

SEEDS

SPECIALIST EDUCATION AND EVOLVING DISABILITY SERVICES

ISSUE **05**

Building bridges
to a great start

Students
graduate

NDIS helps
love blossom

News from
around VMCH



**VMCH SUPPORTS
ALL LEARNERS
WATCH THEM
BLOOM**

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VMCH offers an innovative approach to helping preps enjoy a great start at school.

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VMCH helped Gerrard and Margaret secure NDIS support and move into their own home. They recently celebrated their wedding. Picture by Lachlan Bence, courtesy of The Courier newspaper.

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SEEDS

We welcome your feedback and
contributions to SEEDS.

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A WORD FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

Welcome to the first edition of the SEEDS magazine for 2018.

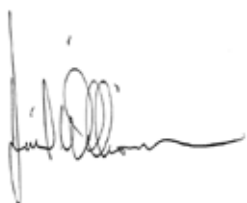
Many families and individuals we support are by now back at school, work and activities after the summer holidays. We look forward to another great year of helping you achieve your goals and enjoy life through the many services and programs we run.

Our specialist school, St Paul's College, welcomed back its students in February. Our story on page four looks at the school's innovative Bridging Program. It helps preps with additional needs enjoy a successful transition to mainstream school.

We are also continuing to help people make the most out of the NDIS this year. Whether you are new to the NDIS or you are preparing for your plan review – VMCH has the expertise and the resources to support you.

The SEEDS magazine offers a picture of our wide range of services. Whether it is NDIS pre-planning, support co-ordination or direct support services – our NDIS experts can help you achieve your goals. With more than 110 years' experience providing services and support to people with a disability, we also continue to offer innovative and inclusive services for people of all ages and abilities.

On a final note, I would like to thank all the people who supported our Christmas Appeal to transform VMCH's Flexible Respite Service in Wantirna South. So far, the appeal has raised about \$85,000 for this great service and the 200 adults and children who use it.



David Williamson
General Manager Community and
Disability Services



Your support has helped VMCH raise about \$140,000 for new toys and equipment for children with additional needs. Story on page 11.

WHETHER YOU ARE NEW TO THE NDIS OR YOU ARE PREPARING FOR YOUR PLAN REVIEW – VMCH HAS THE EXPERTISE AND THE RESOURCES TO SUPPORT YOU.



Jack is one of the preps taking part in this year's Bridging Program at St Paul's College.

BUILDING A BRIDGE TO A GREAT START TO SCHOOL

Preps enter the gates of their new school dressed in the same uniform and they're about the same age. However, scan their little faces and it is clear each child is feeling different things about school.

Villa Maria Catholic Homes' specialist school, St Paul's College, is no exception and its prep grade, called the Bridging Program, recognises and supports the different strengths, interests and dreams of each student and their family.

Ten preps are part of the innovative Bridging Program this year. It provides preps with additional needs a gradual transition into mainstream school. They attend St Paul's three days a week where they benefit from small class sizes, support from allied health professionals and specialist teachers. They also attend the mainstream school of their choice for the other two days.

Parent, Gabrielle, says her family chose the Bridging Program for their six-year-old son Jack this year to

PARENT, GABRIELLE, SAYS HER FAMILY CHOSE THE BRIDGING PROGRAM FOR THEIR SIX-YEAR-OLD SON JACK THIS YEAR TO GIVE HIM THE BEST CHANCE TO ATTEND HIS LOCAL PRIMARY SCHOOL FULLTIME EVENTUALLY.

give him the best chance to attend his local primary school fulltime eventually.

"We wanted to set Jack up for success in mainstream schooling by being able to teach him the fundamentals of turn-taking, sitting in a group without getting distracted, correct social behaviours and general school routine," Gabrielle said.

Jack is an adorable six-year-old who loves all things on wheels, playing at the park and riding his bike.

"Give him a truck, digger, train, bus, boat and he is a happy boy," Gabrielle said.

Jack, who has Autism Spectrum Disorder, started prep with nine other students in the program at the beginning of this year.

“We love that there isn’t the mainstream pressure on Jack to write his name, read, and draw at this stage. These are all the things that he struggles with and in a classroom of 18 he would get a bit lost and potentially go backwards,” Gabrielle said.

Bridging Program teacher, Gillian Bryan, says Jack and his classmates benefit from a smaller class size, a play-based teaching approach and the program covers the Victorian Curriculum with modifications where necessary.

“It’s very much the same structure of a prep grade. We make reasonable adjustments to the individual children’s requirements,” she said.

Gillian and her team also regularly visit Jack’s mainstream school to support his transition. This can include everything from providing practical resources, sharing their expertise with teachers at the mainstream school and offering tips to adjust the curriculum where needed.

About 66 per cent of children with special needs attend mainstream schools and about 10 per cent go to specialist schools. The remainder, about 24 per cent attend special classes within mainstream schools.

Research strongly backs the benefits of inclusive education. It shows students with disability and their peers who do not have special needs benefit from being together. Students with special needs generally perform better academically, socially, behaviourally and their communication and language development is generally better. Meanwhile, their peers learn about diversity and inclusion.

Gillian, who has been with the Bridging Program since it started 12 year ago, has reassuring advice for parents who are not sure about which way to go when deciding on a school for their child with special needs.

She said parents knew their children best and encouraged them to trust their instincts.

“You’re not going to do them any damage if things are not working out one way. There is always a plan B, there’s always a plan C. As you go on the journey you become very good at changing plans and being flexible because it’s not one size fits all with children,” she said.

“Ultimately you have to put them in a place where they are going to be safe, respected and valued for who they are and for what they can do. The whole aim of education is to bring out the best in children so that they are the best that they can be and so it’s just about choosing a setting where you believe that will happen.”

By the end of the school year, the Bridging Program teachers help the parents consider their options for the following year.

Gillian said she loved seeing the changes in students as the year progresses.

“These children just surprise me every day,” she said.

“Give them a challenge, encourage them and teach them confidence ... They will rise to the occasion, hit those goals and often exceed them.”

To learn more about our specialist school, St Paul’s College, call VMCH on 1800 798 921.

Sources: Victorian Department of Education & Training & Children at School with Disability, ABS, 2009.



“GIVE THEM A CHALLENGE, ENCOURAGE THEM AND TEACH THEM CONFIDENCE ... THEY WILL RISE TO THE OCCASION, HIT THOSE GOALS AND OFTEN EXCEED THEM” – BRIDGING PROGRAM TEACHER GILLIAN BRYAN.

A FEW THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN VISITING POTENTIAL SCHOOLS

- Ask about programs offered, staff ratios, policies and practices around children with special needs
- Think about what support your child needs and if the school can meet those needs
- Ask if allied health therapists are permitted to visit the school
- What vibe do you get while walking around the school and talk to staff?



Graduating students, back left, James, support worker Deb, Claire, trainer Sharon. Front from left, Lenny, Monique, James C.

STUDENTS CELEBRATE GRADUATION

Congratulations to these five students who completed a Certificate 1 Transition Education course offered by VMCH in Wantirna.

The students took part in the accredited course which ran for 43 weeks for a full day, each Thursday, in 2017.

Trainer, Sharon Spencer, congratulated the students for their commitment to the course.

“I have certainly looked forward to Thursdays each week and have enjoyed the process of planning and creating as many different hands-on activities, various worksheets and individual experiences to enhance the learning environment of this group,” she said.

“I THANK THE STUDENTS FOR ALL THEIR HARD WORK, THEIR ENJOYMENT OF PARTICIPATING IN MANY DISCUSSIONS, THEIR CANDID HUMOUR AND LAUGHTER. IT HAS MADE FOR AN ENJOYABLE YEAR.” – TRAINER, SHARON SPENCER

“I thank the students for all their hard work, their enjoyment of participating in many discussions, their candid humour and laughter. It has made for an enjoyable year.”

This year VMCH and a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) is offering the Certificate 1 Work Experience Education course at its Wantirna community hub.

The course offers students the chance to learn and practice skills needed in the workforce. It also aims to build confidence, self-esteem and explore options for employment and volunteering.

Students will be able to gain work experience by working in a food van later this year.

VMCH Disability Services offers vocational, social and community activities at its four community hubs across eastern Melbourne at Croydon, Kew, Mount Waverley and Wantirna.

The community hubs are meeting places for people aged 16 and over to come together to develop skills, independence and to build friendships and connections.

Activities offered at our hubs or in the community includes:

- Sports, arts and craft, music and disco, excursions and drama
- Therapeutic activities to improve health and well-being
- Vocational supports include training and transition from school, supports to find work, undertake work experience and to volunteer.

For more information call 1800 798 921.

LIFE SKILLS

Are you ready to take the next step from school towards work and independence?

Life Skills is a new service for teenagers over 16 and young adults. It focuses on daily living, work readiness, self-advocacy and community participation.

It aims to help participants gain confidence and make friends by providing opportunities for volunteering, work experience and developing life skills.

It offers practical learning experiences like money handling, budgeting, continue further studies to gain employment and travelling on public transport.

For more information call 1800 798 921.



OUR SUPPORT DELIVERED YOUR WAY

VMCH's team of health professional can offer you the supports you need to reach your independence goals, promote general health and well-being and access equipment you need and connect to your family and your community.

Our therapeutic supports include:

Psychology | Occupational therapy | Speech pathology | Allied health assistant
Music therapy – children only at this stage

CALL US 1800 798 921 or email seeds.response@vmch.com.au

NDIS HELPS LOVE BLOSSOM

It was an extra romantic Valentine's Day for Gerrard and Margaret this year, as they counted down to their wedding day on February 18.

The couple, both 65, are NDIS participants. Finding a home together and getting married were important goals for them.

Villa Maria Catholic Homes (VMCH) has helped them find the right home and has continued to support them with their daily living needs. VMCH's Direct Care Service helps the couple attend appointments, social activities, shopping and other daily activities.

VMCH Disability Services Regional Manager, Jo Debrincat, said Gerrard and Margaret met while living in supported accommodation. She said that more options opened up for the couple once they secured NDIS support.

**"THE NDIS IS ALL ABOUT EMPOWERING PEOPLE TO LIVE ORDINARY AND FULFILLED LIVES. GERRARD AND MARGARET'S MAJOR GOAL WAS TO LIVE TOGETHER."
– VMCH DISABILITY SERVICES REGIONAL MANAGER, JO DEBRINCAT**

"The NDIS is all about empowering people to live ordinary and fulfilled lives. Gerrard and Margaret's major goal was to live together," she said.

"The NDIS gave them the ability to make choices and plan their future together. This would have been a lot more of a challenge without the supports they are now receiving."

Margaret says she loves their new home. Gerrard, a keen cook and gardener, enjoys working in their garden, growing flowers for Margaret and cooking for them every night.

VMCH has a team of people across Victoria that can provide support for everyday activities in the home or the local community.



VMCH helped Gerrard and Margaret secure NDIS support and move into their own home. Picture by Lachlan Bence, courtesy of The Courier newspaper.

At home: our Direct Care service can help with activities including:

- Personal care
- Overnight support
- Meal preparation
- Cleaning and household chores
- Assisting with recreational activities and spending time with friends

In the community:

- Shopping
- Attending recreational activities
- Attending appointments such as medical or hairdressers
- Visiting the local gym, sports clubs or other disability services

NDIS PLANNING AND SUPPORT COORDINATION

VMCH provides support coordination for NDIS participants.

We can work with you to help you achieve your life goals and dreams. Our Support Coordinators can help you establish and organise the services that you choose as they appear in your approved NDIS plan. We will assist you to find the right service providers, coordinate all your supports and help you if any issues arise.

For more information call us on 1800 798 921.

VMCH RUNS FREE NDIS WORKSHOPS

VMCH regularly runs free workshops about NDIS planning. VMCH staff will share tips and inside knowledge about the NDIS planning process to ensure that you are ready for your NDIS meeting.

For more information please call 1800 798 921 or send an email to: seeds.reponse@vmch.com.au

Excited about
your possibilities
with the

NDIS?

So are we!



Our Disability Services team supports people of all ages and abilities at home, out and about, or at our centres. Call our NDIS experts to book a **free consultation** about your NDIS plan.

1800 798 921 or email seeds.response@vmch.com.au

vmch.com.au/disabilityservices

VMCH
Villa Maria Catholic Homes

NEWS FROM AROUND VMCH



SCHOOL'S OUT FOR ST PAUL'S GRADUATES

VMCH specialist school, St Paul's College, said farewell to six of its senior students this year who graduated when the school broke up for 2017.

The students, Jacob, Natasa, Alana, Josh, Emily and Mikey are all part of the senior class of 2017.

Senior teacher, Justin McFarlane, said the students have been busy this year with studies in numeracy and literacy that focus on developing functional skills in these areas.

Students also participated in elective programs around areas of interest, independent living skills, travel education and training, work education and work experience for some students.

For students Mikey and Emily, it has been a great year and highlights included their roles as school captains and working in the school café.

Mikey and Emily, who have attended the school since grade prep, will next year join a program which supports young people to transition from school to the adult community.

Mikey said one of the activities he will be involved in helps look after animals that have been injured in the wild.

"It's going to be so much fun. It's a very friendly kind of place," Mikey said.

TEACH AND TUMBLE RAISES \$140,000

Villa Maria Catholic Homes' (VMCH) major fundraising appeal for 2017 has raised \$140,000 to buy new toys, digital resources and equipment for a service that supports young children with additional needs.

About 150 children, who use VMCH's Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS) in Kew, have started to receive some fabulous new resources, thanks to the generosity of the supporters of the Teach & Tumble fundraising appeal.

Koby, pictured, is having a great time using one of the new instruments purchased for our preschooler programs.

If you would like to learn more about the services offered by VMCH ECIS please call 1800 798 921.



HERE COMES SANTA

No surprises that Santa and his big sack of presents were the highlight of the Christmas Party for children and teenagers who use VMCH's disability services.

The animals, sausage sizzle and jumping castle were also a hit at the party held at Chesterfield Farm.



CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

Live music, great company and a sausage sizzle made for one merry celebration at this year's Christmas party for people who use VMCH's adult disability services.

Here's a few photos from a jolly good afternoon.





I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A ONE-OFF DONATION TO THE VILLA MARIA CATHOLIC HOMES APPEAL TO RENOVATE ITS FLEXIBLE RESPITE SERVICE IN WANTIRNA SOUTH.

I PLEDGE TO DONATE \$

My donation will help pay for a sensory garden, water feature, quiet area and play equipment.

Full Name:

Address:

Postcode: Phone:

Email:

DONATIONS OF \$2 AND OVER ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE.

Cash Cheque (made payable to Villa Maria Catholic Homes)

Please debit my (tick one) Visa Mastercard

Cardholder's Full Name:

Credit Card Number:
 _____/_____/_____/_____

Expiry:
 ____/____

Cardholder's Signature:

Yes, I would like to receive more information about the VMCH Appeal and the people it supports.

VMCH BANKING DETAILS
ACCOUNT NAME: VMCH OPERATING ACCOUNT
BANK: NAB
BSB: 083-125
ACCOUNT NO: 515 620 356

vmch.com.au



VMCH supports people with a disability, their families, and carers through every stage of their life.

NDIS AND SPECIALTY SERVICES

- NDIS support coordination and plan management
- Allied health services, speech & occupational therapy, physiotherapy
- Support in the home and community

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

- Early Childhood Intervention Services, music & play therapy
- Supported inclusion into mainstream schools
- Specialist education school, ages 5-18
- After-hours school care, school holiday programs & camping weekends
- Short-term accommodation (respite)

ADULT

- Group-based activities
- Day activity programs to develop social and life skills
- Camping weekends
- Short-term accommodation (respite)

CALL US

We can help you make the most of your NDIS plan.

T: 1800 798 921

E: seeds.response@vmch.com.au