

our church at work

A newsletter to Uniting Church congregations and community groups
from Wimmera UnitingCare



Message
from the
CEO,
Wendy
Middleton

Since the last newsletter, the Agency has been extremely busy. We successfully hosted the 14th Annual Awakenings Festival. This year for the first time, various parts of the region joined in the festivities. The five day event was filled with plenty of activities including an amazing Art Show at Haven Hall to kick off the Festival.

The rain was welcome in the past months although it now is a distant memory with the recent soaring heat. The promise of a good season for the farmers is now questionable, and we will need to ensure that our services are responsive and available.

We held our annual meeting recently and reported on our successes for the previous 12 months. For me it was an opportunity to talk about the courage of our staff and the agency and to thank them and the congregations for their tireless time and commitment. The annual report is now available online or contact the office if you would like a copy.

Christmas is just around the corner and this year we are working in partnership with the Salvation Army folk. The combined appeal will ensure that we reach as many people in need as we can. Jeannette Lennon has taken on the role of coordinator and if you are able to help out please contact her on 0400 011 570, particularly if you are able to assist with cash donations or vouchers as young people and adolescents are always difficult to give to.

Look after yourselves over the festive time, and be kind to each other, and once again thanks for all your support, and look forward to working alongside you next year.



Official Launch of Wimmera Christmas Appeal

Teams combine for 2009 Wimmera Christmas Appeal

Wimmera UnitingCare will join forces with the Salvation Army to coordinate and deliver the 2009 Wimmera Christmas Appeal. Previously both organisations conducted their own appeals....a joint approach will make for efficiencies and ensure as many people in need can be catered for.

The 2009 Christmas Appeal was officially launched on Tuesday 10th November at the Wimmera Woodturners and Sawdust Sewers clubrooms where the two groups handed over toys and gifts made by their members throughout the year. The Wimmera Mail-Times has also come on board as the key supporter of the Wimmera businesses 2009 Kris Kringle challenge. Last year the inaugural challenge raised over 700 gifts and \$2000 in cash for vouchers.

If you would like to give to the 2009 Wimmera Christmas Appeal, drop your gifts in to our office at 185 Baillie Street, Horsham or call our Appeal coordinator Jeannette Lennon on 0400 011 570.





Rock band, Claymore at the Annual Awakenings Festival Royal Ball

Awakenings Festival 2009 comes alive

Awakenings brought Horsham and surrounds alive with the 14th annual regional disability arts festival from 21-25 October.

The festival, auspiced by Wimmera UnitingCare, opened with an art show in Haven and the 'Coming Together' Project. The artists' installation featured images of local areas affected by February's Black Saturday bushfires. It shared the struggles, the strengths, the recovery and re-growth celebrating resilience.

The opening included an Indigenous Welcome from traditional owners Barengi Gadjin Land Council and Black Cockatoo Dance from Warracknabeal's Yarri Actors.

The week was jam-packed with come-and-try workshops of every kind. The days and evenings saw every available Horsham venue filled with theatrical performances, music, dance, poetry, painting, photography, drawing and more.

The dis/assemble dance collaborative project from Albury Wodonga performed '6', a contemporary multimedia dance work for dancers with mixed abilities under the direction of choreographer Tim Podesta.



Curtains for Certain from Moe performing at Nexus Centre

Danish band Popcorn, rocked the Wimmera and shared their amazing story of touring worldwide as a talented band whose members are all people with disabilities.

They certainly regally rocked 400 ball-goers at Horsham Town Hall on the Saturday night for the Awakenings Royal Ball along with favourites Celtic band Claymore who humbly received this year's David Helfgott Award - named for Awakenings' patron - for ongoing, outstanding service to the festival.

Horsham awoke to the more gentle strains of an ecumenical service held in the open air at Horsham's May Park. Led by the Uniting Church's Rev. Ian Wilson it was a joyous celebration of 'Thankfulness' with support from the Horsham Salvation Army, including accompaniment by its brass band, and graced with a solo by tenor Jonathon Welch AM, director of the Choir of Hope and Inspiration.

On Sunday night, The Choir of Hope and Inspiration performed to a sell-out crowd at the Town Hall.

In a most fitting and memorable close to the festival many said it was the most enjoyable concert they had ever experienced!



Meet Dick Walsh, Hazelmere Resident

Dick was born locally and had lived all of his life on a property at McKenzie Creek. He became aware of the units at Hazelmere with the assistance of a family member, before moving into a unit at the end of 2003.

Dick enjoys living at Hazelmere because it provides him with not only a high level of privacy and independence, but also great company and social events.

Hazelmere is not too far away from Horsham's town centre, with a bus stop right out the front of the units, but Dick prefers the option to walk up the street for some exercise and shopping.

Dick also feels that Hazelmere is a safe and secure environment to live in and enjoys the support and visits from the pastoral committee.

Helping the Men Who Helped Many

Last month Bendigo Bank's philanthropic arm 'Community Enterprise Foundation' provided Wimmera UnitingCare with a generous \$8,000.00 grant to fund a debriefing event for men who were involved in fighting the Remlaw Bushfires on Black Saturday.

The need to acknowledge the men involved on the day became apparent during the recent debriefing sessions held around the fire affected areas in Horsham, where it was clear that the issue of male trauma was still of concern.

With help from the Bendigo Bank, Wimmera UnitingCare held a "Black Saturday Blokes Night" on 26th November at the Horsham showgrounds.

A free BBQ and beverages were provided and the evening included guest speaker Kevin Sheedy. Over 150 blokes turned out on the night.



Wimmera Youth & Community Bus Launch

Hugh Delahunty MLA, Member for Lowan and Shadow Minister for Youth Affairs, officially launched our Wimmera Youth & Community Bus project on Thursday 29th October at the Nexus Youth Centre in Horsham.

The 'mobile' Youth and Community centre project will help address a sense of belonging for youth at risk due to isolation, boredom, lack of social opportunities, drug and alcohol issues.

The project will cost around \$250,000 to set up and requires a salaried person to manage it. We have raised nearly \$70,000 so far but need the support of the community and local businesses. If you are able to help, please contact Ross Haby on 53622901.



*Bernie Geary
OAM, Wendy
Middleton and
Roy Henwood*

Child Safety Commissioner speaks at Annual Meeting

The agency had Victoria's Child Safety Commissioner, Bernie Geary OAM as its special guest speaker at its Annual Public Meeting on Thursday 5th November 2009. Mr Geary spoke on the Victorian Government's Future Directions for Child Safety.

Mr Geary's office audits and monitors a range of Government services towards Victorian children, in the areas of Child Protection, Out of Home Care and more general safety standards for Victorian Children. The Office of the Child Safety Commissioner acts as a leader, a conduit and an advisor on children's issues.

The Annual Public Meeting saw a 'new look' annual report for 2008/09, befitting the Agency's new and innovative approach to servicing the needs of the Wimmera community. The report is a simple to read document not unlike your daily newspaper, an approach we think our clients, supporters and the community will welcome.

You can get a copy of the Annual Report, and the 2008/09 Financial Report by dropping in to our office at 185 Baillie Street, Horsham or accessing our website on www.wimmera.unitingcare.org.au.

The Agency finished the year with a \$339k net loss, caused mainly by the significant affect of the global economic crisis on the Agency's investment income.

*Check out our
new look Annual
Report on our
website*





Outreach discussion at the Kitchen table

Our Bushfire Response Continues..

Over the past few months we have continued to offer counselling and support services for people affected by the Remlaw bushfire on Black Saturday.

We delivered a number of debriefing sessions in September using specialist grief and trauma counsellors from Melbourne. Around 30 of our staff have participated in the second major outreach program where all 360 property owners affected by the Remlaw bushfire were visited and provided with information about available grant assistance and fire plan preparation for the upcoming fire season.

Our agency has attracted two financial partners for projects which have arisen from responses from the debriefing sessions. The Bendigo Bank has given \$8000 to conduct an event targeting males involved in fighting the Remlaw bushfire which will feature special guest speaker, Kevin Sheedy. Many males are still carrying the scars of Black Saturday and the event will aim to help these people.

The SchoolAid Trust (supported by the Melbourne Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation) has also provided \$40,000 to the agency to conduct a project using music to engage children impacted by the Remlaw bushfire and help with their healing processes. Children will learn to play an instrument, become part of a choir and even cut a CD. This exciting project will commence early in the New Year.

Nhill and Goroke Men's Sheds

Wimmera UnitingCare has given life to the new Nhill Men's Shed by offering rent free the use of the old Nhill Uniting Church Wesley hall and providing \$15k in financial assistance for its set up.

These funds were sourced from the UnitingCare SHARE Community Appeal together with \$10,000 for the new Goroke Men's Shed.



Alex Hall, Leeanne Thomson, Machele Kerzinger & The Hon. Jacinta Allan, MP

2009 Regional Achievement Awards

Wimmera UnitingCare's Bushfire Outreach Project Team was last month nominated as one of the semi finalists at the 2009 Regional Achievement and Community Awards in the Kleenheat Gas Community of the Year Awards - Population Over 5000 category.

Anne Page was also nominated as a semi finalist in the Kleenheat Gas Community of the Year Awards - Population Over 5000 category for her great efforts in Coordinating the Parent Support Network.

The Community of the Year Awards provide projects, groups, cities, towns or local government initiatives with an opportunity to gain recognition for their achievements and contributions to their community.

The Bushfire Outreach Project Team and Anne Page have shown a strong sense of community spirit. Congratulations!!



Anne Page & The Hon. Jacinta Allan, MP

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