

Building better lives



Brotherhood of St Laurence

Working for an Australia free of poverty

Executive Director's message

As I talk to people who engage with our services I am aware that assisting families and individuals in real need can become even more important at Christmas time, when disadvantaged members of our community are simply unable to meet some of the financial expectations of the festive season.

We know through our ongoing research that the vast majority of people we help, regardless of their level of disadvantage, have the same aspirations – to have a job, a home, family and security. During times of celebration, such as Christmas, it is easy to feel isolated and alone, particularly if you can't afford to celebrate with

friends and family. Feeling connected with others is vitally important to the wellbeing of us all and the services offered by the Brotherhood aim to help people develop a sense of belonging in the community as well

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Tony Nicholson

Exploring a new future at High St

Artist and former chef, Digby Smyth is one of the innovative and creative educators behind the Brotherhood's new Taster program at High St, Frankston.

Each Wednesday, 15 young people who are completing a community services qualification engage in personal development activities with Digby, who is teaching them to cook, establish and nurture kitchen and herb gardens and create art work.

Seventeen-year-old Trent is quite at home flipping pancakes in the frypan.

"The High St kitchen is great – we have already made vegetable curry, scones and pizza. And I'm a big fan of seafood – my grandpa goes fishing every day, he lives near the beach."

Verity enjoys the open space of The Nave, where art classes are held.

"I've done a portrait of Liza Minelli and now I'm working on a butterfly. I've made new friends and the artwork is fun and creative."

Digby says the students work well in pairs in the kitchen.

"Today we cooked Indian food and they responded very well. They had to form into groups and do set tasks and have them ready at a set time.



Taster Course students, Aiden, Trent and Rebecca get into the action at the Brotherhood's training kitchen.

"In art classes we have to cater for different levels of ability. Through this course they develop self confidence and self belief, and challenge themselves to do things they haven't done before.

"We've got kids coming here every day who've only ever attended school a handful of times in a whole year.

"These are students with great people skills and great artistic talents – we don't value these things enough."

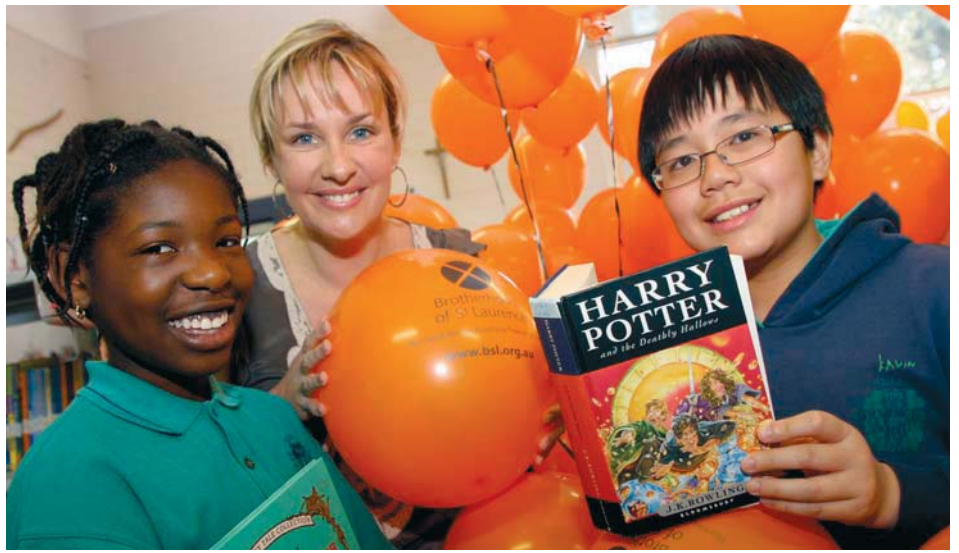
- The Brotherhood is running Community VCAL (Victorian Certificate of Applied

the artwork is fun and creative

Learning) at High St in 2010. The program meets the needs of students who are either likely to become disengaged from school prior to completing a Year 12 or equivalent qualification, or who have already become disengaged from school.

OUR 2009 ANNUAL REPORT IS NOW AVAILABLE – WWW.BSL.ORG.AU

Brotherhood Books is a wonderful new way to recycle and reuse secondhand books



Corinne Grant with Grade 6 Sacred Heart PS pupils Pauline Makenene and Kavin Nenh.

Reading in another dimension

Corinne Grant, best known for her long stint on ABC TV's *The Glasshouse*, recently launched our online bookstore, Brotherhood Books, at Sacred Heart Primary School in the heart of multicultural Fitzroy in inner Melbourne.

A strong and valued supporter of the Brotherhood for many years, Corinne is currently working on writing a book of her own – about hoarding, a subject dear to the hearts of all of us.

Many of the children attending Sacred

Heart and their families are residents of the high-rise public housing in Fitzroy. They are helped by the numerous programs run by the Brotherhood of St Laurence, including the Breakfast Club, the Homework Centre and the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY), which prepares preschoolers for school.

Brotherhood Books is a wonderful new way to recycle and reuse secondhand books while supporting the Brotherhood of St Laurence's work. The online bookshop

offers books to suit all ages and tastes, from children's picture books to bestsellers.

Browse online through a huge range of categories including biographies, families and relationships, gardening, health and fitness, classics of literature and the popular self-help category.

One hundred per cent of the profits from Brotherhood Books will go towards supporting and funding the Brotherhood's fight against poverty.

Visit www.brotherhoodbooks.org.au

Executive Director's message Continued from page 1

as the skills that are needed to live a happy and fulfilled life.

Of course, some people need a greater level of support than others, but no matter what their needs, we are committed to helping people improve their lives in a way that is sustainable in the longer term.

One of the programs we offer can be particularly helpful, including at Christmas time. Saver Plus helps financially disadvantaged people develop a savings habit and build their financial skills and knowledge. Saver Plus is a matched savings program and includes tailored financial education workshops.

These workshops, known as MoneyMinded, help people gain a thorough knowledge of personal budgeting and help them to use credit cards appropriately and thus avoid overwhelming debt and very high interest rates.

Many people who have joined Saver Plus have told us that the knowledge they have gained has given them greater confidence in understanding how to budget for special times such as Christmas, while still managing to cover their daily needs.

As Jeff explained, "I used to dread Christmas, not only was it a hard time for me emotionally, being apart from my kids, but sometimes I couldn't even afford to buy them a present each. I felt I had no option but to use my credit card so that my kids could experience Christmas in the same way as their friends. Then, every year I had a real battle to repay the debt.

"Since I did the MoneyMinded workshops I have been able to budget and stick to my goals, to save enough for a decent Christmas – now I even have something left over for a rainy day."

The successful Saver Plus program run in partnership with ANZ Bank has enhanced the lives of literally thousands of disadvantaged individuals and families and encouraged the development of other financial inclusion programs.

Financial skills development promotes social inclusion by helping people to participate in the mainstream economy. By having the knowledge to understand the impact of financial decisions, people gain the confidence to make purchases, such as a car or work tools which can assist them to gain a job – the first step towards financial independence.

While we are very fortunate that our financial inclusion programs receive significant sponsorship, many of our other programs remain reliant on gifts from our generous supporters. We are extremely grateful for the assistance of all our partners, including businesses, corporations, philanthropic trusts and foundations, as well as those from compassionate members of the community. This support is an enormous encouragement to us all at the Brotherhood and is a catalyst in helping turn people's lives around.

To all our friends, thank you very much for the help you have given us throughout the year. On behalf of everyone at the Brotherhood, I would like to extend our warm thanks and best wishes for a safe and peaceful festive season.

Steps to independence

New website coming

We will shortly launch our redeveloped website, which has been updated to better meet the needs of the Brotherhood's diverse and increasingly web-savvy online audiences – including you! Features of the new site include:

- a revised structure, which makes it easier to find out about our work, the issues we think are important right now, and how you can get involved
- the personal stories of people whose lives have been turned around by the Brotherhood
- a simple way for you to register to receive our newsletters and updates about research and Brotherhood events
- a calendar that makes it easy to RSVP for events.

We would appreciate your feedback – email comments to web@bsl.org.au

A gift in your will

We hope that you have admired the values and work of the Brotherhood of St Laurence and that in future you will give serious thought to including a gift in your will.

If you would like more information about making a bequest, please tick the bequest information box on the back page of this newsletter, or phone Donor Liaison Officer, Peter Hannan on (03) 9483 1399 for personal and confidential assistance.

Despite having left school at the tender age of 13 – and now faced with the challenges of surviving on a pension – Annette remains upbeat.

Until she successfully applied for her first Progress Loan from the Brotherhood, Annette had never taken out a loan in her whole life.

Now the 56-year-old public housing tenant enjoys the benefits of financial planning and saving.

"It's the first time in my life I've had nice things. I couldn't afford them otherwise, because I'm only on the disability pension.

"I know material things aren't that important in life, but it is nice to have them sometimes.

"I used to wash my clothes by hand and now I just put them in the machine."

The washing machine is just one of the items Annette has purchased via Progress Loans, a scheme that provides small personal loans of \$500 to \$5,000 to people on low incomes for the purchase of household goods and services.

The program was developed by ANZ and the Brotherhood of St Laurence and is designed for people who have a Health Care or Pensioner Concession Card.

Annette has also purchased a lounge suite, fridge, air conditioner, barbeque and a TV. Her home is very hot in summer and the air conditioner has helped. She doesn't get out much and the TV provides



Annette keeps in touch with the Brotherhood.

I used to wash my clothes by hand ...

entertainment, while the barbeque allows her to invite friends around.

She is now familiar with the loan application process and managing a loan over time and she regularly makes additional payments.

"It gives me independence, I don't have to ask my family for money and I know when I pay this loan off, if I want something else I can get another loan."

Connecting through play helps families

Broadmeadows Valley Primary School Playgroup, Cool Kids, is an example of how schools and local communities are working together for the benefit of children and families.

The playgroup provides a fun and affordable venue for parents and children to enjoy.

Families are warmly welcomed into the school. This allows parents to access information and helps children become familiar with the school environment, making it easier to connect with schools and early learning opportunities.

Playgroup facilitator, Latife Cankaya says the sessions are very popular. "We create a learning environment that gives confidence to children and families."

Comments from parents highlight the many benefits for families participating in

the weekly playgroup:

"My son sits down and listens to stories – he never used to do that."

"As a parent I have opened up more, I've met new people and become very confident."

"It's a chance for my child to mix with other children and improve our language skills."

"When we came here first she was shy and quiet and stayed close to me, now she mixes with other kids, communicates well and enjoys the group."

"I was new to the country and had no friends or family – with the playgroup I make friends."



Cool Kids playgroup involves lots of fun activities.

The Brotherhood of St Laurence works with the school through a federally funded, Communities for Children project, Breaking Cycles by Building Community Hubs.

Alternative approach pays big dividends

New links will help disadvantaged

The Brotherhood and the Rotary Club of Melbourne recently signed a new Memorandum of Understanding that will enhance opportunities for disadvantaged people.

"Our links with the Rotary Club of Melbourne have already led to significant program successes and helped a number of people, including young people," Brotherhood Executive Director, Tony Nicholson says.

"We welcome with enthusiasm a partnership with this active club. Their skills, creative energies and ability to see a solution will help to get the job done."



Collingwood Alternative School student, Craig and Coolibah member, Bernie discuss their latest project.

Brotherhood Christmas Appeal

All of us at the Brotherhood would like to thank each one of you, our volunteers, and our donors, for your generosity throughout the year.

If you have not yet given a gift to our Christmas appeal, we would urge you to make a gift now.

Your donation will be put to immediate and practical use, to help a disadvantaged family this Christmas.

God bless you and yours, and may the wonderful spirit of Christmas touch your lives as you have touched those we care for.



Father Jeff O'Hare, Chaplain

Getting students engaged in real learning is a rewarding process.

Through a pilot program of the Community Service Leadership Program (CSLP) run in conjunction with the Rotary Club of Melbourne in 2008, an active partnership is now established between Collingwood Alternative School and the Brotherhood's Coolibah Centre, with continuing activities and a great rapport between Coolibah members and the students.

The program has also won a \$50,000 NAB Schools First award which will fund a new group of students next year.

Coolibah Centre Manager, Rod Miller says the partnership is an extension of the Coolibah's commitment to applied social inclusion through bringing different generations together.

"The members have benefited from engaging with the younger people, from

telling their stories and also hearing the students' stories," he says.

"The members now see themselves as leaders, as role model and advisors for the young people."

Student, Craig says he is inspired by his visits to the Coolibah, where he is able to engage with the members and learn from their life experiences.

"Bernie likes to talk to us and it's good to get to know him.

"He encourages us to stay out of trouble because when he was young he got into trouble."

Coolibah member, Bernie is also enthusiastic about connecting with the youngsters.

"I love 'em - cos I was the same when I was a kid.

"It's great, it's good for them to learn things."

Please find enclosed my gift of:

\$30 \$50 \$100 \$200 \$_____ my choice

Payment method: Cheque Money Order Visa MasterCard DinersClub AMEX

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Please send me information about the Brotherhood's regular monthly giving program Please send me information about remembering the Brotherhood in my will

We respect the privacy of your personal details. The Brotherhood of St Laurence will not disclose your details to any other party. See our Privacy Policy on our website.

Donations to the Brotherhood of St Laurence of \$2 or more are tax deductible.

