Welcome back from your holidays! In this edition of our Quarterly Newsletter, look for exciting Kinship Connect activities including:

- The great feedback from a carer who attended the Community Family Camp
- Connections and Mini Connections Groups
- Kinship Carer Training
- Kinship Connect Market stall opportunity for carers
- Road Trips to Lancefield, Maryborough and Moama

Check out Our staff Profile in which Rachel O’Dowd reveals her passion for supporting children and carers.

Welcome aboard to Bruce Pauly who is not only a Kinship Carer but is officially our new Executive Chef Contributor to our Kinship Connect Newsletter. Bruce will be sharing his most delicious and healthy recipes with us.

Cheers everyone, Debbie Frost

Congratulations

To Charlotte who submitted the best trail map and won the Skitz10 E-scooter!

Grow Mr. Grass Head and Win two free passes to Mulligrubs Play Centre!
Staff Profile

Rachel O’Dowd

- Tell us how you first got involved with St Luke’s Kinship Care
The kinship team was developed as an initiative following the Vulnerable Children’s Report and it was to provide more support for the carers and the children they care for. At the time St Luke’s won the tender I was managing the Adoption and Permanent Care Team and was committed to working with families and helping support strong attachments and outcomes regarding trauma informed practice. Therefore applying for the Manager’s position seemed a natural transition.
I was also very interested in how we could develop the program to bring further understanding to the DHHS and the broader community regarding the experience of kinship carers and the children/young persons in their lives.

- What's your first memory of your kinship care work?
My first memory of kinship care was how little I understood the issues that existed and how under represented this section of carers was reflected in Child Protection.
I am happy to say that the need to respect kinship carers and the underlying issues has become more into focus over the past 61/2 years. There is now consistent training provided to support the care of this cohort of children and listening to the voice of the carers is far more prevalent and accepted as expertise.

- What has surprised you most about working in Kinship Care?
The dedication of the carers towards better outcomes for the children in their care in light of all the barriers that were present within the system.
The fantastic stories and positive outlook about the children/young person they care for even with all the additional problems that come with the children/young person who have suffered trauma.

- When you last (volunteered, made a donation, etc.), how did that make you feel?
I like to give money to people who busk (mainly children) on the street because I cannot believe how brave they are and I am musically hopeless so they all look like geniuses that deserve support.

- What might (someone) be surprised to know about you?
That I originally started out my career in fashion, that I have been caught speeding more than once or twice, that I really enjoy my time alone to the point that if I don’t have to leave the house for the day I get excited.

- What would you tell someone who is thinking about working in a Kinship Care Program?
That it is the best job in the world and there are more rewarding moments than not. That there is much to learn from both the carers and the children.
I believe that kinship has been a neglected area in the care system and there will be a lot of opportunities in the future to be part of the ever expanding knowledge and support in this program.

- What do you think will change about Kinship Care over the next five years?
More research will be undertaken demonstrating the specific needs of this group of carers.

- How would (someone) describe you?
I am direct, passionate and compassionate. I like to have fun and very much enjoy a good laugh. I have a nurturing disease which involves pets, plants, food and people.

- What do you do when you aren’t (working, volunteering)?
I spend time with my husband, three children, grandson and extended family like most people.
In summer I like to swim and in winter I cook, sometimes to the point that the fridge and freezer can take no more.

- If you retired what would you be doing?
I think I would go back to where I began and work in childcare.
I recently dropped my grandson off at his childcare and I noticed a number of persons at the retirement age working and playing with the children and it made me remember how much I enjoyed that work in the past.
Request for Support

A local carer is hoping to ‘share the journey’ with another carer or parent whose child has been diagnosed with ADHD. Does anyone know of a friendship group or support group for parents/carers of a child with ADHD?

Please txt Debbie on 0429 498 440 or call 1800 992 495

Invitation to Kinship Carers to contribute to the Kinship Connect Market Stall

A great way to meet other carers and share a profitable interest!

In February two of our Kinship carers took up the opportunity to sell their plants, craft and second hand clothing via our Gravel Hill Community market. Each carer displays their goods and receives all of their own proceeds.

The market site has been reserved for the 3rd Saturday of each month for our program. Thank you very much Gus, Market Coordinator, who has helped Kinship Connect organise this stall at his market.

Carers are asked on the day to share the $15 cost of the indoor site. Gus will provide two display tables free of charge.

If you would like to sell at the stall please call Debbie to be linked in with other carers to share this opportunity.

Research

Call to Kinship Carers!

The University of Melbourne and Berry Street Childhood institute are hoping to understand the early learning environment of children living without parental care. Foster carers and Kinship carers are invited to complete a survey helping them to achieve their objective.

If you would like to help out please call Debbie Frost on 1800 992 495 or 0429 498 440 for a survey form.

Doing School Differently

National Flexible & Inclusive Education Conference

Melbourne 15 – 16 September

Reserve the date!

Check out the details by typing ‘Doing School Differently’ in your favourite search engine and select the result that begins with www.cvent.com. This will take you directly to the website.

Imagination Library

A free, monthly home delivered book program for 0-5 year old kids!

The Imagination Library was established by the Dolly Parton Foundation and is auspiced in Australia by Uniting Way. Imagination Library has been started in Bendigo as part of the Communities for Children Early Years Literacy and Language Development Strategy. The Strategy focuses on addressing the literacy and language development needs of children in Bendigo.

The Imagination Library enables a child aged between 0 and 5 to receive a book each month up to the age of 5. There is no cost to the families who sign up their child/children.

Communities for Children currently have funding to sign up 100 children in Bendigo with the aim to increase the number of families as new funds are raised.

If you would like more information or have questions about the Imagination Library please call the Kinship Team on 5440 1100.
Hit the Road

Mad Gallery
Address: 19 High St, Lancefield VIC
Date: 29th April 2016
Time: 10.30am to 1.30pm
Online Review: "Lovely People, awesome coffee and very delicious food as well."

Maryborough Railway Station
Address: 29 Station Street, Maryborough
Date: 13th May 2016
Time: 10.30am to 1.30pm
Online Review: “Old world charm with a great atmosphere. Ideal place to meet have a coffee and while away time with friends”

Moama Sports Club
Address: LOT 266 Perricoota Rd, Moama
Date: 10th June 2016
Time: 10.30am to 1.30pm

Connections Morning tea
Where: Anglicare Victoria Bendigo Office
Family Room, 175-187 Hargreaves St,
When: 9.30am to 11.30am Friday Mornings, during school terms (can be replaced by Kinship Care Training at which there is always morning tea – see future Training dates)

Rushworth Mini Connections Group Morning Tea
Where: Rushworth Bakery 13 High St, Rushworth
When: 10.30am to 12.30pm every 4th Wednesday of the month

Castlemaine Mini Connections Group Morning Tea
Where: The Governor’s Café Olde Castlemaine Gaol
36-48 Bowden St, Castlemaine
When: 10.00am to 12:00pm Every Monday Morning
Training

Caring Connections - Information & Support for Kinship Carers
If you are a relative, grandparent or friend sharing your home with children who can’t live with their parents - for whatever reason….this is for you:

- Why do kids behave the way they do?
- What discipline strategies do really work?
- They have been through so much...what will help them feel secure and safe??
- What about resilience? How can we help them handle the tough stuff in life?

Kinship carers who have attended Caring Connections programs around Victoria have said:
- “it is very informative and you come away feeling empowered”
- “(we were able) to speak openly about issues without being judged”
- “it is down to earth and relevant...this has been really valuable”
- “you understand a lot more about the child in your care”

Caring Connections is a program for all Kinship Carers. You are invited to:
- learn about ideas and approaches that make sense for these children & young people
- build on your strengths and family resilience
- share your ideas & experiences with others in similar situations

When: 10.00am – 2.00pm Wednesdays May 25th, June 1st, 8th, 15th and 22nd (5 sessions)
Where: Anglicare Victoria Training Room 1st floor corner cnr. Mundy & Hargreaves Streets, Bendigo
Cost: There is no cost to attend these sessions however bookings are essential.
Lunch is provided at all sessions.

Bookings & Enquiries: Gill Oliver (Facilitator) 0458 002 536
You can also enquire by email: kinship.program@anglicarevic.org.au Or Free call: 1800 809 722

Community Family Camp

I was there when the Kinship Carers Community Family Campers returned from the Strathbogie ranges!

On the weekend of 1st to 4th April 20 Kinship Connect carer family members spent a wonderful few days of relaxation and fun at the Community of Christ (CoC) Community Family Camp.

It has been our pleasure to work with the CoC team to deliver the first of the 2016 series of CoC events for our kinship carers and their children.

I met the returning campers in Bendigo and gauged from their enthusiastic responses that the children and adults were tired but very happy with all intending to continue to link with CoC events.

One grandparent provided the following feedback: “Adopt a child! Steal a child! Do whatever you have to but go on the next CoC camp. Great people, wonderful people! The best massage I have ever had. People are telling me today that I look years younger. If I keep going to CoC camps I will look 12 years old by this time next year. I am definitely going on the women’s retreat in October. My grandson didn’t want to go on the camp initially but by the third day he said he is going to go on the teenager’s camp (later in the year) by himself. He was delighted to learn how to cheat at cards and has introduced his grandfather to '52 pickup' (or further details on this card game contact Alicia)
VPTAS

The Victorian Patient Transport Assistance Scheme (VPTAS) subsidises the travel and accommodation costs incurred by rural Victorians and an approved escort(s) who have no option but to travel more than 100 kilometres one way or an average of 500 kilometres a week for one or more weeks to receive approved medical specialist services or specialist dental treatment.

Key messages

- The Victorian Patient Transport Assistance Scheme (VPTAS) covers some costs incurred by rural Victorians when they travel more than 100 kilometres one way for specialist medical treatment.
- To be eligible, patients must live in a designated rural area and not be undergoing clinical trials or accessing allied healthcare.
- Travel and accommodation costs can be subsidised.
- An approved medical specialist must sign the claim form

For more information and an application form, type ‘vptas-how-to-apply’ into your favourite search engine and select the top link.

Kinship Connect Carer Facts

Across Australia in 2009-10, 46% of children in out-of-home care were in relative or kinship care

Kinship carers are:

- Better able to maintain a sense of family and cultural identity
- More likely to maintain connection with child’s original community
- More likely to maintain connections with siblings
- Can provide stability and permanence with fewer placement moves

Recent trends show that kinship care has grown significantly, and about 60% of new placements made in 2005-06 were in kinship care

Things that make carers feel proud, happy or rewarded

- Positive outcomes for child
- Positive feedback from children
- Positive changes in child’s personality/behaviour and emotional wellbeing
- Involvement in major events
- Positive changes in child’s physical health
- Positive feedback form professional or parents

Dear Grandma,

I am writing to you because you have inspired me. You have inspired me by always being there for others and making sure everyone else is okay before yourself. You have helped me through everything and made sure I would always have things that I needed to succeed in life. You have made sure that I always have help for my depression and anger management. You never let us go hungry. You always have an open heart for everyone. Anytime mum and Dale* needed somewhere to stay, you would always have a spare bed and always look after them so they’d never go without.

You have influenced me to go beyond and further in my life. You have encouraged me to never give up when the tough times happen. You have always been there through my times of anger and even when you were ready to give up, you didn’t because you knew that you had to show us the right way and not to give up.

You have encouraged me to keep going in school and too aim as high in life because you want me to get a good career and have a family. You will help me in the future because now I know what is right and what is wrong, what I should and shouldn’t do, and that giving up on life isn’t an option because even when you think that nothing could go right that there is always light at the end of the tunnel.

You have inspired others to get off their bum too and try in life, like my mum even when she was on so many drugs that she was in hospital because if you keep on believing in her, that she would pull through and that this was just another downfall for her and that she always comes through. You always made sure that she got to see us even when was not meant to, you Always told her that we loved her even when she was rude to us and was in the wrong, even when she said things that she didn’t mean, you always told us how she still loved us.

We always have an amazing time when we go down town or up to the marketplace, you always ask me if I need anything and you always make sure that we have the best times. You always go out of your way to make sure we go on holidays, like just the last Christmas gone, you paid over $1000 for me to go on a cruise, it was amazing and when I came home I was so tired and dint even tell you about it, and I bought home gifts and you loved yours.

Thank you for always being there for me, and never giving up on me or any of the family. You have and always, will be there and I know that. I love you and appreciate everything you have done for me.

Sincerely

Your Granddaughter.

*names changed for privacy reasons.
I have a three-year-old little girl who is full of drama.

When time out time comes for bad behavior, I find myself with a little girl on the bottom step screaming, kicking walls and not able to even calm down enough to learn her lesson. Nothing was working. Finally I saw something called a mind jar. This was a mason jar filled with water, clear gel glue and ultra-fine glitter. You shake it and the glitter settles slowly as you watch you relax. The original ones I saw were to teach children to meditate, Genius! So I didn’t have to watch the clock or set a timer, and it would calm my Bella. I didn’t like that it was a glass jar (she is three) so I substituted this with a water bottle.

So here’s how I made one:

- Mix 3 parts boiling water
- One part glue/gel (you can change the consistency depending on how quickly or slow you prefer the glitter to settle- extra gel makes glitter slower)
- Food dye to colour the liquid
- Lots of fine glitter
- Add your food color and glitter shake until you’re happy with the consistency
- Glue the lid in place once your bottle is complete

Different options

The glow in the dark glitter or even add glow in the dark plastic stars are great for a bed time relaxation and mason jar could be used for older children if there is no concerns of them throwing them. Also a Voss water bottle looks great to.
Cheryl Lawry’s Mum’s Ginger Fluff

Ingredients
- 4 Eggs
- ¾ cup castor sugar (warmed)
- 1 dsp golden syrup
- ½ cup cornflour
- 2 dsp plain Flour
- 1 tsp of powdered ginger
- ½ tsp bi-carb soda
- 2 tsp cocoa

Method
1. Preheat oven to 180c
2. Sift all dry ingredients twice
3. Separate eggs
4. Beat egg whites until soft peaks form
5. Gradually add sugar, beating until smooth and glossy.
6. Beat egg yolks in one at a time gently.
7. Add warmed Golden Syrup
8. Gently fold in sifted dry ingredients
9. Divide the mixture between 2 lined and greased 8” (20cm) sandwich tins
10. Bake for 25 minutes
11. Cool on rack, fill with cream and dust with icing sugar to serve

Cheesy bacon, corn and zucchini fritters

Ingredients
- 2 corn cobs, kernels removed
- 2 medium zucchinis, grated
- 3 rashers bacon, chopped
- 1 cup tasty cheese, grated

Method
1. Mix Beaten eggs, milk and flour to form a batter. Set aside.
2. In a non-stick frying pan sauté bacon until most of the fat has rendered.
3. Add the corn kernels, grated zucchini, cumin, salt & pepper.
4. Cook another 5 minutes until the zucchini has wilted.
5. Transfer to a colander and drain excess liquid over the sink. Cool
6. Mix batter, zucchini mixture and grated cheese.
7. Divide mixture into 12 portions and shallow fry each portion until golden brown

I like to stack three fritters on a plate and serve with wilted seasoned spinach, tomato relish, topped with a poached egg.

It’s a very healthy, protein rich tasty meal

Bruce Pauly, Executive Chef
Linda’s Handbags
Kinship carer, Linda has a penchant for very glamorous handbags. We hope to track her ‘habit’ with quarterly updates on her growing collection.