

# CONNECTIONS



WNC MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER

No. 7 January 2024

6 Murray St., Wonthaggi

Ph. 56723731

*"We are constituted so that simple acts of kindness, such as giving to charity or expressing gratitude, have a positive effect on our long-term moods. The key to the happy life, it seems, is the good life: a life with sustained relationships, challenging work, and connections to community." – Paul Bloom*

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**Wonthaggi Neighbourhood Centre** has a proud history of serving the local community. This year we celebrate 40 years of service. A wonderful achievement certainly worth celebrating. Over the years countless locals have benefitted in many ways from the support or advice or advocacy provided by the staff and volunteers of the Centre. Officially opened in January 1984, the vision of a community centre became a reality after much hard work from a determined group of locals and generous support from a number of existing community groups and the shire council. Lorraine and Ross Mitchell (for whom Mitchell House is named) were the key drivers in this endeavor. The Mitchell's contribution was formally recognized with the naming of the former station master's residence that would become the base for the Neighbourhood Centre in their honour. Mitchell House has become a well known and widely appreciated feature of the Wonthaggi social landscape. The community is invited to share in the celebration event on February 17!

## FROM THE MANAGER...

....aaand we're back! Term 1 2024. For me in particular 2023 was a whirlwind of a year, but my anniversary of being the Manager here at Wonthaggi Neighbourhood Centre has come and gone so it should pretty much be 'business as usual', right? BUT – the life of a neighbourhood centre would never fit that description. We are lucky enough to be in a place where no two days are the same, there is always something going on. My goal for 2024 is to continue this legacy and our major event for term 1 is the Wonthaggi Neighbourhood Centre at Mitchell House 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Family Fun Day. Saturday the 17th of February 2024 is the day we will celebrate four decades of providing a safe, welcoming environment where people can meet to learn and share ideas, friendship, skills and information. Four decades of working within the community, responding to local needs and providing a diverse range of programs and activities that support and connect people and groups as they participate in community life. The program for the 17 th of February will be out soon so you'll be able to check it all out and plan your participation – just don't forget to save the date.

And of course, if you're interested in volunteering on the day, we would love to hear from you. Now we know we live in a generous community, and it seems that the December / January time of year in particular, brings out the best in people. Whilst Wonthaggi Neighbourhood Centre has been the lucky recipient of donations for our food pantry all throughout 2023, things ramped up in the weeks leading up to Christmas and New Year. Local businesses, Government offices, schools, community groups and many, many individuals donated food and toiletries for us to share with those in need. All of us here at Mitchell House say a great big thank you to everyone who has helped us to help out.

And another big thank you - we are lucky to have a great group of volunteers all of whom donate their time and energy to assisting the community as well as the staff here at Mitchell House. We have people working on our front desk, in our grounds, doing odd jobs and helping with projects. We have Learn Share Group Leaders whose contributions enable WNC to provide a varied and interesting program each term. And of course, our dedicated Committee of Management. They volunteer many hours to ensure we are on track and a safe and welcoming place for all. And finally – you. The people who walk through our door wanting to know something or to join something or to help with something. Or, maybe you just read this newsletter and keep up with what's happening at Mitchell House? Each and every one of you contribute to the success of the Wonthaggi Neighbourhood Centre - thank you. The Grapevine program for term 1 will be out in the next week or so; please check out which of our offerings interest you and get in touch to register.

*Leslie*

## REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP GROUP WELCOME NEW FAMILY TO TOWN

The members of the Bass Coast Refugee Sponsorship Group are delighted to welcome the Al Habara family from Syria. Father, Hossam, mother, Iman and their children, Jamal, Amoun and Jihad arrived at Melbourne airport on 15th November.



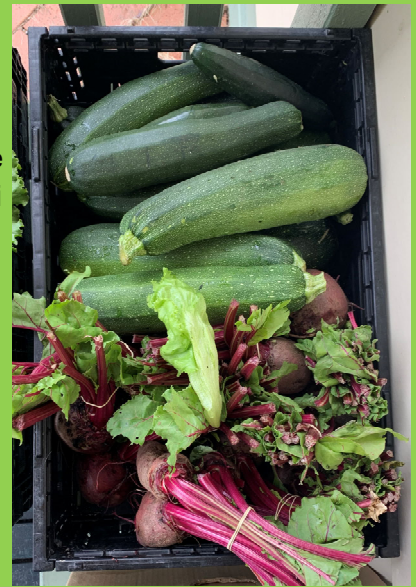
Leading up to their arrival the Sponsorship Group worked hard to ensure all was in place for their new life in Wonthaggi. Most importantly was the acquisition of a rental house that the family could move into and make their new home. Furnishings were also needed and the Group is grateful for the generosity of their supporters within the community whose donations of goods, time and funds ensured that the new family had a home they could move into.

The children were able to spend some time at a nearby school before the summer holiday period began. This gave them a taste of school life in their adopted country and the school an opportunity to assess their educational needs going forward ensuring that plans to meet those needs will be in place as the new school year commences. Hossam and Iman are keen to learn English as quickly as possible and to establish themselves and their children in their new home.



### The Cape Community Garden...

is located within the Cape Paterson sustainable housing estate. The garden has become a highly productive urban farm spreading over 500 square metres. The Neighbourhood Centre in Wonthaggi is the grateful recipient of marvelous fresh produce from the garden at regular intervals. Most weeks the Centre welcomes produce that finds its way onto plates for the community lunch and occasionally surplus is delivered to the free food boxes at the entrance of Mitchell House where it is eagerly accepted by locals in need. We are very grateful for the support of the Cape Garden and look forward to our continued association!



## EVER CONSIDERED VOLUNTEERING FOR WNC?

*Volunteering for the Wonthaggi Neighbourhood Centre can be very rewarding knowing that in such a role there exists opportunity to help the Centre fulfil one of its most important goals, to assist in building community and to reach out to those most in need to make a difference.*

*There is a significant need for more volunteers at this time. If you can spare a few hours each week for a shift on the reception desk or perhaps in another role, we would be very pleased to hear from you.*

*Complete the online volunteer form available on the website, phone the office for a chat or better still, drop in for a face-to-face conversation.*



## FROM THE PRESIDENT...

Anniversary celebrations are a fantastic opportunity to get together and have fun, share food, be entertained and reminisce. The Wonthaggi Neighbourhood Centre is about to have one of those celebrations. It will be an opportunity to ponder our past achievements. All the passion, time and effort that people have poured into the Centre as volunteers, leaders, participants and employees during the past 40 years. All the new friendships and connections that have been made and developed and new skills that have been acquired. For some it has been a stepping stone into their new community. Others have used the Centre to develop support and advocacy groups.

The Centre has always needed the community to keep it going so our 40 year celebration is a huge thankyou to past and present volunteers and all the individuals and groups who have contributed to its groups, programs and events, the committee of management and the maintenance of the premises.

The Centre moves into the future wanting to continue to help build community relationships and friendships and enhance the lives of people in our community. It wants to continue to enable people to gather and have fun while playing music together or learning new craft skills. It hopes to assist young parents to meet other parents and grow in confidence. It wants to discover new programs and activities and work with other groups to respond to changing needs in the community.

But before we do all that it's time to celebrate so see you at the 40th!

*Helen Searle*

## STAFF MEMBER PROFILE: Melanie Mumford

The Bass Coast TAC L2P program provides support for young learner drivers aged 16-23 years who do not have access to a suitable supervising driver or vehicle to assist them to reach 120 hours of driving experience and become safe, competent drivers. Learners are matched with a volunteer mentor driver who completes their supervised driving hours with them in a program vehicle. My role is coordination of the Bass Coast L2P program, recruiting and supporting learner drivers and volunteer mentors, coordinating bookings and ensuring the vehicles are maintained. I've been in this role for 3.5 years. I love meeting our participants, both mentors and learners, learning a little about them, their strengths and their story and sharing their excitement when shared goals are achieved. I really enjoy being around Wonthaggi Neighbourhood Centre, spending time with all the wonderful people who work, volunteer, attend groups or pop in here. I grew up in Bass Coast, moved away as a young adult but returned at the start of 2020 with my family.



A good news story: Last year 24 learners gained their Ps through the program. For each of them this was a result of their hard work and commitment, and an exciting occasion, signalling an increase in independence and easier access to employment, education and recreation. One learner, after initially being concerned he would not be able to get a licence, worked extremely hard to reach his goal of gaining his Ps before finishing his final year of school. He drove between 4 and 6 hours a week all year to make this happen. He passed his drive test at the end of the year with an almost perfect score. He saved enough to buy a car and is now planning an apprenticeship.

A huge shoutout to our mentors, who really are the reason for the success of the program. Their commitment and willingness to volunteer their time is crucial for the success of the program. Their generous giving of time and patient direction is appreciated by all clients of the program!

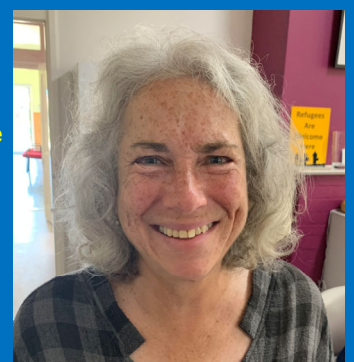
## COMMITTEE MEMBER PROFILE: Diana Holmberg

Most of my career I worked in corporate and consulting organisations. My last role, before retiring, was with a not for profit focused on family and child welfare. It was the most personally rewarding work I've ever done. After retiring I was keen to continue to contribute in both the community services and health sectors.

Because of my previous experience in leadership, budget management and governance I believed the best way for me to do that was as a member of a committee in these types of organisations. Wonthaggi Neighbourhood Centre provides a variety of extremely valuable supports and services focused on the wellbeing of all members of our community.

In September, at the last AGM, I was fortunate enough to be voted in as a member of the Committee of Management. In the 3 months since I've learnt so much more about what we do and I know I've joined the right place to help support our community in a multitude of ways.

My husband and I moved to Bass Coast in 2016 and couldn't be happier. I started volunteering with Bass Coast Health soon after retiring and have had the privilege of being part of the Wonthaggi Hospital Community Advisory Committee since 2018. I feel honoured to have been given the opportunity to be part of both Bass Coast Health and Wonthaggi Neighbourhood Centre allowing me to fulfil my desire to make a positive contribution to community well-being. My hope is that I do just that.





# 40

celebrating years

Wonthaggi Neighbourhood Centre at Mitchell House  
Invite the community to come help us celebrate our  
40th birthday with a free family event.

**Saturday, February 17**  
**6 Murray Street, Wonthaggi • 11am – 3pm**

PRIZES FOR BEST DRESSED

(categories: men, women, children and family)

**Themes for the day are:** Time Warp dress for the 80s,  
C.O.O. Country of Origin (traditional dress)

### *Lots of exciting activities*

- Free entertainment • Free food and drinks
- T-Rex the Dinosaur will entertain the children
- Chatty café will be serving tea and coffee with some local history
- Circle dance display • Seated yoga display
- Welcome to Country Smoking Ceremony
- Guest speakers • L2P and other services

**Slip, slop, slap**  
**Wear a hat,**  
**bring a blanket**  
**or chair**  
**Strictly**  
**no alcohol**



Wonthaggi Neighbourhood Centre at Mitchell House acknowledges Bass Coast  
Shire Council's generous financial contribution to our 40th anniversary event

Email enquiries to [aisha@wonthaggineighbourhoodcentre.com](mailto:aisha@wonthaggineighbourhoodcentre.com)



**Come along and  
meet TOBY the  
T-REX—he is  
VERY friendly!**

## PEACE EDUCATION WORKSHOPS – Facilitator Beatrice Day

Come and join the Peace Workshops to discover the power of our innate qualities of choice, kindness, compassion, gratitude, simplicity and dignity. Each week the one-hour workshops are focused on a different theme: Peace, Appreciation, Inner Strength, Self-Awareness, Clarity, Understanding, Dignity, Choice, Hope and Contentment. The video sessions include interviews and talks by peace educator Prem Rawat, animations, visuals and music followed reflection and discussion. Starting Tuesday, 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2024 12 noon - 1.00pm finishes on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> March, 2024

This course is free please register by phoning Mitchell House Ph: 5672 3731 or email: [reception@wonthaggineighbourhoodcentre.com](mailto:reception@wonthaggineighbourhoodcentre.com)



**"WNC is on the land of the Bunurong Boonwurrung people of the Kulin Nation. We acknowledge and pay our respects to the traditional owners of this land where we gather to learn, work and play. We thank the elders past, present and emerging for their custodianship and their continuing connections to the land, sea and community."**