. Items to meet sensory needs like a trampoline, climbing wall or walking track would be great. Things to help the kids feel engaged and fulfilled, and reflect the high quality of the program delivered by the dedicated staff, would be great to see.”

The planned renovations, including a sensory garden, water feature, quiet area and play equipment, will make the area accessible and interactive.

“The building which houses the program (below left) was built in the 1970s as a nursing home and day hospital,” said VMCH Disability Services General Manager David Williamson. “The design does not come close to meeting the purpose-built needs of children and adults with disabilities. Improving the space will not only help children now, but also help attract new families to the service.”

Fiona explains just how vital respite is for families like hers.

“Having access to respite has actually changed how our family works. It means I can do a bit of (paid) work and also spend time with my other son, Tom, and meet his needs and desires,” she said.

“When Lachie is at respite it gives us a break to take a breath. For example, we were able to have a party for Tom’s birthday, which we couldn’t do with Lachie here as too many people in the house can be overwhelming for him.”

**“AT THE MOMENT IT REALLY IS JUST A SPOT TO DROP OFF AND PICK UP. THERE’S NOTHING REALLY THERE TO STIMULATE THE KIDS; THERE’S SPACE BUT IT’S NOT REALLY UTILISED.” – LACHIE’S MUM, FIONA**



The Flexible Respite Service in Wantirna South.

David urged the community to dig deep for the appeal.

“All children deserve access to a safe, warm and secure space to relax and have fun. For children with disabilities, an interactive, calming and welcoming space is critical.”

## WANT TO HELP?

To donate please call 1800 036 377  
or visit [www.vmch.com.au/donate-now/](http://www.vmch.com.au/donate-now/)



An artist’s impression of the new outdoor space for Wantirna South Flexible Respite Service.





The 2017 Charity Golf Day was great day out for a good cause.

## CHARITY GOLF DAY A HIT

**The weather was kind and so were the corporate golfers for our 2017 Charity Golf Day on October 20.**

Southern Golf Club in Keysborough provided the perfect backdrop for 97 players to enjoy 18 holes of Ambrose golf, with Reflex Technology Group taking out the 2017 Perpetual Trophy. Australian Essential Services Maintenance and Cura Health Pharmacy came second and third respectively.

The real winners will be the 200-plus children and adults with disabilities who access our Flexible Respite Service in Wantirna South. They will directly benefit from the almost \$65,000 raised to help transform their currently tired and outdated space into a fun, welcoming and interactive area.

An edible garden, water play area, cubby house and accessible and open spaces for dancing and arts and crafts are just some of the exciting plans we hope to see come to fruition.

Now in its third year, the VMCH Charity Golf Day has become a popular event, attracting generous companies and corporate golfers who want to make a difference.

Thank you once again to our Platinum Sponsor, Jim's Antennas, for their very generous support, along with our Gold Sponsors, Telstra, Reflex Technology Group and Cura Health.

### JOIN US IN 2018

**Interested in joining our 2018 Charity Golf Day as a golfer or sponsor?  
Contact us: [fundraising@vmch.com.au](mailto:fundraising@vmch.com.au)**



## REVITALISED POOL BRINGS JOY

**Villa Maria Catholic Homes is thrilled to unveil the result of some amazing community generosity.**

Work to transform the warm-water pool at our specialist school, St Paul's College, finished mid-February, giving hundreds of children and adults with disabilities a fantastic start to the new year.

The unique and much-loved pool was built in the 1970s and in desperate need of renovation when VMCH set about campaigning to raise funds in 2016. As a not-for-profit organisation, VMCH receives no funding for capital works.

Money raised through our Charity Golf Day, Art After Dark event, individual donations, bequests and trusts, has seen some huge changes take place, including a vibrant digital sea-life feature wall, new pool seating and sound system, safety features, tiling and painting.

"We wanted to transform the pool into a modern, state-of-the-art facility that could be enjoyed by people of all abilities," said VMCH Chief Executive Officer Sonya Smart.

"And thanks to the generous spirit of our supporters, we have been able to do just that. We believe everyone has the right to experience the joy and therapeutic benefits of water. The environment in which this happens should reflect the vibrancy and the spirit of those who use it, which we are now glad to say it does."

The pool at St Paul's College is special because it is accessible to people of all abilities and has equipment that assists people with even the highest needs get into the water.

For parents like Carla, the changes are great to see. Her 12-year-old son Orlando, who has autism, has always loved the water. He even learned to swim in the warm-water pool. And last week, during his first session back in the new pool, he achieved another milestone.

"His teacher Nicky said he was an absolute star in the pool. Without any prompting, he lay on his back and swam beautifully ... just gliding through the water, something he's never done before," she said.

"You only achieve firsts and milestones when you're comfortable and happy and having such a nice new environment is conducive to learning and improving his skills. We're all so happy with this fresh, bright and modern-look pool."

### SPECIAL THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING DONORS OF MAKE A SPLASH

- Estate of John Dineen
- Andrew and Geraldine Buxton Foundation
- Lorenzo and Pamela Galli Charitable Trust
- Br Gerald Develin Trust
- Access Health
- Walter Dodich
- St Columba's College





These preps at our specialist school, St Paul's College, are happy about recent addition to their playground.

## HEAT WON'T STOP PLAYTIME

**There is a reason that these new preps at specialist school, St Paul's College, are jumping for joy. They can play more comfortably with their bikes, scooters and balls when it's hot thanks to these new sail shades.**

The sail shades were installed just in time for the start of the new school year and protect this very popular playground, at the Kew school, from the heat.

The Rotary Club of Balwyn generously donated more than \$17,000 to allow the school to buy three large shade sails. Now the play area is more accessible than ever to more than 60 students that attend the school.

Peter O'Brien, from The Rotary Club of Balwyn, said that in the past 12 months it donated about \$200,000 to many great community projects, including this one. It raises the money thanks to proceeds from the popular Camberwell Sunday Market, which it runs.

"We're very pleased to be able to see the benefits of our endeavours and to see it's getting great use and benefiting all the kids," Mr O'Brien said.

St Paul's College Acting Principal, Margaret White, said staff, students and parents loved the sail shades.

"It's fantastic and it has made the playground a lot more user friendly and we're very grateful. All donations such as this are very much appreciated by the whole school community," Ms White said.

## CARER MENTOR PROGRAM RECEIVES A BOOST

Young people who care for a loved one will continue to receive vital support thanks to a \$6,000 donation from Menzies Aviation.

The company presented the funds to VMCH late last year at Melbourne Airport.

VMCH's Young Carer's Mentor Program, established in 2015, connects young carers in the Hume region with volunteer mentors. Young carers often face social isolation and depression, and drop out of school so they can care for their family member at home.



## SENIORS ARE WILD ABOUT HARRY

### Volunteers come in all different shapes and sizes – and species!

Harry the Labrador has become a firm, furry favourite among seniors at Willowbrooke aged care residence in Upper Ferntree Gully since he began visiting with his owner, Raelene Olsen, around eight months ago.

VMCH is lucky enough to have the support of more than 630 volunteers who donate their time and talents to brighten the lives of the older people, children and adults with disabilities, their families and carers.

Harry is among eight canine volunteers who visit various VMCH aged care residences across Melbourne, bringing joy to seniors. Late last year he became a bona fide volunteer, receiving his very own I.D card.

Raelene, who is a long-time volunteer of VMCH, says the response from residents towards eight-year-old Harry has been “fantastic”.

“When he’s not sniffing under the tables for crumbs the residents sit next to him and give him a pat and reminisce about their own dogs, who they no longer care for. Those who are non-verbal just seem to get a good feeling from being around Harry. One fellow who always sits on his own and keeps to himself was at first a bit reticent, but now he puts his hand out to stroke the dog and you can see his eyes light up when Harry comes in.”

Raelene described the pair’s fortnightly visits as “rewarding”.

“There are so many people in aged care who don’t get any visitors so it’s nice to give something back. And Harry enjoys it... he’s a beautiful dog with a calm and laidback attitude, nothing bothers him.”

VMCH Volunteer Services Engagement Coordinator Molly O’Shannassy said pet therapy had many benefits.

“It provides a welcome distraction for residents who may be in chronic pain, provides mental stimulation, helps with reminiscence (for people living with dementia) and can help increase social interaction,” she said.

“Interacting with a furry friend helps residents focus on the present and can reduce stress and anxiety. Bringing in their pet also gives the volunteer a purposeful role to play in residents’ lives and helps them to get to know each other in a meaningful way.”

**“THERE ARE SO MANY PEOPLE IN AGED CARE WHO DON’T GET ANY VISITORS SO IT’S NICE TO GIVE SOMETHING BACK. AND HARRY ENJOYS IT... HE’S A BEAUTIFUL DOG WITH A CALM AND LAIDBACK ATTITUDE, NOTHING BOTHERS HIM.”  
– RAELENE OLSEN**



Harry the Labrador visits seniors at Willowbrooke Aged Care.

### VOLUNTEER WITH US

If you are interested in volunteering with VMCH, call 1800 036 377 or email [volunteers@vmch.com.au](mailto:volunteers@vmch.com.au)



# YOU CAN MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE TO THE LIVES OF OTHERS BY SUPPORTING VILLA MARIA CATHOLIC HOMES.

Whether through a one-off contribution or ongoing donation, your generosity will help put a smile on the faces of some of the adults and children in the VMCH community.

Thank you for your support.



## YES! I WOULD LOVE TO SUPPORT VMCH AND GIVE MONTHLY.

\$10  \$15  \$20  \$30  Other \$ .....

### I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A ONE-OFF DONATION TO SUPPORT CHILDREN AND ADULTS WITH A DISABILITY

Your donation will help support and grow our vital disability services.

\$25  \$50  \$73  \$125

\$ ..... amount of choice

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I authorise VMCH to charge the amount selected by me to my credit card.

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