

VOLUNTEERS' NEWSLETTER

March 2011



Dear Volunteers

Welcome to Autumn.

We have had more than our usual wave of interest in volunteering at the beginning of the year, thanks largely to a volunteer recruitment advertisement placed in a recent edition of "The Big Issue" which has had a fantastic response (see Welcome to new volunteers). We now number more than 70 volunteers at WCS.

I look forward to seeing all our new volunteers at the Orientation session on Wednesday 30 March (please see p.3 for details).

Please also be ready to celebrate National Volunteer Week with us, which this year will be 9-15 May.

I hope the year is going well for you all.

Regards and Best Wishes

Geoff Hayes
Volunteer Co-ordinator
Woden Community Service

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Smile:

A curve ...

that can set a lot of things

straight.

Volunteer Profile: Chris Flaherty



I have only been a volunteer with Woden Community Service for about 15 months and I am greatly enjoying the experience. I realise that compared to many other volunteers, my contribution is rather small but, hopefully, it is of some value and keeps me out of mischief on Fridays.

The Home and Community Care (HACC) programme runs several groups during the week to provide social interaction, fun and activities for older people living in the Woden and Weston Creek areas. One such group meets at the Lutheran Church Hall in Lyons every Friday. The group co-ordinator plans and organises the activities while the volunteers, including myself, help with lunch. It is a superb venue with an excellent kitchen and with several willing hands we provide a nutritious two course meal each Friday.

We particularly enjoy sharing lunch with the group participants who have many interesting things to chat about. Then comes the washing up and this is where my expertise lies!!! There is such a fun atmosphere in the kitchen that all the clearing up does not seem much of a chore at all. Occasionally I have been asked to call Bingo games for the group.

I have now been retired for about 18 months. And initially found it quite difficult to settle into life without work after so many years.

My working life started sometime last century when I underwent training to become a registered nurse in Birmingham UK. After qualifying and working for some time I took a few years off to have our two children and move to Australia.

On returning to the workforce I enrolled in a refresher course at the then Woden Valley Hospital to bring my nursing skills back up to date. After working on relief at the hospital I accepted a position at Jindalee Nursing Home working three nights over each weekend. This fitted well with the children and also allowed me to enrol at the University of Canberra to study part time for a Bachelor of Applied Science in Health Education.

Having completed my degree six years later I decided I had had enough of night duty and started looking for employment with more social hours.

About this time I joined the staff of the HACC program at WCS and stayed for the next 22 years, becoming manager in 2000. I do miss it but my little contribution on Fridays keeps me in touch.

My husband and I really enjoy travelling. In April last year we did a trip which involved sailing across the top of Australia from Cairns to Darwin, travelling from there on the Ghan to Adelaide and then driving back home to Canberra round the bottom of South Australia and Victoria. In June we then visited some friends in Victoria on Vancouver Island in Canada. Last November we went to Port Douglas for a few days. Looking after our five year old granddaughter one day a week has been an absolute joy as she is so full of life and fun.

Retirement is not all bad!



Welcome to new volunteers

Welcome to the new volunteers who have joined us in the last few months:

Trish Boekel	The Big Issue
Angela Bouris	The Big Issue
Sharon Chadwick	The Big Issue
Jo Edwards	The Big Issue
Attila Fenyuesi	The Big Issue
Sarah Ferguson	Family Support
Juliana Kelly	ESL Class
Jessica Lange	The Big Issue
Pam McGregor	ESL Class
Anne Murn	The Big Issue
Sarah O'Connor	The Big Issue
David Robertson	The Big Issue
Paula Trevisan	Family Support

We wish you an enjoyable and rewarding volunteering experience at WCS.

National Volunteer Week

National Volunteer Week 2011 will be celebrated in the week of 9 – 15 May.

WCS programs will be arranging to celebrate this week with volunteers who contribute to the work of their programs.

Volunteer Orientation

An orientation session will be held for new and recently arrived volunteers ... and for any volunteer interested in learning more about Woden Community Service and the context for their work as volunteers.

This session will provide important information to guide your work as volunteers.

When? Wednesday 30 March 2011

Time? 10.00 – 12 noon

Where? Community Room at WCS
(26 Corinna St. woden)

Please RSVP to Geoff by Wednesday 16 March to confirm your attendance at this session:

Ph: 6234 6862

Mob: 0409 854 994

Email: geoff.hayes@wcs.org.au

Focus on the organisation support programs at WCS.

In each issue of the Volunteers' Newsletter we focus on a different WCS program – to inform volunteers about the work and staffing of WCS as the context for your work as volunteers. For this issue, the focus is on the various teams within WCS which support the staff and different program activities ... without them, the rest of our work would not be possible!

Sharon White is our Office Manger. Sharon manages all the day to day issues of equipping, running and maintaining the office including the Reception and support for the Director and Board of WCS.



Melanie Bru and Julie Leck are the Reception staff who are an important part of the public face of WCS, as the first point of contact we have with visitors and people making enquiries about the work of WCS.



Nick Ilic is the Manager of the WCS Human Resource and IT team. Nick is responsible for developing and maintaining the Human Resource framework for the employment of some 200 staff including conditions of service and the range of personnel policies and guidelines which ensure that WCS complies with Federal and Territory legislation and formal employment agreements.



Stuart Hogan is our IT Officer and is responsible for developing, implementing and maintaining the IT, communications and security systems for WCS.

Gary Daw is the Manager of our Finance and Accounts team comprising of Deepak Mehta (Assistant Finance Manager), Saowanee Riding (Assistant Finance Manager) and Vicki Jones (Payroll Officer).

This team manages the finance and accounting requirements of an annual budget of \$8million and the payment of salaries and allowances to 200 staff



WCS Volunteers at The Big Issue Christmas Party in Glebe Park:
Jessica Lange, Erin Stevens, Sarah Cooke and Sharon Chadwick
... it now seems a long time ago!



Café Ink ... at the Woden Library



Puzzle Corner

The first two correct responses from volunteers to reach me (by either phone or email) with the correct answer to the following puzzle will receive 2 Dendy Cinema tickets.

(Any 2010 winners are now again eligible for this prize).

A number of children are standing in a circle. They are evenly spaced and the 5th child is directly opposite the 19th child. How many children are there altogether?

Email: geoff.hayes@wcs.org.au

***Never put both your feet in your mouth at the same time
... because then you won't have a leg to stand on.***

Staff Profile: Keith Mahar
Peer Support Worker, Personal Helpers
and Mentors Program (PHaMs)



It is correct to say that my life has significantly benefitted as a result of volunteering in Canberra. In fact, I made this same point to an audience at the World Psychiatric Association International Congress in 2007, while presenting on my recovery from severe mental illness.

I was born in Montreal in 1962. The first time that I experienced symptoms of psychosis was in Toronto during the summer of 1994. At that point in time I had a corporate broadcasting career, a property in the city and a plan to retire early in my life. By the time I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder in the spring of 1996, my life had fundamentally changed. My career, house and plan to retire early were all gone. More problematic was the fact that I suffered from the tormenting thought that I was never going to be able to work again or enjoy a

satisfying and productive life. As it turned out, I was wrong.

In 1998, I fell in love with an Australian woman. Fortunately, she also fell in love with me. Three years later, Gail and I moved from Toronto to Canberra. In early 2002, I saw a poster by Mental Illness Education ACT (MIEACT) requesting individuals to train to become volunteer educators, sharing their personal stories of mental illness with classes of high school students to both reduce stigma and encourage early help seeking behaviour.

Over the last nine years, I have made significantly more than 100 presentations as a MIEACT volunteer educator. Becoming involved with MIEACT played a major role in my mental health recovery, as I started to feel less and less ashamed of being a person with a severe mental illness. In turn, I started feeling more confident and capable of working. Moreover, being out of the psychiatric closet actually opened doors for me.

In 2004, I was hired for a day per week by the Mental Health Council of Australia as a Consumer Advisor & Policy officer, a positive experience which also helped my recovery process. The following year, I returned to university to study social work. After completing the requirements for my degree in December 2007, I started working three days a week as a case manager in Community Youth Justice for the ACT Government.

In May 2009, I joined Woden Community Service, working four days a week as a peer support worker in the Personal Helpers and Mentors Program (PHaMs); a recovery-oriented mental health program funded by the Commonwealth. A few weeks ago, I started working full-time in the same program ... my first full-time employment since 1994.

See the following websites for more information about Keith and his work:

www.mentallympians.org

www.keithmahar.com.