

SEASONS

KEEPING YOU CONNECTED

ISSUE **55**

**You make all
the difference**

**St Paul's celebrates
60 years**

**Allied health
goes mobile**

**Sensory garden
takes shape**





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fundraising
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or Narrelle.Paige@vmch.com.au

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Diane Guiney

SEASONS

We welcome your feedback and
contributions to Seasons.

Contact:

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Cover Image:

Lexi, a St Paul's College student,
and her friend Elise.

CEO'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the first edition for 2017 of *Seasons*.

I'd like to take this opportunity to say it is a privilege to be the new CEO of Villa Maria Catholic Homes (VMCH).

I am committed to continuing the great work of VMCH and driving our organisation's vision to be a leading provider of quality disability, specialist education, aged care and retirement living services.

I'm also excited to get to know you – our valued donors and supporters. It is because of your generosity and compassion that VMCH is able to achieve so much to enhance the lives of people across our services.

Before joining VMCH in February, I was Chief Executive of Catholic Homes Incorporated in Perth, for over six years. I have a passion for residential aged care, disability and community services and have been a long-time advocate for delivering exceptional care to marginalised people in the community.

In this Autumn 2017 edition of *Seasons*, we update you on the positive impact your donations are having.

Our lead article outlines the success of recent appeals and how each project is evolving.

Our 'Make a Splash' appeal, to transform the therapeutic pool at St Paul's College, exceeded our fundraising expectations and we are excited to see our dream to create a state-of-the-art facility take shape. The sensory garden project at Austin Street is almost complete and the residents are relishing their new multi-sensory outdoor space. You can read more about this project on page 10.

Did you know that because of your generosity, the VMCH Young Carer Mentor Program is secure for another year? We are thrilled that many young people in northern Victoria, who are currently caring for a loved one, will get the support they so deserve. Turn to page 11 for all the details.



12 February 2017 marked a major milestone for our specialist school, St Paul's College. It was the school's 60th anniversary. Our celebrations brought together past and present students, staff and supporters of the school and VMCH. Read about the event and the success of St Paul's College's alumni on pages 6 and 7.

We also profile one of our amazing supporters, Diane Guiney. Diane and her husband, Patrick, have been donating regularly to VMCH since 2010. Their daughter, Lexi, is a student at St Paul's College and she graces the cover of this edition of *Seasons*. Discover what inspires the Guineys to donate on page 9.

We will soon announce our fundraising direction for 2017. I'm sure that with your continued support and vision, we can achieve more wonderful things to continue to enhance the lives of people we support.

I hope you enjoy reading our magazine.

Sonya Smart
Chief Executive Officer
Villa Maria Catholic Homes



YOU MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

As a not-for-profit leader in the provision of high quality disability, specialist education and aged care services, fundraising is a core element of our business.

Without generous public and individual support, Villa Maria Catholic Homes could not create or deliver the special projects that really transform the lives of the most vulnerable people in our communities.

As an organisation, we want to build inclusive, compassionate and sustainable communities, but we cannot do it alone. And we don't need to. The passion and generosity of the public – our volunteers, stakeholders, donors, sponsors, and corporate partners – continue to impress and empower us.

In recent years, with your help, VMCH has achieved many life-changing projects.

A stand-out initiative was the 2016 **Make A Splash** appeal. Over \$400,000 was raised in 12 months through charity events, donations and a bequest. The focus of the appeal was to renovate the warm-water pool at St Paul's College, our specialist school in Kew.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO ANNOUNCING OUR MAJOR APPEAL FOR 2017, AND EMBARKING ON A FRESH, NEW INITIATIVE TO TRANSFORM THE LIVES OF PEOPLE WHO NEED IT THE MOST.

This much-loved facility, built in the 1970s, is used by children and adults with a disability. Due to the generosity of our supporters, our vision to create a state-of-the-art facility is now a reality.

Other important projects now exist due to your vision and compassion. Over \$33,000 was raised in 2015–2016 to create a **sensory garden** at Austin Street, Victoria's first purpose-built residence for young people with an Acquired Brain Injury (ABI). With no government funding, we asked for donations to help fund the redesign and landscaping of the existing outdoor space. The result is stunning. The 10 Austin Street residents can now easily access and enjoy a water feature with fish, surrounded by plants that stimulate the senses.

As detailed on page 11, the **Young Carer Mentor Program** was the focus of our 2016 Christmas Appeal. In as little as two months, almost \$40,000 was raised via donations, and that program is now secure for another year. This means young carers in the Hume region of Victoria will continue to be matched with local mentors who provide them with emotional support and social opportunities.

Ordinary people can have an incredible impact when they see a need in the community and take it upon themselves to make a difference. People such as Lisa Buxton and Ariel Lakman. The Melbourne couple organised 50 people in 2015 to walk around Manhattan in the *New York Lap4Life* fundraiser. They hoped to raise \$10,000 for St Paul's College **Build a Bus** appeal, helping children with disabilities get to and from the school. Ultimately, the group smashed their fundraising target, raising almost \$29,000 in 11 hours. Other individuals, such as students from St Columba's College in Essendon, raised \$1,042.55 in 2016 for the same appeal.

Bequests are also a vital aspect of our ability to create or fund new projects. A generous bequest made by the late John Edward Dineen kick-started the **Make a Splash** appeal. John, was a member of

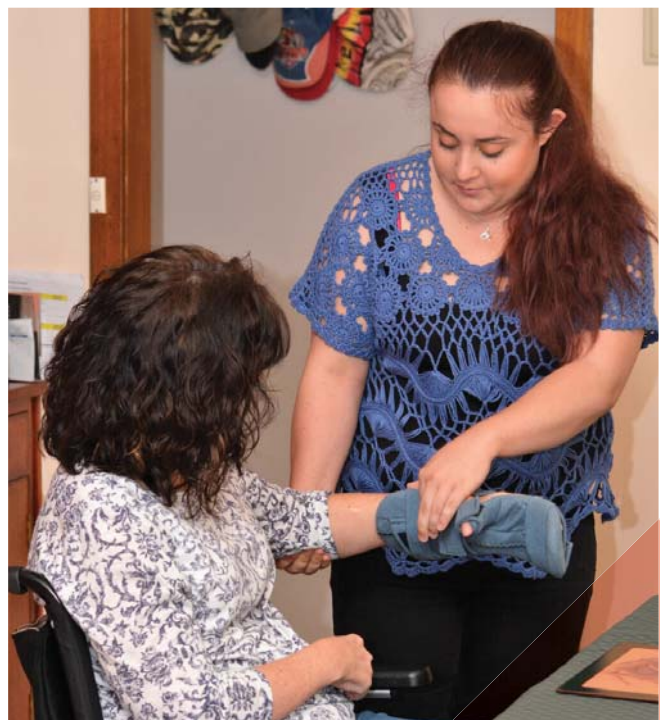
the Brighton Icebergers and his love of swimming will continue in his legacy.

In all of this, what drives us is the people we support: adults and children with disabilities; the aged; and the vulnerable.

We look forward to announcing our major appeal for 2017, and embarking on a fresh, new initiative to transform the lives of the people who need it the most.

RECENT KEY PROJECTS

- Build a Bus Appeal
- Sensory Garden Appeal
- Make a Splash Appeal
- Young Carer Mentor Program



SUPPORT

Transform a life and make a donation to VMCH.

Complete our donation coupon on the back cover, call 1800 036 377 or visit: vmch.com.au/get-involved/make-a-donation

ST PAUL'S CELEBRATES 60 YEARS OF TEACHING

VMCH specialist school, St Paul's College, celebrates 60 years of teaching this year.

It is a celebration close to the hearts of Peter Walsh and Bill Jolley. They both attended the school when it first opened its doors on February 12, 1957.

When they talk about the school, they remember wonderful teachers, the goodwill and generous community support that helped the school become a reality and its dedicated founding principal, Brother Patrick O'Neill.

Brother O'Neill lost his sight in his 40s. What he found was a mission to help others with vision impairment.

He was providing religious education to Catholic children at the Royal Institute for the Blind when Archbishop of Melbourne, Dr Daniel Mannix, asked him to find a way to do more for vision-impaired children in Victoria.

"IT IS WHY, I THINK, A NUMBER OF US HAVE BEEN ACTIVE IN OUR GLOBAL COMMUNITY. THAT HELP THAT WE RECEIVED IS SOMETHING THAT WE PASS ON TO PEOPLE THAT ARE LESS FORTUNATE THAN US." – BILL JOLLEY

He accomplished this by rallying community support to open St Paul's School for the Blind, in Fernhurst Grove, Kew.

The school is now called St Paul's College. It provides education and support to children with a range of disabilities. The school has about 60 students, employs 25 teachers and teachers' assistants. It has allied health staff, a speech therapist, occupational therapist and physiotherapist.

While a lot has changed over the years, many things remain the same. Things like wonderful community support, dedicated teachers and innovative programs.

Peter, who was eight when he started at St Paul's, can recall Brother O'Neill's words to students on the first day of school.



“He told us that we as blind people, we will be able to achieve what we want to. We should aim for the best in life and do the best we can,” he recalls.

“It was amazing what those teachers and Brother O’Neill did. They always aimed for the highest and the best. How lucky were we.”

Bill says community support helped the school thrive in the early years.

“There were no government grants. It was all the community and we owe so much to that philosophy of the community and self-help,” he said.

“It is why, I think, a number of us have been active in our global community. That help that we received is something that we pass on to people that are less fortunate than us.”

Bill and Peter both went on to study at mainstream high schools and at university. They also continued their contact with the school as Villa Maria board members.

Bill was the first blind person in Australia to gain an honours degree in mathematics. He is well-known for his advocacy work. He was a pioneer of computerised braille production in Australia, and led the advocacy work for the installation of audible traffic signals.

Peter studied social work at the University of Melbourne. His career included helping resettle migrants and refugees and he worked for the Department of Housing.

Sheilah Blanchfield was also at St Paul’s from the day it opened in 1957. She was five-years-old and says it was an exciting time.

“Everything was new. It was all very exciting,” she says.

“The camaraderie of the staff in the early days, everybody really wanted it to work and there probably was very little money.”

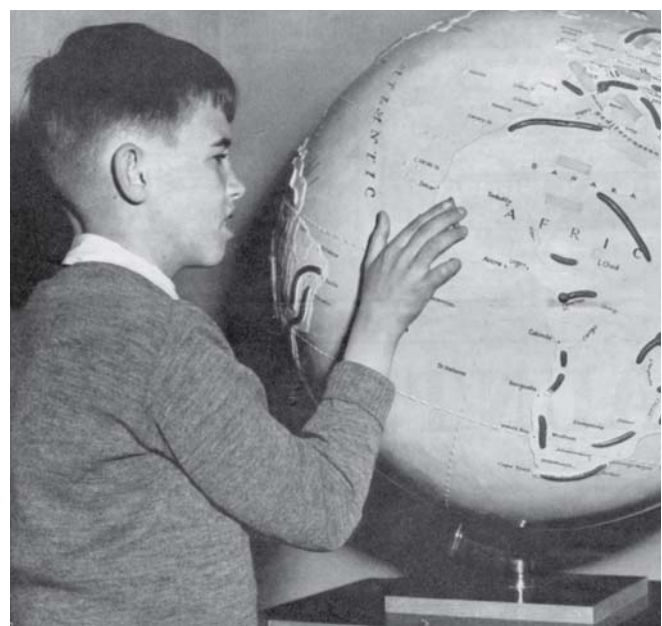
She remembers Br O’Neill encouraged students to aim high.

“He thought that our goal in life should be the same as anyone else’s.

“I think he wanted us to have the best education we could and to grow up to make good decisions... to be happy with whatever we did with our lives.”

As times changed, the school responded and in the late 1970s, it expanded to teach children with other disabilities.

Today, it continues to be innovative with projects like the dual-school and bridging programs. These programs give students experience in mainstream school settings for part of the week. They attend our specialist school the other days and benefit from smaller class sizes and teachers with specialist skills.



Top: Historic picture of St Paul’s College. Bottom: Peter Walsh during his student days. Far left: Past students Peter Walsh (left) and Bill Jolley with St Paul’s College school captains Mikey and Emily.



The mobile service is an extension of the VMCH Rehabilitation Program (Day Therapy Centre) – a highly respected centre that has been operating in Melbourne’s east since 1979. The centre offers a variety of allied health services including physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech pathology, dietetics, remedial massage and podiatry. Allied health services are also delivered to some of VMCH’s residential and retirement living facilities.

“The STAY bus is one more example of our organisation’s commitment to meeting the health needs of clients not just in Melbourne but in regional centres around Victoria,” says Heather Catherwood, VMCH General Manager of Community Services. “It will bring professional allied health services to the client’s ‘doorstep’, whether that is in their home, a retirement village, aged care facility, community centre or church hall. We want to deliver flexible, person-centred services which focus on wellness and reablement.”

ALLIED HEALTH SERVICES GO MOBILE

In a Victorian first for a not-for-profit organisation, Villa Maria Catholic Homes (VMCH) will launch its ‘STAY’ bus this Autumn.

This unique mobile initiative will support seniors in regional Victoria by bringing allied health and therapeutic services directly to them. It aims to assist clients who are housebound, frail, deconditioned or in pain and are unable to visit a clinic or therapist.

“In some regional areas timely access to a range of Allied Health services can be a challenge,” says Jo-Ann Petersen, VMCH Operations Manager of Allied Health and Nursing for Community Services.

“The mobile service is an innovative way to address this issue. Services delivered from the bus can also be tailored to address the needs of individual clients.”

The STAY bus has been fully fitted with equipment to enable physiotherapy, remedial massage and podiatry services. A team of professional therapists will travel with the bus and deliver their particular service to pre-booked clients with the appropriate equipment.

“IN SOME REGIONAL AREAS TIMELY ACCESS TO A RANGE OF ALLIED HEALTH SERVICES CAN BE A CHALLENGE. THE MOBILE SERVICE IS AN INNOVATIVE WAY TO ADDRESS THIS ISSUE.” – JO-ANN PETERSEN, VMCH OPERATIONS MANAGER OF ALLIED HEALTH AND NURSING FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES.

The bus will also offer information and advice to clients on how to manage their health conditions and improve their overall wellbeing. Solutions for safe and independent living at home and the provision of assistive equipment will be part of the service.

The VMCH STAY bus will hit the road this autumn. Shepparton will be its first stop, and other regional centres will follow as client need and community interest is identified.

LEARN MORE

For more details on the new allied health bus call 1300 919 850

DONOR PROFILE

Diane Guiney, a regular donor, reveals why she supports VMCH and how St Paul's College has changed the life of her daughter, Lexi.

Diane, tell us about yourself and family

DG: I am 44 years old and grew up in Tasmania. My entire family lives in Tassie, so we visit often. My husband, Patrick, and I have three children. Nick is 15 and in Year 10, Georgia is 13 and is in Year 8 and Lexi is 11 and in Year 4. I'm a physio and went to University in Queensland. I have worked in many hospitals, private practises and also in nursing homes. After our youngest child, Lexi, was born I decided not to return to work. Lexi faced many challenges as a baby with global developmental delay and an eventual diagnosis of autism. It was helpful for me to be home when she was young, so we could focus on lots of therapy.

You have been regular donor to VMCH since 2010. What is your connection to VMCH?

DG: Lexi attended St Paul's College as a baby for early intervention. We were part of a fantastic music therapy group. We were referred back to St Paul's for the bridging program. It was reassuring to know there were dedicated staff who could help us make the huge transition to school.

What inspires you and your husband to donate?

DG: We donate to St Paul's College for many reasons. We feel blessed to have found such a wonderful school with dedicated staff who continually surpass our expectations. We have experienced first-hand the challenges that families face when you have a child with special needs. These families often experience financial and social disadvantage, so the support that our school provides through VMCH is invaluable. I'm sure anyone observing the work of the staff at St Paul's would also feel motivated to contribute in some way.

Tell me more about how St Paul's has impacted Lexi's education and life.

DG: Lexi has autism and attended the bridging program to help her settle into her mainstream school for Prep. Lexi was extremely anxious and resistant to settling down for learning. The challenges facing her seemed insurmountable but the program at St Paul's addressed a lot of her



behavioural issues and taught us strategies to help with the transition. She has continued on at St Paul's and Sacred Heart schools in the dual-school program and adores both. Lexi has developed into a curious, happy, energetic child. There are challenges that we will always face, but her progress is inspiring.

How would you like to see your donations used?

DG: We'd love to see further improvements to the grounds and classrooms. The bus service will always be a priority and is a lifesaver for many families. Although we do not use respite care, I would love to see this service continue for the families who do access it. Many of the children with special needs adore art, music and drama and flourish in these subjects, so it would be great if these areas were well-funded. The pool is also a wonderful asset to St Paul's and we look forward to its redevelopment.

"I CANNOT THINK OF A MORE REWARDING OR IMPORTANT CHANCE TO GIVE BACK TO THE COMMUNITY THAN DONATING TO VMCH." – DIANE GUINEY

What would you say to other people considering donating or leaving a bequest to VMCH?

DG: I cannot think of a more rewarding or important way to give back to the community than donating to VMCH. Dealing with the challenges of a special needs child can be devastating and disabling to the entire family, but their quality of life can be improved through support. VMCH provide programs that ensure children and their families are not isolated and disadvantaged by their disability. Every child deserves to reach their full potential and feel an important member of our community.

SENSORY GARDEN TAKES SHAPE

We all love a beautiful garden. However, for people with physical, cognitive and sensory challenges, an accessible garden can be life changing.

The new sensory garden under construction at VMCHs' residence for people with an acquired brain injury, Austin Street, will give them a safe, tactile and relaxing environment to enjoy nature.

The only garden they have is a courtyard with a beautiful maple tree. The layout of the space has stopped many residents, several who are in wheelchairs, from fully enjoying it.

VILLA MARIA CATHOLIC HOMES SUPPORTERS HAVE RAISED MORE THAN \$30,000 TO BUILD A SENSORY GARDEN FOR THE 10 RESIDENTS.

That is until now. Villa Maria Catholic Homes supporters have raised more than \$30,000 to build a sensory garden for the 10 residents.

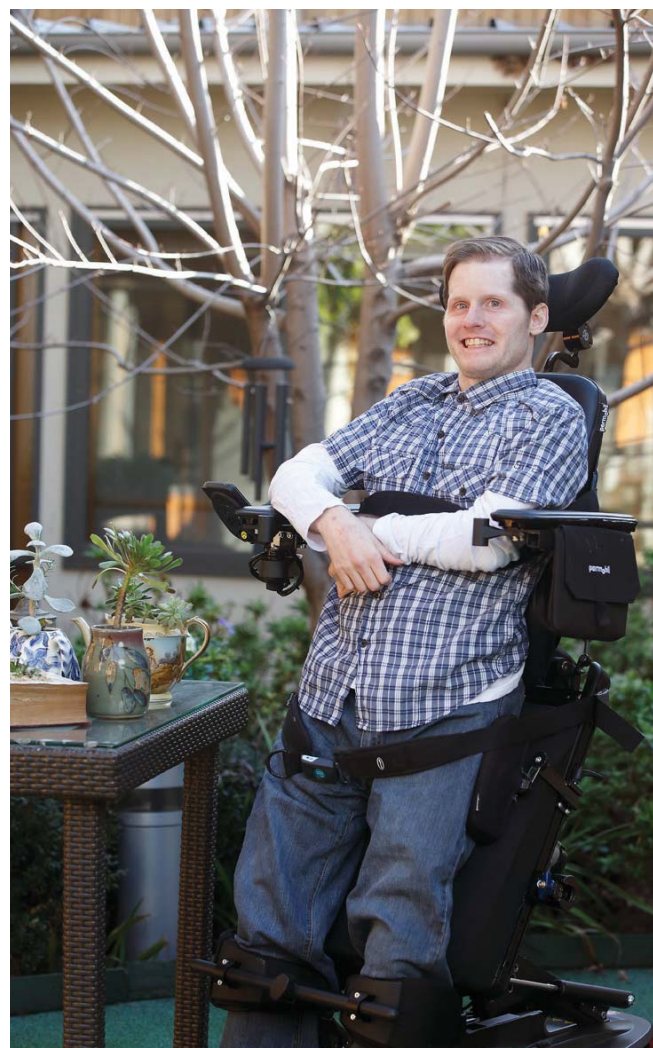
With no government funding available, VMCH asked for donations to help pay for the redesign and landscaping of the existing garden.

The generous donations have paid for three unique landscaped spaces for residents to enjoy.

Landscaper, Damien Carmody, of YMCA ReBuild is currently creating the sensory garden and it will feature a paved pathway for wheelchairs and a raised pond with goldfish. The sensory garden will surround the pond and feature plants that stimulate the senses.

He has finished a smaller and more private garden in the spa room. This is a lovely space with a timber deck, landscaped garden and retaining wall. They have also landscaped the Avery where residents enjoy watching two playful birds fly around and sing.

Austin Street manager Jo Herbert said residents were already using the two smaller spaces and were looking forward to seeing the courtyard finished.



WHAT IS A SENSORY GARDEN?

Most gardens are visually appealing, but a sensory garden is designed to stimulate the other senses as well. The design is also interactive and accessible.

Melbourne's Royal Botanic Gardens feature sensory gardens: the Grey Garden, the Herb Garden and the Children's Garden.

AUSTIN STREET:

Austin Street is Victoria's first residence for young people with an Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) who may otherwise live in a nursing home.

Regardless of the severity of their ABI, the short and long-term goal for Austin Street is to improve their independence and return them to the community as soon as possible.

UPDATE: YOUNG CARER MENTOR PROGRAM

‘The role of mentoring is simple, but its impact on young carers is immeasurable.’

Ask Cobram teenager, Kaitlin Hamilton, who has been caring for her mum, who has Multiple Sclerosis, since the age of 12. Since being part of the Young Carer Mentor Program (YCMP), and being matched with her mentor Marion, Kaitlin now gets the support and ‘time-out’ she so deserves.

The Young Carer Mentor Program is a VMCH initiative that transforms the lives of young people. The program connects carers – between the ages of 8 and 25 – in the Hume region of Victoria with carefully selected mentors who give them emotional support, life skills and social opportunities.

For children and teenagers, caring for a loved one with a disability, mental illness or health issue can be isolating and challenging. It means they don’t have the same opportunities as other children to study, play sport, see friends or simply relax. Other emotional and economic pressures may impact them as well. That is why the support of an adult outside their family unit is valuable and can open up a world of possibilities for them.

The Young Carer Mentor Program was the focus of our recent Christmas appeal. We are now thrilled to announce that due to the generosity of our supporters, people like you, we have raised enough funds to secure the program’s survival in 2017 and possibly beyond.

“I am thrilled that the YCMP can continue this year,” says Marion Rak, the program’s Wangaratta-based coordinator.

“Young carers who are currently matched with mentors will benefit from their ongoing support and get the opportunity to go on outings with other young carers. In addition, the program’s continuance will allow those on the waiting list to be matched with suitable mentors.”

The program’s survival also means that Marion can continue in her important role as Program Coordinator: engaging with the community, sourcing and training mentors, matching carers with mentors, running social events, and advocating for the needs of young people in caring roles.

Thank you to everyone who showed their support for these amazing young Australians by making a donation to the Young Carer Mentor Program.



QUICK FACTS*

- Young carers are children or young people up to 25 years, who help care in families where someone has an illness, a disability, a mental health issue or who has an alcohol or other drug problem
- YCMP began in 2013 and covers the Hume region of Victoria
- 100 young carers have been supported by the YCMP
- 20 young carers are currently matched with mentors
- 12 young carers are waiting to be matched with mentors
- There are three young carer/mentor social outings planned for 2017

These facts are accurate as at February, 2017

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 most vulnerable people in our 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

 \$25

 \$50

 \$73

 \$125

\$ amount of choice

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I am considering leaving a bequest and would like more information

I wish to find out more about making a monthly gift

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