



Merri Health
Healthcare that moves with you

MerriNews

Volume 19. August 2018



.....
**Inside
this
issue:**

- 1.** LITERACY PROGRAM FOR FAMILIES
- 2.** HIPPIY'S WE LOVE BOOKS FESTIVAL
- 3.** DEMENTIA SESSIONS FOR CARERS
- 4.** STUDENTS GET SAFER TRAVEL OPTIONS

In this issue:

3. Taking a healthy step forward

3. Word play

4. Mindfulness training for schools

5. A treasured experience

6. Pondering at Moreland Road

7. Supporting male carers

8. Active travel in Fawkner

 Merri-Health

 @MerriHealth

 Merri Health

© All applicable copyrights reserved for Merri Health. No part of this publication may be replicated in any manner or medium, without the permission of Merri Health, except as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968 [Cth].



Welcome.

Welcome to this edition of MerriNews. It's been a very busy year for us, with lots of activity happening across the organisation – 2018 is really whizzing by.

Some highlights include the official opening of our new Merri Central site in Coburg. Officially opening in April, the site is now home to corporate services, as well as our Wellness at Home and community wellbeing teams. Both teams continue to see significant growth; Wellness at Home in our aged home care packages and community wellbeing in attracting a range of new funding to build capacity in our community.

In order to better service our community in Hume, we have recently secured a satellite site in Broadmeadows, providing support to families with a child with a disability. This location means families in and around Broadmeadows are able to access support, without having to travel too far.

Our social support program team was recently acknowledged at a regional forum for its work in increasing choice and opportunities for older

people. We provide 25 programs for over 300 clients every week who are ageing, have dementia, younger onset dementia, or a disability. These sessions strengthen social connectedness, decrease loneliness and isolation, and promote the abilities of participants. The team continues to work with our consumers to look at innovative ways to provide genuine choice and control when it comes to programming activities.

The ongoing reforms Government is driving, continue to be a focus for the organisation as we grow our service offering to the many communities we serve. The remainder of the year is projected to be equally busy!

Nigel Fidgeon
Chief Executive Officer – Merri Health

Taking a healthy step forward

New lifestyle program supports people experiencing mental health issues to take control of their physical health.

Healthy Steps is supporting clients with a mental illness to improve their health and wellbeing and make positive behavioural changes through education.

The tailored approach addresses lifestyle factors like physical activity, diet and smoking, to prevent and treat obesity, cardiovascular and metabolic conditions. While the impact of these conditions are improving nationally, this is not the case for people experiencing a mental illness: they continue to have a lower life expectancy.

Our first participants reported positive changes at the end of the program, with many commenting they are more

conscious about their food choices.

To continue to help them in their journey, many took the opportunity to receive support from our community nurse, dietitian, exercise physiologist, restorative yoga and other group programs, post the program.



Would you benefit from Healthy Steps?

 1300 637 744

 info@merrrihealth.org.au



Word Play

Free literacy program for Fawkner families to learn English together.

Launching in term 2 this year, Word Play is a new literacy program for pre-school families to learn English.

Running weekly at the Fawkner library for families who have low English literacy, the program offers the opportunity to learn to read and speak English together through reading, games, play, songs, puppets – and lots of fun.

Parents are also offered the opportunity to partner with a reading buddy to practice and improve their own English.

We know from current participants there is a need for support: 50% of families have lived in Australia for five years or less.

This program is a collaboration between Moreland City Council and Merri Health and has been made possible by State Library Victoria and Public Library Victoria Network through the Statewide Public Library Development Project grants.



Sessions run every Tuesday from 9:30am during the school term at the Fawkner library

For questions call 03 9355 4200

Mindfulness training for schools

Belle Vue Park primary school and Belle Vue Park kindergarten staff completed training to teach mindfulness to students.

Belle Vue Park primary school has a number of students who have experiences of trauma, which can affect their engagement at school.

The training provided techniques on when and how to embed mindfulness activities in a classroom setting, to support vulnerable students and/or students who may have experienced trauma, and included strategies for working with students with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder.

By the end of the session, staff were better equipped to support students to lower their stress levels, feel calmer and be more emotionally aware.

This training was delivered by Corporate Zen and partially funded by School Focused Youth Service (SFYS). SFYS works with schools in Moreland to deliver targeted interventions for students who are vulnerable to disengaging from their education. It builds the capacity of schools to support students to remain actively engaged in their learning.

Did you know?

We're finalists for Employer of Choice for non-for-profit sector, at the national HR Awards!

Our Gender Equity, LGBTIQ+ and Reconciliation Action Plans help us stay on track, to ensure we're meeting the needs of both our clients and staff. Family friendly practices and supporting women in the workforce is one of our many priorities.



We love books

Early childhood education program hosts its first weekend festival for families.

Early childhood education program HIPPY, invited families to their Saturday We Love Books festival to cater for people that work during the week.

Families participated in a day full of activities, highlighting the important role parents have in supporting their children's learning and love of books.

Activities included various craft activities with children and parents alike enjoying the chance to get creative and decorate their own library bag and make a zoo.

Parents also had their senses of touch, sound and smell tested as they tried to identify objects while blindfolded.

Activities were followed by a pizza lunch outside: families enjoyed the opportunity to chat, while children got active running from sandpit to a climbing frame, swings and cubby house!

The festival was generously supported by a local recycling company Sustainable Resource Use, who donated a large

selection of second-hand picture story books, which children were excited to take home!

It was great to have mums, dads, siblings and even some grandparents, come along to find out more about HIPPY and how they can support their child's learning.

HIPPY – Home Interaction Program for Parents & Youngsters is an early childhood literacy program that supports parents to teach their child skills around reading and writing, communication, creativity and social/emotional development and getting ready for school.

Number of attendees:

24 families

60+ children



A treasured experience

Lala Rukh shares her experience of being a part of the Urdu speaking women's group

Leaders aren't born, they are made, and they are made through hard work and dedication. Their skills are polished by the organisation where they work, flourish and ultimately lead.

I became a member of leadership committee of Urdu speaking women's group of Merri Health in July 2017. Joining the leadership committee was a decision I will cherish for the rest of my life. It proved to be a pathway that opened doors to new horizons.

This versatile experience gave me a chance to give back to a community which has been my clan for years and to make new friendships that I will always relish.

During this time, I developed a better understanding of this important yet delicate field of work, and I could have never imagined that by the end of this

journey I would be holding a recognised qualification in this field; Certificate IV in Community Development.

Today, I stand my ground as a person, molded beautifully to confidently voice my opinions in front of others, and strong enough to deliver the best for my community. Not only am I professionally groomed, but I'm also more poised and empowered.

Merri Health taught me how to lead: not to follow a path laid out by others but to pave my own way.

I am grateful to the team leaders and management of Merri Health for the encouragement in highs and lows and overwhelming support. I hope forums like leader committee continue to flourish as they are major contributors to community wellbeing and development.

The contributions of the Urdu speaking women's group leadership committee were celebrated on 26 June.

Thirteen leaders were presented with certificates and thanked by Moreland City Council and Merri Health for their participation and contribution to community activities.



Join the Urdu speaking women's group



1300 637 744



info@merrihealth.org.au

Pondering at Moreland Road

Partnering with the community to support older people and people with dementia or cognitive issues.

Nature is restorative and can have positive effects on people's health, wellbeing and quality of life.

With this in mind, a pond and water feature was built in the garden at our Moreland Road site, to support older people and people with dementia or cognitive issues.

Partnering with Bunnings Warehouse, Coburg, who helped fund and manage the project and Strathmore Men's Shed, who provided the muscle on the day, we built a raised garden bed with fish pond inset.

As many people who attend a social support program are from overseas; having migrated from places near the ocean, the pond will help stimulate sight, sound and touch, allowing them to reminisce. This act of reminiscing can be highly beneficial to their wellbeing and interpersonal skills.

For older people and people with dementia, gardens can also have cognitive and physical benefits as they can lessen confusion and agitation.

The pond acts as a focal point for groups to sit and enjoy the open air, and has also met the participants' goal of beautifying the garden.

Participants ensure that the water levels are maintained, provide ongoing garden maintenance – and chat with the “home grown” fish each day, which one of the participants kindly donated!

Our social support program is client-focused with participants having a say on how activities evolve. They can decide what activities they would like to get involved in and are able to move from room to room.

With more than 23 social support programs, each considers and caters for the different needs, abilities, interests and culture of the participants. Activities include gardening, craft, cooking, and other recreational interests which can be centre-based or delivered in the community.



Would you like to join a group? Ask us how.



1300 637 744



info@merrihealth.org.au

Supporting male carers

Male carers invited to barbeque lunch for Men's Health Week.

Our carer support service CarerLinks North acknowledged and celebrated male carers during Men's Health Week, with a lens on key health issues faced by males.

Male carers were invited to a barbeque on Wednesday, 14 June, to connect with others and learn about support available to them.

More males die at every stage of the life course, take their own lives and suffer from lifestyle-related health conditions than females of the same age. Support for male carers addresses their unique challenges, as these conditions may be heightened.

"We know that carers experience some of the lowest wellbeing in Australia due to financial hardship, isolation and higher levels of stress and depression.

"Having a close social circle can have a positive impact on a person's mental health and overall wellbeing, which is why we offer support for male carers to identify and address their health concerns," said manager of CarerLinks North, Vicki Down.

CarerLinks North are currently exploring the opportunity to establish a male support group, allowing carers to meet and support each other regularly.



Dementia education for carers

Three-part education series supports carers of people with dementia.

Two carer groups benefited from education sessions developed to help them understand dementia and find supports and services available to them.

Presented by the HammondCare and the University of Melbourne, topics included the background of dementia; the causes and impact, managing behavioural changes, and strategies to support them.

A dementia peer support group was established following the sessions, which has allowed carers to continue sharing

and learning from each other's experience and helped in addressing isolation that can result from the caring role.



Find out more about the dementia peer support group

03 9495 2500

CarerLinksNorth@merrihealth.org.au

Bright futures

Young carers make gains thanks to young carer support program.

Local young carers received a total of \$4,700 under the Carers Victoria Young Carers Scholarship to go towards their school expenses, extra-curricular activities or skill based activities.

Supported by CarerLinks North in writing the application, our team ensured they had the best possible chance at getting the scholarship.

Five young carers have also been accepted into the Big Dreamers personal development program by Little Dreamers.

The program includes two retreats and monthly workshops aimed at empowering, developing resilience, and providing them with the opportunity to gain new skills and find hidden talents.

They will also be eligible for a Big Dreamers Scholarship later in the year which will go towards school expenses and extra-curricular activities.

We are excited for these new opportunities for our young carers!

The young carers program at CarerLinks North has recently undergone a refresh. The co-design process had led to a more targeted program that is responsive to their needs as carers.



Are you a young carer? Join our young carer support program!

03 9495 2500

CarerLinksNorth@merrihealth.org.au

Watch the young carer's video: <https://goo.gl/gxWPnc>



Active travel in Fawkner

Safer and direct routes for riders and walkers to and from Fawkner primary school.

Partnering with Moreland City Council and Fawkner primary school, we worked with students to develop safe walking and riding routes to and from school.

Following a 'bikeability' and 'walkability' audit of streets often used by students and their families, we identified two safe routes to and from Fawkner primary school.

Fawkner teacher Joe Mills said that this has increased the number of students travelling actively to school.

"When we started 30 per cent of students either walked or rode and we are up to 55 per cent now," said Joe.

"We even hit 75 per cent on Ride2School day (in March) and we're really proud of that. There's steady improvement all the time."

Grade 5/6 students participated in a competition to design signs for footpaths along the safe routes.

Chosen by the students, the winners had their designs printed on the footpaths, encouraging them to travel actively.

Two safe routes are now signposted so children know the best way to walk, ride or scoot to school, with reminders to cross safely.

📞 1300 637 744

✉️ info@merrrihealth.org.au

Brunswick

11 Glenlyon Road
Brunswick VIC 3056

Brunswick West

382-386 Moreland
Road Brunswick West
VIC 3055

Coburg

93 Bell Street Coburg
VIC 3058

Fawkner

79 Jukes Road Fawkner
VIC 3060

Chifley Drive, Preston

Level 2, 110 Chifley Drive
Preston VIC 3072

Glenroy

5D Cromwell Street
Glenroy VIC 3046

Merri Central

Ground floor, Unit 4
19 Pentridge Boulevard
Coburg VIC 3058

Victoria Street, Coburg

21 Victoria Street
Coburg VIC 3058

Thornbury

298 Victoria Road
Thornbury VIC 3073

Wangaratta

Level 3, 62-68 Ovens
Street, Wangaratta VIC
3677

Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is provided by Merri Community Health Services and is for general information purposes only. While information is current at the time of publication, subsequent changes to events may occur. MCHS ventures to provide current and accurate information and we make no representations or warranties, express or implied, about the completeness, accuracy, reliability, or availability, with respect to this publication. Any reliance you place on such information is therefore at your own risk. In no event will MCHS and its employees be responsible or liable for any loss or damage including without limitation, indirect or significant loss or damage, or any type loss or damage whatsoever, suffered by any person as the result of reliance on information contained in this publication.