

together stronger

A NEWSLETTER FOR ALL UNITINGCARE AGEING SUPPORTERS | SPRING EDITION 2010



An important message from Gillian McFee Director UnitingCare Ageing



Welcome to the first edition of *Together Stronger*, the new quarterly newsletter for partners, friends and supporters of UnitingCare Ageing.

In each edition we will be showcasing exciting developments across the organisation, highlighting some of our passionate staff and volunteers, campaign updates, our UnitingCare Christmas Appeal – Operation Santa and much more.

Our first edition features information about our award winning dementia program and a construction update for new developments in the Mid North Coast and South Coast.

UnitingCare Ageing is committed to changing the landscape of aged care and shifting perceptions of ageing itself. Physically we may slow down but I strongly believe getting older can also bring the realisation of wisdom gained through the experience of years; opportunities to keep learning and to teach others our skills; watch our families expand and importantly, the drive to keep pursuing our passions and our dreams.

As part of the Campaign for Care of Older Australian's coalition, we are helping to drive The Grand Plan which focuses on a new vision for aged care. In the lead up to the Federal Election our staff, residents, clients, volunteers, Uniting Church Ministers and congregation members all participated in different aspects of this campaign to work together to make a difference.

This campaign will be ongoing until the final report of the Productivity Commission. UnitingCare Ageing will keep you informed about future initiatives and I urge you to show your support and get involved by visiting the campaign website: www.thegrandplan.com.au

We are also pushing our advocacy agenda through submissions into the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Aged Care. In our most recent submission we identified a number of key issues including:

- The use of technology;
- Innovative ways of providing care (particularly exploring separation of accommodation from care); and
- Special needs groups.

We now eagerly await the final report of the Productivity Commission and hope it brings with it some of the huge reforms required for this industry.

I hope that you enjoy this newsletter and the information that it holds. Be sure to check out the back page which details Operation Santa – the UnitingCare Christmas Appeal and the exciting ways you can get involved and show your support.

Gillian McFee
Director
UnitingCare Ageing



Maida Chand: ACSA Employee of the Year

Congratulations to Maida Chand, Manager Mental Health and Homelessness, UnitingCare Ageing Sydney Region, on winning the Aged and Community Services Australia (ACSA) National Employee of the Year for 2010.

This award is recognition of Maida's outstanding passion and commitment to the care of older people.

Maida was presented the award at the ACSA National Conference in Hobart in September. On receiving the award Maida remained humble, citing the stories of triumph and happiness for clients as what makes it all worthwhile.

Maida has been working with the organisation for over 18 years, and has over 30 years experience in aged care. During the past 18 years with UnitingCare Ageing, Maida has specialised in the field of mental health and homelessness.

She has strived to forge strong links with external bodies to give the best possible care to clients with mental health issues and homelessness. Maida has not only cared for clients; she has also educated the community on squalor, mental health and homelessness at aged care conferences.

Congratulations also go to the UnitingCare NSW.ACT Communication Team on being finalists in the ACSA National Media Award for positive portrayal of older people in the media. Both Maida and the Communication Team were put forward for the National Award after winning the NSW Awards for their respective categories.

Mother and Babies Group opens new windows of opportunity for people with dementia

“Each friend represents a world in us, a world possibly not born until they arrive, and it is only by this meeting that a new world is born” Anon.

In the case of people living in the dementia specific service of UnitingCare Ageing's Starrett Lodge in Hamlyn Terrace, new worlds are not just being born; they are being rediscovered, thanks to the introduction of a Mother and Babies Group.

Diagnosed with mild to severe forms of dementia, those involved have experienced a new lease of life since the group began.

Staff observations that families were visiting loved ones more frequently following an upgrade of the service's surrounds, including the addition of a sensory garden and atrium, led to the idea of creating one-on-one interactions between residents, staff, mothers and young children.

Aims included increasing quality of life for the residents and their families, providing intergenerational opportunities; increasing staff knowledge of the personal characteristics of the people they care for as well as giving families and other community members more incentive to visit and spend time with loved ones.

Now held weekly, the group is benefiting all involved – transforming both residents who have new opportunities to connect with other people and those who visit them.

Residents read books to their young friends, watch them play a game, and

share their own stories of childhood and parenthood. Visits are eagerly anticipated with women applying makeup and residents dressing up in honour of their guests.

In other areas of their lives, residents are more at peace with themselves and the world around them. Importantly, barriers between people with dementia and those without have broken down, increasing understanding, love and connection.

Residents without dementia who share the site have now started visiting to join in the fun and those in the formerly isolated dementia specific service are experiencing a return to community interactions they once knew; imparting their wisdom, knowledge and stories with others. In some instances encounters from the previous week and newly formed relationships are being remembered and savoured as new memories.

The initiative recently won an award through the Positive Living in Aged Care Awards. These awards aim to recognise residential aged care providers in NSW who are implementing strategies to promote positive approaches to the prevention and management of mental health conditions.

The service has now started visiting a local Preschool and new encounters are relished with each trip.

Healthy Living for Seniors celebrating life!

130 guests including 80 of our healthy living seniors recently celebrated the expansion of their day program into the Lake Macquarie area by gathering together for lunch at Wangi Workers Club, alongside the lake on a sunny Winter day.



Many seniors expressed delight with the lovely setting, being in the company of their friends, having the opportunity to meet members of other healthy living groups and seeing that many people come along and have a day out like they do, with one exclaiming “believe me I want to be first on the bus next time!”

The program, which began last year in the Central Coast area, has become very successful; often starting with just a few members, the groups have gradually grown over time, with at least one group now having a waiting list to join.

Designed to cater for people aged 65 years and over The Healthy Living for Seniors day program provides a unique opportunity for individuals to engage with their local communities in a supportive environment. The program

is designed to support health and well-being through a focus on social participation, independence, and quality of life. Seniors can enjoy the company of others in a safe, relaxed and enjoyable environment whilst participating in leisure and lifestyle activities including health and well-being monitoring, supervised gentle exercise, social outings, cooking classes, healthy mind activities, social support, living skills and life planning.

Our seniors’ feedback speaks volumes about the benefits of the program with comments about the opportunities to learn new skills and establish social networks, giving a greater sense of independence. The program also benefits fulltime carers by offering respite.

Feedback from a member’s sibling, “he really enjoys his Wednesdays and Thursdays with UnitingCare... he keeps on telling me how happy he is... thanks to you.”

A dedicated team of UnitingCare Ageing staff run the leisure and lifestyle activities, with the assistance of wonderful volunteers from the local community.

Currently, the service is provided by UnitingCare Ageing Hunter, Central Coast and New England Region across eleven locations in partnership with the Uniting Church at Wangi Wangi, Toronto, Charlestown and Garden Suburb – through Lake Macquarie; and Terrigal, Umina, Gosford, Narara, Kincumber, Mannering Park and Toukley – across the Central Coast.

Acacia – Living Life Well

In 2008 UnitingCare Ageing was appointed to conduct a project on opportunities for implementing Wellness, Capacity Building and Restorative Care approaches within the Northern Sydney Home and Community Care (HACC) sector.

The pilot program, *Acacia Living Life*, provides centre-based activities and

support for older people and their families living in the Berowra, Brooklyn and Galston communities. It works in partnership with HACC and other service providers, community groups and volunteers to enhance independence, quality of life and social participation. Thanks to UnitingCare Ageing bequest funding, this program has now been implemented in all

Northern Sydney Region day centres Acacia’s better practice initiatives are included in the Ageing, Disability and Home Care Department of Human Services NSW (ADHC) resource, ‘A handbook for community care services’. Launched in October, this print and online resource has been produced to encourage the adoption of evidence-based better practices.

Property Development Update: UnitingCare Ageing South Eastern Region

UnitingCare is paving the way to effect positive change in the lives of the people we serve. The development of UnitingCare Ageing's service model focuses on healthy ageing, independence and choice for older people, integrating them into the community and developing services around the person.

The service model underpins UnitingCare Ageing's new service development projects across NSW and the ACT. In this edition we highlight development projects in UnitingCare Ageing South Eastern Region.

Residential Aged Care development

Location: Lakeview, Shellharbour, NSW

Status: Under construction

A new 100 unit residential aged care service in Shellharbour is currently under construction and will be completed mid next year. It will provide 80 low care and 20 high care places, incorporating provision for residents from the Italian community as well as dementia care.

The design has been undertaken with sensitivity to the environment and is located on an extensive site which currently contains 25 independent living units and will in the future include an innovative intergenerational senior's community precinct.



Mirinjani Nursing Home extension

Location: Weston, ACT

Status: Complete

Nursing Home now comprises a 124 bed residential aged care service. A new 64 bed wing was officially opened in 2009 followed by complete refurbishment of the original wing which was finished in July 2010. The improvements are designed to provide the community with a new style of service for older people. Master planning of the site took into account the specific needs of older people with considerations such as accessibility, safety, security and comfort. The extension won the 2010 NSW Australian Institute of Building Award for Professional Excellence in Building in its category.

For more information about any of our service developments in UnitingCare Ageing South Eastern Region please call 1300 236 030.

Seniors Precinct development

Location: Gordon, ACT

Status: Planning

UnitingCare Ageing is aiming to turn the provision of care on its head at an upcoming development in Gordon by providing care at different stages which can be delivered through various housing options. UnitingCare Ageing's new service approach focuses more on integration, providing communities with the chance to continue sharing skills, services and experiences across generations.

Upon completion the Seniors Precinct will incorporate a range of residential housing options, community services and support services, signalling greater choice and independence for local seniors.



Banks Lodge Nursing Home extension

Location: Peakhurst, NSW

Status: Complete

UnitingCare Ageing Banks Lodge is a low care residential service which has recently undergone a major upgrade and extension to provide eight discrete houses, each with its own dining/lounge and activity areas around a central landscaped courtyard. The bedrooms are spacious and care is provided discretely at a time and place of the person's choice.

Age no barrier to achieving dreams

“As a teenager I read lots of books about Paris and started learning French,” says Joyce.

Joyce is a resident at UnitingCare Ageing Woodfield Lodge, a low care service in Sydney’s Inner Western suburb of Haberfield.

At 89, she had never travelled overseas, and seemed to have lost her energy to achieve her dream of going to Paris when she entered aged care. “It seemed like travelling was something too difficult to do,” she explains.

During Seniors Week in March, Joyce’s daughter, Kathryn, realised that travelling to Paris wasn’t impossible after seeing her mother enjoying the annual Seniors Ball hosted by UnitingCare Ageing Sydney Region. With over 750 guests, the 2010 theme was *The Circus is Coming to Town* and included dodgem cars, which Joyce couldn’t get enough of. Kathryn realised that Joyce still had a lot of enthusiasm and energy, saying,

“When I saw mum driving a dodgem car, she was so happy!”

Even though the life-long dream was soon to happen, Joyce still had some misgivings, “Security issues held me back, I thought about leaving my home, leaving my GP. But the anxiety soon subsided when I was greeted with a glass of champagne as soon as I boarded the plane.”

Travelling business class, Joyce said, “I’m a born traveler. I can’t do it any other way.”

“The steward took me to the cabin where the pilot and co-pilot were – I could see the heavens!”

When Joyce and Kathryn arrived in Paris, the air was balmy and beautiful, with breathtaking scenery and gorgeous people. “Paris is just like magic”, said Joyce. “I’m going to



write a book about seeing Paris in a wheelchair. It was great to get around.”

Joyce continued, “I had special treatment at the Louvre: front position by the Mona Lisa! Our taxi driver stopped the car on the roundabout at the Champs-Élysées so I could take photos of the Arc de Triomphe.”

Joyce’s next adventure will be travelling to Egypt where she plans to “ride a camel”.

Volunteer Spotlight

Cherie brings joy to others through volunteering

Cherie threw herself into what many would consider the deep end when she began volunteering at a high care dementia specific facility but she doesn’t regret a moment.

When Cherie decided to volunteer she was looking for practical experience for her studies in working with people with disabilities.

When Cherie began an online search for information about volunteering she came across a video about volunteering on the UnitingCare Ageing website which piqued her interest.

“The video was very open and encouraging... I started to think about older people may be being lonely and

needing some personal attention”, Cherie says.

“I’d never really considered volunteering in aged care but as I thought about it more, I realised it was something I wanted to do.”

In her first few days, Cherie encountered a distressed woman who she sat with and started to talk to, encouraging her to laugh and have a chat. Cherie found the moment a turning point, “It was great to be able

to deal with the situation and make it better”, says Cherie.

“It is such a fulfilling feeling and sense of achievement”.

The UnitingCare Ageing team are grateful for the compassion and care Cherie brings with her.

She has made an impact and the residents she works with love her.

For more information on volunteering opportunities with UnitingCare Ageing visit:
www.unitingcareageing.org.au/careers/volunteering



Operation Santa – Go on!

Add just one more to your Christmas Shopping List...

UnitingCare needs your help for Operation Santa. We are looking for generous people to help spread a little extra Christmas cheer to some of the vulnerable and disadvantaged people in UnitingCare services through our annual Christmas Appeal.



There are a few ways that you can get involved and help UnitingCare brighten someone's day.

- 1** Head into your nearest Target store in the lead up to Christmas and select a tag from the Christmas Tree to purchase one more gift for someone less fortunate in your local community. Visit www.target.com.au/html/stores to find your nearest Target store.
- 2** Host a UnitingCare Christmas Giving Tree in your workplace, school or club. Simply email unitingcare@nsw.uca.org.au with your details and we will send you a Giving Tree kit to help get you started.
- 3** Visit www.unitingcarenswact.org.au and make a donation.

Thank you for helping us make a difference as we continue to transform lives together stronger.



Help UnitingCare change lives

Yes I would like to support the work of UnitingCare NSW.ACT with a donation.

First Name Surname

Address.....

..... Postcode.....

Telephone number Congregation.....

Please enclose your cheque/money order payable to UnitingCare NSW.ACT or complete the credit card details:

Payment method: Cheque Bankcard Visa Mastercard

Amount: \$25 \$50 \$100 Other \$.....

Card Number

Name on credit card..... Expiry date /

Signature.....

Donations \$2 and over are tax deductible.

**Address all donations to UnitingCare NSW.ACT GPO Box 9961 Sydney NSW 2000
Donations can also be made online at www.unitingcarenswact.org.au**

I would like to join the UnitingCare mailing list.

My email address is:

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Please send me details on how I might consider UnitingCare in my Will.

UnitingCare respects and values your privacy and will not disclose any personal information without your written permission.

Thank you for your support