

MEDIA RELEASE

Monday 07 November 2011

21 YEARS OF HITTING THE BOOKS AT THE BROTHERHOOD'S HOMEWORK CENTRE

The Brotherhood of St Laurence is celebrating 21 momentous years of its [Homework Centre](#) in Fitzroy. Since its inception, the Centre has provided after school learning support to over 1 000 students from refugee and disadvantaged backgrounds.

To mark the milestone, past and current students and tutors, as well as Brotherhood supporters and special guests, will attend a celebration at **Fitzroy Library, next Wednesday 16 November, from 5pm to 6.30pm.**

Since 1990, the Homework Centre, now based at [Fitzroy Library](#), has provided a study haven for secondary school students every Monday to Thursday, during school terms, from 4pm to 6pm. It's a quiet and supportive place for students to study and receive assistance with their homework, and it's free to attend.

According to Homework Centre Coordinator, Paul Daly, the heart and soul of the program is the generous team of volunteer tutors and mentors, who dedicate their time to help the students.

'Our volunteers come from an array of backgrounds and professions. We have volunteers from the corporate world, as well as teachers, engineers and university students,' Mr Daly said.

'What makes the Centre invaluable is that students can get one-on-one support from tutors across all curriculum areas, from mathematics to humanities. They also help students prepare for exams and apply for future tertiary study or employment if required.'

'Twenty years of providing this service to the local community is a remarkable achievement, and it's true to say that without the Homework Centre, some students might not have made it through their final exams or on to tertiary study.'

Mayor Alison Clarke will pay tribute to the Homework Centre on behalf of the City of Yarra, at Wednesday's gathering, while students and tutors past and present will reflect and reminisce on their experiences with the program. Speakers will include the Homework Centre's first Sudanese tutor, Teng Bath.

Teng, a refugee from Southern Sudan, attended Homework Centre throughout his VCE, gaining assistance mainly with his mathematics, biology and chemistry studies. This year, during a break from his Bachelor of Science degree at RMIT University, Teng returned to the Homework Centre in a tutoring role.

'I love helping people. And the help I got at Homework Centre was really good so I decided I should volunteer as a tutor in return,' he said. 'When I've helped a student and they say, "thank you, I've finished my homework", I'm very happy. It makes me feel good.'

Education has always been important to Teng. His earliest memory of a classroom was 'beneath the trees' in his homeland. As a teenager, Teng left his family behind and journeyed to a refugee camp in north Kenya so he could go to school there and get an education. Teng recalls, 'In Africa a class room would be about sixty to seventy students. A teacher would never give attention to one.'

After migrating to Australia in 2006, Teng commenced Year 10. He says his main challenge, aside from understanding his teachers' Australian accents, was understanding the technology.

'In Africa we learn primarily with books. You were told to read it and answer the questions – that's it! When I moved here it was very different. The class structure and facilities are so complex and sophisticated.'

'At the Homework Centre, I learned how to do research on the internet,' he said.

'Homework Centre is very important because you get extra help that you wouldn't get in class. It's relaxed and more comfortable than school. And students get the chance to have specific questions answered.'

ENDS

WHAT: The Brotherhood of St Laurence Homework Centre's 21st Birthday Celebration

WHEN: Wednesday 16 November, 2011, from 5pm to 6.30pm

WHERE: Fitzroy Library, 128 Moor Street, Fitzroy, Victoria, 3065.

PHOTO OPPORTUNITES:

- Students and tutors cutting the birthday cake and blowing out candles
- Mayor Alison Clarke mingling with guests

To interview/photograph Teng Bath or a representative from the Homework Centre, please contact Terri Heard on (03) 9483 1339, 0419 370 934 or theard@bsl.org.au.