

BUILDING BETTER LIVES TOGETHER

A newsletter for our valued friends and supporters



Brotherhood
of St Laurence

Working for an Australia free of poverty

ISSUE 75 June 2019



Above Ralph loves the stability of foyer life, which means he can focus on study.

An innovative and unique space for young people to thrive

When you walk into the Brotherhood's Education First Youth Foyer in Broadmeadows, you enter an airy, open communal space inside a tall, bright building. To the left is an open plan kitchen/dining area opening onto a sunny deck, and a large activity room with a pool table, musical instruments and couches. On the right is office space for staff, but here, unlike other types of assisted living or emergency accommodation, the spaces are integrated and students can come and go from the office as they need.

Education First Youth Foyers break the cycle of homelessness by providing young people aged 16 to 24 with study and career pathways and safe, secure

and affordable accommodation on campus for up to two years. Students work with staff and mentors, who provide help with education, emotional support, financial skills and work pathways. Rather than focusing on challenges a student might have faced, the program supports student's talents, strengths and goals. This builds their capability to shape their own solutions and engage with community on an equal footing.

Ralph, 20, had been struggling to get by after leaving a difficult situation. The instability of living day-to-day, between temporary shelter and share houses, filled Ralph with fear. "It was a real struggle. A big burden. You would never know if you would eat a meal or where you would sleep," he says. Now, Ralph's been living at the foyer for a year, and he's thriving.

Ralph was matched with his mentor in October. She is a physiotherapist, which makes her a great fit as Ralph studies nursing. But it is also much more. "Mentors are not just a life coach," explains Ralph. He and

his mother are close, but she lives overseas, so having someone local really helps. "My mentor is like a mum to me," he says.

Ralph also loves living with people he can relate to and believes being with others with similar experiences pushes him to work harder. And the foyer provides resources to lift young people out of hardship long-term. "If I hadn't found the foyer, I wouldn't see a good future in life," he says.

Ralph's currently working two part-time jobs and studying. It's a lot, but he is determined. "I'm doing a Diploma of Nursing, and after that I'll go into a bachelor's," he says. Ralph sees himself working in the community, "My dream is to help a lot of people. And as I help, I want to empower."

Ralph has seen firsthand how tough it can be when you lose family support. "I want to say to all the younger people to be optimistic," he says. "It's going to get better. It's not the end of the world."

To learn more about the foyers, visit bsl.org.au/youthfoyers

Support our
winter appeal



Be a part of
lasting change



Visit bsl.org.au/donate to donate online
or call us on (03) 9483 1301



Above Executive Director, Conny Lenneberg.

Executive Director's message

Welcome to our second Building Better Lives newsletter for 2019. It fills me with incredible pride to share with you some of our

recent highlights and stories from a selection of people who benefit from our community programs.

Take Aaron, Ralph and Josephine: program participants who have shared their stories about how they are gaining skills through education, work and social connections. Access to a traineeship and mentors has made growth possible for Aaron who is now Frankston's Youth Mayor. Secure housing in our Education First Youth Foyer and mentoring has given Ralph the chance to study and work while living in a nurturing environment. For Josephine, our Breakfast Club has led to a stronger sense of community and a good start to the day for her children. Time and again, our participants overcome barriers when their talents and strengths are recognised and supported.

Last month we celebrated National Volunteer Week. I had the privilege of joining some of our 1,200 volunteers at our biennial volunteer recognition event. The event was held at Melbourne Town Hall, where I met

so many volunteers who shared with me their unique stories and reasons for choosing to support the Brotherhood. A fantastic time was had by all. Without volunteer contributions we would not be able to reach as far or support as many people as we do, every single day.

Many parts of the Brotherhood, especially our growing store network, rely on an incredible volunteer commitment, and I am in awe of the energy and time they give. It is a real source of strength to the Brotherhood that so many diverse supporters share in our desire for a fairer Australia.

Thank you for all you do to support our vision for an Australia free of poverty.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Conny Lenneberg".

Conny Lenneberg
Executive Director

How can we learn from the past to prevent poverty in the future?

Finding solutions to prevent and alleviate poverty is the bread-and-butter work of the Brotherhood.

A new joint Brotherhood/Melbourne Institute book explores how we can shape a future social security system that enables people to thrive and escape poverty rather than rely on a fraying safety net.

Revisiting Henderson: poverty, society security and basic income features writing by leading social security researchers. They possess deep knowledge of the relationship between poverty and social security and issues such as indigenous people, disability, changes to family structures and the labour market.



Above *Revisiting Henderson* has a chapter co-authored by our head of research, Shelley Mallett.

The book reflects the enduring influence of the 1975 findings of the Commission of Inquiry into Poverty led by Professor Ronald Henderson. While many factors have changed the way poverty is experienced, it is still measured according to the methodology he devised. This was initially based on the income required

to support the basic needs of a family of two adults and two dependent children. The Henderson poverty line is updated quarterly by the Melbourne Institute according to increases in average incomes.

***Revisiting Henderson* is available as an ebook in print from Melbourne University Press.**

Volunteering: the whole community benefits

For Lesley, volunteering at the Brotherhood is a social activity that builds her skills and puts a smile on her face every week.

Lesley, who is a retired teacher, started her volunteer journey with us seven years ago, with our Homework Club. She now volunteers at the Northcote Community Store as well. She describes the Northcote op shop as a 'hidden gem'. Although it's tucked away at the side of the historic blue-stone All Saints Anglican Church in Northcote, the op shop is spacious and busy. It's always brimming with clothing, books and CDs, as well as an ever-changing array of bric-a-brac, toys and collectables.

The day Lesley began at the Northcote store she thought she only had two hours to spare, but soon found she enjoyed it too much to leave. Time flew and Lesley ended up staying even longer than expected, "On my first shift I stayed six hours and enjoyed the whole time," she explains.

Lesley volunteers at the store one day a week and still tutors at Homework Club once a week. She felt useful in the store from the start. "There are so many small but important tasks that people can do, even on day one," she says.

Lesley's background as a teacher makes her a natural fit at Homework Club, but she's also found her niche at Northcote, where she specialises in books. Having prior experience in retail has made her an asset to the shop, and has allowed her to brush up her customer service skills. "You gain a lot of confidence as well as new friends," she says.

Lesley loves knowing that the time she spends at the Northcote store benefits her community in so many ways.

"On top of the things I gain from volunteering, the whole community benefits from the low environmental-impact shopping and the funds generated. It's brilliant."

Lesley is an advocate for volunteering and believes everyone should give it a try. "There is a huge amount of work to do and jobs for all sorts of people," she says. "We are always looking for more helpers."

If you are interested in volunteering in one of our stores or programs, find out more at bsl.org.au/volunteer

Below Lesley, Northcote Community Store and Homework Club volunteer.



1,200 people
volunteer for the
Brotherhood of
St Laurence



Collectively, that's a
contribution of **3,000**
hours every week



Our 22 community
stores are operated
by more than **750**
volunteers



Volunteer tutors
support over 150 high
school students at
our Homework Club
to build confidence
and empower them to
thrive at school



“When I was their age, I was not at school and I was running from the war. You are lucky in this country that you have school.”

Above Josephine and her sons Emmanuel and Abraham.

Breakfast Club connects local community

Josephine’s four children have attended the Brotherhood’s Fitzroy Breakfast Club for over five years. As a sole parent with English as an additional language and no family support, raising four school-aged children has had its struggles.

One thing that has helped Josephine is the Brotherhood’s assistance to connect her with local community. Josephine attends the Breakfast Club with her kids on weekdays. It gives her children a stable routine and they can enjoy a nutritious meal every day before school. The kids love the Breakfast Club. “They play and draw, have food, then go to school,” she says. They’re all doing really well in their studies, too, which makes Josephine proud.

Josephine fled the war in South Sudan at the age of 16 to come to Australia alone. Being here without extended family isn’t easy. She often tells her children how fortunate she feels they are to have access to a good life and education. “I tell them that they are lucky,” she explains. She wants the best future for them, “I need you to study,” she tells them.

“When I was their age, I was not at school and I was running from the war. You are lucky in this country that you have school.”

At Breakfast Club, Josephine has made friends with the other parents. “We met here and drink tea together,” she says. And the morning rush can be pretty hectic, so they all pitch in. “We help each other with the children,” she explains.

She has worked and studied over the years, but as sole parents know, it’s not easy juggling work and children. However, Josephine has recently earned a diploma in childcare. “I want to fight hard to be better and to get a job,” she says. With the Brotherhood’s help finding work placements and with job interviews, her chances of finding employment are looking good.

Our Breakfast Club provides over 6,000 nutritional breakfasts every year to children before school.

All children deserve the best start in life. With your support we can continue to make a real difference in the lives of children and their families, like Josephine’s. Please to our give to our Winter Appeal today: support.bsl.org.au

Together, we can create an Australia where every child can thrive.

Find out how you can help at support.bsl.org.au



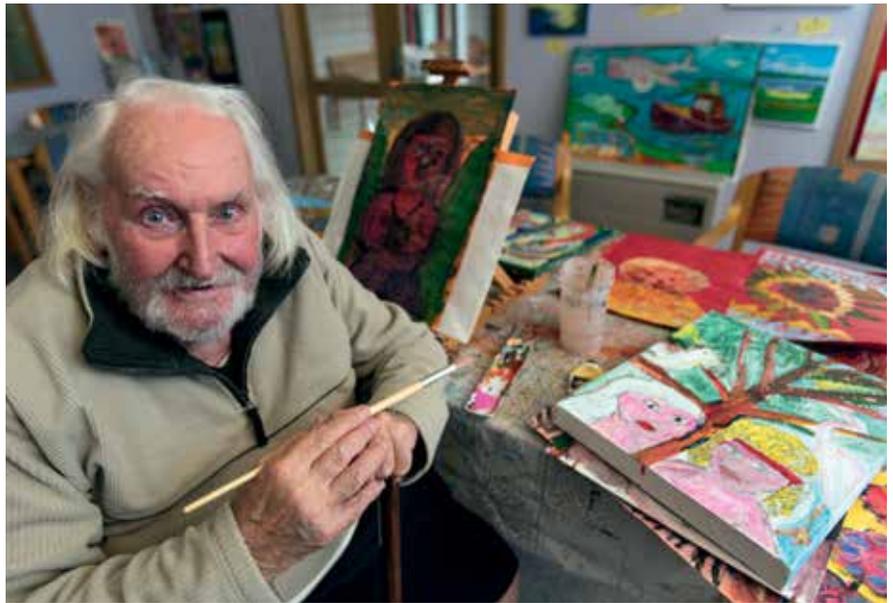
Ian's recipe for a life without loneliness

Retired stationmaster Ian Morris loved his working life on the railways, yet since leaving his job he has barely been on a train. Now in his mid-80s, Ian is enjoying a more creative journey through painting and drawing. He spends two mornings a week at the Brotherhood's Banksia Social Connection Hub in Carrum Downs, in southeast Melbourne.

Ian cherishes every moment with a brush, canvas and music. "Sometimes I paint six paintings a day, and keep correcting what I do over the next few days. Other times I just do one a day," he explains. "I always paint both sides of the paper because I'm stingy," he laughs.

He enjoys the social aspects of Banksia. "It's something to get up for in the morning," he says.

"If I didn't come here, I probably wouldn't be here. Loneliness is a killer, you know," he admits. "I'm a butterfly really, I like to see people."



Above Ian has attended our Social Connection Hub in Carrum Downs for four years.

Ian took up painting after his wife died. "My wife was a painter. She left half a dozen unfinished works and I finished them off," he says. He nurtured his talent through lessons at the U3A (University of the Third Age) and spending time with other artists around the Mornington Peninsula.

Over the years, Ian has developed a unique approach to painting. He explains that listening to music as he paints guides him, "Every colour is a musical note, and when I hear the notes I paint that colour."

"I have been coming here twice a week for about four years. I also spent some time in respite at Banksia Frankston when I was sick. It's a wonderful thing. You don't feel old, you just feel normal, but, of course, I am old."

Like other people attending Banksia, Ian eats a two-course lunch and joins in other group activities.

"Coming here lets me be more social and I meet all sorts of people. I am blessed really," he says.

Find out more from agedcare.bsl.org.au



Aaron Quarrell, Youth Mayor of Frankston

Coming through our youth employment programs, the David Scott School's Administration Officer, Aaron Quarrell, is relishing his next challenge: Youth Mayor of Frankston.

A few years ago, Aaron was struggling to find work. He received support from our youth employment programs and completed a few short-term jobs before returning to the Brotherhood of St Laurence to accept a 12-month traineeship with our David Scott School.

Aaron's ambition and self-confidence takes him from strength to strength. His role at the school has shifted focus and he is now working to embed new technologies into the classrooms to enable learning.

Wishing to further develop personally, give back to his community and advocate for youth, he then applied for the Youth Mayor position. Frankston Mayor Michael O'Reilly says, "It's an opportunity to learn about local government, gain priceless mentoring, and develop valuable leadership skills."

His appointment is testament to Aaron's passion and determination to engage with Frankston's youth with drug and alcohol dependencies on education opportunities. He took up the role on 12 March.

Congratulations, Aaron!

Left Aaron Quarrell wearing his Youth Mayor medal.



Above The Noble Park team ready to greet customers on opening day.

Our community stores network is growing

The Brotherhood now has 22 community stores across Greater Melbourne and Geelong.

Over the past six months, we have opened a new store in Noble Park, and a Hunter Gatherer store in the heart of Geelong. Hunter Gatherer stores sell a selection of vintage

fashion and an eclectic mix of bric-a-brac, records, and accessories.

Our stores are not just a place to pick up a bargain, they benefit the community in many ways. With their large numbers of customers and volunteers, they offer a place for local social connections in each location. We also provide work experience for students and placements for young job seekers from the Brotherhood's Youth Transitions Programs.

Proceeds from our stores go towards our many programs and services supporting people living with hardship and disadvantage, including children and families, job seekers, refugees, migrants, people with disability and older people. Volunteers are the backbone of our stores network and we are seeking donation sorters, retail assistants and furniture movers across Greater Melbourne and Geelong. Our volunteers are asked to commit to at least four hours a week. To find out how you can contribute, visit bsl.org.au/volunteer

Research and Policy Centre update

VET vital to early school leavers

Vocational education and training (VET) plays a crucial role in giving Australians the skills and resources needed to access jobs and participate meaningfully in their communities. VET is of particular importance to early school leavers and 'second-chance' learners.

Early school leavers are much more likely to have experienced hardship than those who complete Year 12. This negatively impacts young people's economic participation, social connectedness and health. In the current era of economic and social change, with national youth unemployment at 11.2 per cent, for disadvantaged learners the stakes are high.

But getting young people into training can be difficult. The proportion of those in VET aged

between 15 and 19 years has been in a steady decline since 2012.

Our research has identified three critical ways that training providers and support services can improve engagement with the VET system:

- help early school leavers better understand what VET is and what it can offer them
- make the enrolment process one that helps lay the foundation for a positive learning experience
- provide multiple supports for logistic, academic and social help.

Meaningful collaboration between training providers and other services is also vital. With this, young people experiencing severe hardship can be linked with health services, community supports and employers.



Above Transition to Work is one of our programs linking young people to vocational opportunities.

Research into how the VET sector can better meet the needs of early school leavers and other disadvantaged learners is undertaken by researchers working across the Brotherhood's Research and Policy Centre.

For more information on our research and policy work visit bsl.org.au/research