


LIVING TODAY

in Mooroolbark and the Yarra Ranges NO. 73 DECEMBER 2020

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 - The enduring gift of Mooroolbark's oak trees
 - It's back to business for the Yarra Ranges

Good news stories from your local community

Lives of Service

For many years I've shared a special friendship with two people who have never lived in our township and yet have had a significant and lasting impression on our life together in Mooroolbark.

Doug and Marg Lewis, the very dear friends I write about, spent their childhood in Preston, growing up not much more than a stone's throw from one another, yet not meeting until they were 16, at a local church dance.

Doug tells the story of four of his mates from Reservoir who went to the dances with him. It was common practice in those days to offer to walk a girl home from the dance. One friend complained that the girls he walked home came from the other side of Melbourne, whereas Marg lived next door to the church. Doug would chivalrously walk Marg across the road to her home. Meanwhile, his friends would wait at the end of the street for him and when they thought he'd had long enough to say goodnight they'd be calling out, "C'mon Doug, let's head home!"

In May this year, Doug and Marg celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. They remain great mates. They are inseparable and have lived in Boronia for the past 44 years. Once the coronavirus restrictions are lifted, many of us are looking forward to another of the unforgettable and noisy mega get-togethers of Lewis family and friends to mark such a significant milestone!

Doug and Marg's relationship with Mooroolbark began in 1986 when Doug was appointed principal of Pembroke Primary School, where he served until his retirement in 1992. Additionally, Doug served as an honorary chaplain at the school for two or three years. To honour his years of service, the school unveiled the "Doug Lewis Buddy Bench" in 2014.

When the church congregation where Doug and Marg have been long-term members relocated to Mooroolbark in 1982, it began meeting in the community centre. As active members of what became known as Mooroolbark Christian Fellowship (MCF), the couple's love affair with our town deepened.

In September 2002, MCF published the first edition of *Living Today in Mooroolbark* as a gift to the community with the aim of highlighting the good things we share as we live, work and play in this neighbourhood.

Doug was the founding editor of the magazine and in his first editorial he wrote that *Living Today* "is produced by a number of volunteers who are interested in contributing to community life in our neighbourhood. They freely offer their time and energies to help in the ongoing challenge of helping to build a stronger and richer community in Mooroolbark, for all of us to enjoy."¹

It's impossible to capture the impact that my two friends have made to our life together in Mooroolbark; even more impossible to define their wider impact.



Two months after the first edition of *Living Today* appeared, the *Melbourne Age* reported:

A couple who has cared for more than 60 foster children since 1967 was today named the Australian Family of the Year.

Doug and Marg Lewis, from Boronia in Melbourne's outer east, were chosen from more than 1,350 nominations for the award, after an application by their eldest daughter Jenny.

As well as raising five of their own children, two of whom were adopted, Mr and Mrs Lewis have cared for their aging parents, hosted Aboriginal children during school holidays and supported young women upon their release from prison.

Each year, the couple travel as missionaries to the Solomon Islands, assisting with medical and educational donations, and working in the local community to promote self-sufficiency.²

once famously said that "if you want something done, ask a busy person". In the case of Doug and Marg, that is certainly true.

Mooroolbark enjoys a number of annual community occasions that offer opportunities for us to celebrate as a community. One of those is our now-familiar annual family festival, Celebrate Mooroolbark, which began as a very small event initiated by a tiny group of community members and Mooroolbark Community Centre staff in March 2002. Doug was part of that group, and he and Marg continued to play an active part as the festival grew from very humble beginnings into the vibrant festival we know today, which attracts around 10,000 visitors every March.

In 2004, Doug and Marg had an unanticipated return to Pembroke Primary School when World Vision introduced KidsHope Aus, a mentoring program in Australian primary schools. MCF participated in the national pilot program, which involved matching trained



Doug and Marg with their four oldest children.



You'd think that parenting and raising three biological children, two adopted children and four long-term foster children—along with staying engaged with succeeding generations—would have been all-consuming. Benjamin Franklin

mentors from the congregation with students from Pembroke Primary School. Sixteen years later, the congregation continues to provide mentors who spend an hour each week with their designated student. Doug and Marg were part of the mentoring team until Doug had a

¹ livingtoday.org.au/uploads/LivingTodayIssue01.pdf p.2 You can view the complete *Living Today* archive at livingtoday.org.au/issues.php. Doug served as editor until June 2014 when Janet Van Dijk took over the editorial role

² theage.com.au/national/boronia-couple-named-family-of-the-year-20021202-gtlu9w.html



Doug and Marg ready to board the flight for their honeymoon to the Gold Coast in May 1960



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF DOUG & MARG LEWIS

life-changing, serious accident at the end of 2018, which brought an end to much of their community involvement.

For many years Doug and Marg were very active in promoting ecumenism in the Mooroolbark churches. Doug attended and organised regular get-togethers of congregational pastors and leaders which included a monthly fellowship luncheon. Marg continues to help organise the annual World Day of Prayer service in Mooroolbark.

Space precludes more than brief snapshots of additional Mooroolbark involvement. Doug was a founding member of the Mooroolbark Umbrella Group, a community association of local organisations dedicated to work cooperatively for the benefit of all in our town. Each year MUG hosts our Annual Town Forum and Quiet Achiever awards, with sessions in local schools throughout the day and an evening public event at the community centre. Over the years the event has attracted a rich diversity of

the National Day of Thanks Mayoral Breakfast, the Lewises were there—engaging, supporting, and encouraging. And then there were the years of active service and companionship with the Disabled People's Company, and Doug and Marg's involvement through meal preparation and presence at MCF's fortnightly community meal, People's Pantry.

For many years, Doug served as part of the MCF pastoral team, helping share the speaking load and constantly seeking opportunities for MCF to serve Mooroolbark as an expression of our Christian faith. For some time Marg hosted a women's speech club in her home and in later years hosted a group of women who met monthly to put together care bags for local women's refuges. For ten years, both of them travelled to the Solomon Islands for annual pastoral visits. Sometimes they found themselves in dangerous situations, but their love for the people they served more than compensated.

Reflecting back over their lives, Doug and

My wife Mary and I look back on our long friendship with this extraordinary couple with a huge debt of gratitude for the close relationship we've been privileged to share. We're thankful for the generous ways that Doug and Marg have shared their lives with so many. We're thankful for their friendship and the encouraging advice offered when we've asked.

We're really looking forward to gathering with the extended clan for the belated 60th wedding anniversary celebrations—there'll be news to catch up on, bounteous food, a tippie or two, loads of laughter and great conversation.

Well done, Doug and Marg!



Randall Bourchier



PHOTO: RANDALL BOURCHIER

guest speakers—among them Frank Woodley, Sharelle McMahon, Lauren Burns, and Michael Carr-Gregg, to name just a few.

During annual Anzac Day celebrations, Clean Up Australia Day, the tree-planting day, the Hookey Park carols and community picnic, and

Marg speak with deep gratitude for the life they've shared. "We've loved every minute of it!" And of Mooroolbark, they say, "We've really enjoyed being able to share all the good things that so many people are doing to bring benefit to the Mooroolbark community."

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What a challenge this year has been for everyone! If nothing else, the pandemic has made us appreciate the important things in life such as family and friends, and we found different ways to connect with them.

The Celebrate Mooroolbark committee has had to rethink the way it will run its festival in 2021 and yet still be ready to revert to normal if the government allows more than 500 people at an event. We are living with uncertainty, but we are resilient. Our hope is that we can bring some cheer back into Mooroolbark and support our local businesses, particularly the local coffee shops and eating places.

It is with this in mind that we decided to bring the festival to Brice Avenue and Manchester Road, extending it over eight days with popup events in key places around the town at different times of the day and evening from Wednesday 24 March to Wednesday 31 March 2021. Posters and flyers will be distributed closer to the time informing the public when and where events will be.

On the last day of the festival there will be prizes for the year's entries, with three judges selecting the first, second and third places. The theme for our October competition was 'Pets and Wildlife in Action' and we congratulate Yvette, our winner for October, with her entry 'Spread Your Wings and Focus'. The submission was chosen for its "uniqueness, good exposure and editing, well-composed emotions and most of all intention." The December theme, 'Nature at Home', is all about gardens, which are particularly beautiful at this time of the year.

An exciting new competition, currently in the planning stages, is the Mooroolbark Trail, which will take excited young children all over the Mooroolbark precinct with a list of questions to be answered. The child who correctly answers the most questions will collect a prize at the end of the festival. In January we will be inviting our schools to enter the recycled sculpture and writing competitions once again, and to start creating their Snapshot '21 costumes for the parade—which may or may not be via virtual

in beautiful Hookey Park to entertain the adults. The Celebrate Mooroolbark team is encouraging people to buy a meal from one of the many takeaway outlets nearby and have a picnic at Hookey Park while listening to old favourites as well as newer numbers. A spot in Manchester Road has already been chosen to hold the youth zone, which will give our young musicians exposure, and it is in this area that we hope to hold Red Earth Unearthed, our annual talent show.

Our stallholders have been invited to book a stall site at a location to be decided on. Food stalls will be carefully chosen not to compete with local food outlets, so that festivalgoers can continue to support local businesses. For the children, there will be raffles and other fun activities.

Once again, we would like to thank our premium sponsor, the Yarra Ranges Council, and our major sponsors: the Lions Club of Croydon-Mooroolbark, Bendigo Bank, the Professionals, *Living Today*, Ross MacKay Creative, GRV and

The winner of the October Celebrate Mooroolbark photography competition was Yvette, with this entry entitled 'Spread Your Wings and Focus'.



Our photography competition has been in full swing since October, and the response has been encouraging. Croydon Camera House is sponsoring the competition and is generously giving a \$50 voucher to each month's winner from October '20 to March '21. The competition has a different theme each month, and is open to residents of Yarra Ranges and Maroondah shires. Entrants can choose which subject they would like to photograph as long as it is recent and around Mooroolbark. For competition T & Cs, go to: celebratemooroolbark.com/competitions.

reality. For the adventurous, there will be billycart races on one of the festival days, with billycarts made by members of Mooroolbark Men's Shed.

Our hardworking entertainment team has chosen an area in Manna Lane to host the children's zone, and plans to decorate it in a way that will encourage children to stop and be entertained while mums enjoy a cup of coffee at one of the two delightful coffee shops in the lane.

There will also be live music from the rotunda

Mooroolbark Traders. Without them and our volunteers, the festival would not be possible.

Our committee is growing and we welcome our newcomers: Jenny, Bec, Renae, Auds, Helen, Lahiru, David and Bobby. If you would like to be involved as a volunteer or as a sponsor, please contact Barbara on 0417 381 542 or email barbara@celebratemooroolbark.com.au

Barbara Austin
Chair, Celebrate Mooroolbark Committee

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Nature Play

Time in nature is essential for children's mental health and happiness

PHOTO: DEPOSITPHOTOS

A magpie's song. The scent of eucalyptus. The crackle of leaves underfoot. There's something about being in nature that slows us down, softens our focus and brings us into the present.

Nature is restorative. It provides an escape from daily routines and demands. In a world that asks for us to continually pay attention, unstructured time in natural settings allows us to slow down, attend when we want to, and rejuvenate. In these environments, we don't need to process intensive information; our responses to what we observe are immediate, unconscious and emotional. This type of attention, known as 'soft fascination', creates feelings of pleasure, not fatigue.

Spending time in natural settings is not just a pleasant option but is key to psychological flourishing. In a commissioned literature review, Deakin University found access and proximity to safe, high-quality parks significantly improved mental health. Just spending 15 to 20 minutes in a garden or a park lowers stress hormones, reducing anxiety, anger and fatigue. Another large study of 3,600 individuals in four different countries showed that adults are less likely to experience mental health difficulties if they have spent substantial time in nature as children, such as playing in the back yard, visiting gardens and bush walking. For children, outdoor play in green spaces provides countless wellbeing benefits including improved social and cognitive development, less illness, better self-regulation, and the development of qualities such as patience and self-confidence. Children also forge a great respect and love for the environment in which they live.

In recognition of these positive outcomes, bush kindergartens, also known as forest schools or nature schools, are springing up around Victoria as educators recognise how the natural world promotes children's learning and wellbeing. Bush kinder is a preschool held outdoors, where children are encouraged to explore, learn and play in unstructured and intuitive ways. Around 140 Victorian centres are now running some type of bush kinder program.

For increasing numbers of children, however, outdoor play is taking a back seat to other pursuits, particularly screen time. According to *World Health Organisation Statistics* (2011), only one third of Australian children head outdoors as part of their recreation. In contrast, children are spending on average 52 hours a week in front of a screen. The average American child is said to spend less than seven minutes a day in unstructured outdoor play, and over

seven hours a day in front of a screen, and the habits of Australian children are presumed to be similar. This lack of outdoor play can lead to unhealthy lifestyles with increased rates of anxiety, obesity, and ADHD.

However, sending children out into nature may not be as straightforward as it seems. Some children find the prospect of outdoor play unappealing and it can be difficult to convince them of the merits. Compared to the instant gratification offered by technology, time outdoors can seem tedious, uncomfortable and boring. With anxiety on the rise, children may also feel threatened by encounters with dogs, spiders or bees, or by loud noises or storms, all of which are common fears for children. There are now also concerns about the risk of infection from COVID-19. According to the Royal Children's Hospital National Child Health Poll more than a third of parents said concerns about catching COVID-19 (themselves or their child) was a barrier to their child in engaging in exercise or physical activity outdoors.

Nature outings require forethought and planning, but the benefits are worth the effort. Although it may seem easier to visit a playcentre or café, where children will be safe, clean, and insect free, without needing to be slathered in sunscreen, children will not have the same access to the restorative, calming and regulating effects of the natural environment.

Here are some tips to make the prospect of time in nature more appealing to children, so that the whole family can reap the benefits:

- **Share your fascination.** Communicate your enjoyment of nature. Point out things that you notice, and help your child attune to the smaller details. Get to know some of the local birds, frogs and insects. Local councils often have posters of indigenous species so you can tick off each one when you find it.

- **Have a purpose.** Children are often more inclined to spend time outdoors if there is an identified reason for going, such as walking to a playground, dropping off a letter, kicking a ball, or visiting a landmark. You could also make a surprise stop at a park when you are already out, before or after being at the shops or on the way home from kindergarten or school. The appeals of nature often work their magic once the children get there. Younger children may be enticed by a treasure hunt. This can be as simple as providing children with an egg carton that they can fill up with treasures they gather along the way: gum nuts, flowers, shells, pebbles etc.

- **Meet outside.** Rather than meeting at an indoor playspace or café, take a basic picnic and meet outside. Make it a rule that takeaways are eaten outdoors. Children tend to be happier and better behaved when they are free to move and explore at their own pace. When children are driving you up the wall, remove the walls!

- **Respect their limitations.** If children are fearful, pushing them beyond what they feel comfortable with is only going to make them more reluctant. Acknowledge and validate their fears, make sure they feel safe, and then slowly extend their parameters over time. If they are fearful of insects, for example, ensure they have adequate protection before heading out, such as appropriate shoes and clothing as well as repellents and bite creams if needed. Raising Children's Network, the Australian parenting website, provides information on using stepwise approaches to addressing children's fears and phobias.¹

Make outdoor times device free. It can be difficult for some children to disconnect and refocus if a device is within arm's reach. It is also important for them to see your willingness to give technology a break for a while and tune into what is around you.

Nature has a restorative effect on our mood, wellbeing and vitality. Spending time in natural surroundings with our children helps to establish habits that promote good mental health throughout their lives, as well as fostering a respect and appreciation for what the natural world provides.

Kate Chivers

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¹ raisingchildren.net.au/toddlers/health-daily-care/mental-health/anxiety-in-children

Welcome Back, Mooroolbark!

With the easing of restrictions around socialising, shopping, and travel, Mooroolbark Traders and Community Group (MTCG) is encouraging everyone to get out and support local businesses. MTCG President Geoff Earney said, “Every dollar our locals choose to spend here in Mooroolbark instead of elsewhere goes back into our local community. It supports local families, which in turn supports their local spending. A strong local economy employs more locals, with businesses that give back to community initiatives and on it goes, from strength to strength.”

With most retailers unable to open their doors to the public for several months, businesses have suffered. Geoff is impressed by the support and compassion the Mooroolbark community has shown toward local businesses during the closures, and is confident it will continue as things reopen. “It’s going to be a very tough road ahead to recover our losses,” he said.

Businesses are excited to be open again after the lengthy lockdown, and the wellbeing of staff and customers is a focus for many retailers. Some businesses, like Mon Poulet French rotisserie, have become accredited Mental Health First Aid workplaces¹ so that they can offer support and information to help others maintain a healthy mental wellbeing. “Anytime you need it, reach out,” said Lauren of Mon Poulet. “And if we happen to see you’re not quite yourself, we’ll do our best to offer a moment to chat, breathe, or info on who to turn to for help.”

Geoff Earney noted that there are other things people can do, besides spending money, to promote local business. “Write a good review on Google, the business’s Facebook page, or one of the many



PHOTOS: SHARIE AND CO BOUTIQUE

food ordering sites; like, share or comment on their posts on social media,” he said. “And recommend your favourites to your friends and family. It all goes a long way.”

For updates about what is happening in Mooroolbark, follow the Mooroolbark Community Facebook group. For a list of Mooroolbark cafés and restaurants you can support, check out the business directory at mooroolbark.vic.au.

Janet Van Dijk

¹ mhfa.com.au



Coffee with Vintage Appeal

After losing her 20-year career in the travel industry due to COVID-19, Courtney Tull decided to “take it down a notch”—so these days, rather than

travelling the world by plane, she can be seen travelling through Mooroolbark towing a cute vintage-style caravan.

The caravan is the base for The Wattle Tree Co, Courtney’s new takeaway coffee business. After leaving the travel sector Courtney decided to make use of her previous hospitality experience and start her own business. She chose the name The Wattle Tree Co because of her love of green hues and the Victorian countryside. “I have always loved trees and I wanted to use a native plant that really represents the Yarra Valley and the Dandenong Ranges,” she said.

Courtney’s quaint caravan can be seen most days in Cambridge Road, parked in the service road near the site of the old Pembroke High School. It’s from there that she serves coffee, freshly baked goods and other treats to those who pass by—dog-walkers, horseback riders and even customers who drive right up to the window, ordering from the comfort of their cars.

Courtney’s menu suits a variety of tastes



and ages. Children love the milkshakes and Nutella fairy bread. Coffee is popular with the adults, and her special chilli coffee, made with award-winning chilli coffee beans from Queensland, keeps people coming back. Courtney also has dog treats on hand and a dog bowl filled with water for her four-legged customers. In the summer months, Courtney plans to surround the van with rugs and crates to create a zone where people can relax or play large lawn games like Connect 4 and Jenga.

The visual appeal of the caravan, which was designed and custom-made by a local company¹ is a big drawcard, with many people driving past, then doing a quick U-turn to come back and have a look at the van or take selfies.

¹ spifirevintagecaravans.com.au



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF COURTNEY TULL

“If I had a dollar for everyone who said, ‘Oh, your van is so cute’, I’d be rich,” said Courtney. “It draws people in.” Courtney enjoys the social interaction with customers, especially her regulars. “I love recognising their faces—or half their faces, with masks! I can’t wait to see people’s real smiles!”

Although coffee is her biggest seller, Courtney also sells iced drinks, bakery items, and toasted sandwiches. She is open from 7:30–1:30 Tuesday to Friday, Saturday 9:00 am–2:30 pm, and occasional Sundays.

“I’m loving my new adventure,” Courtney said. “I don’t think I’ll be going back to travel any time soon.”

Janet Van Dijk

Find out more about the The Wattle Tree Co on Facebook or Instagram.

Get the Skills to Get the Job

Have you ever thought of applying for a job and then passed it up because you didn't have the confidence or the skills? Or didn't have the right clothing for the interview or for the job?

The concept of First Impressions Clothing Exchange (FICE) began in Cire Services Women's Warehouse program, a partnership with The Salvation Army's Employment Plus service. In the Lilydale office, unemployed women received training once a week under the guidance of experienced trainers Renée Cooke and Sue West. The training, which aimed to build confidence and help with goal-setting, was designed to develop the skills of volunteer staff to enhance their employment prospects. However, many of the women had nowhere to buy affordable clothes when applying for a job, especially after being unemployed for many years. Women's Warehouse came up with the idea of having a clothing library where women who were taking workshops could buy or rent clothing.

In September 2019 the concept became reality and FICE opened as a small business—by women and for women—in a shared pop-up space in another shop in Mooroolbark Terrace shopping centre. Donations of clothing and accessories started flooding in and it soon became obvious that they would need a place of their own if they were to do training in

interview questions which may stump job applicants, such as when a potential employer asks, "Have you any questions?"

'Women's Warehouse Hour of Power' also began during lockdown, as a casual lunchtime catchup each Wednesday and Thursday at 12:30 pm, allowing women to get together via Zoom and feel connected. The unstructured session was sometimes just a chat and a laugh, and at other times a mini self-help workshop which kept the women focused and allowed them to share their emotions.

Many women have a sense of disconnection after staying at home for years with their children, or because of a marriage breakdown, family violence, or even homelessness. It helps them to know that they are not the only ones feeling this way. When they get in touch with FICE where there is no judgement and everyone is treated the same, they get back their sense of belonging, communication, reliability, and feeling part of a team.



Some of the members of the FICE team: Top, L-R: Renée Cooke (Cire Services), Nina Bekker (Cire), Karon Austin (volunteer). Bottom, L-R: Sue West (Cire), Gus Seremetis (CEO Cire), Donna Fairweather (Yarra Ranges Council).



Renée models an inexpensive outfit that she found at FICE

the shop as well. With the help of Cire, FICE was able to secure Shop 7 in Mooroolbark Terrace in October last year. The business has continued to flourish, to the point that it is now outgrowing the premises.

As a Work for the Dole¹ host organisation, FICE provides opportunities to volunteer workers. Women, many of them in their 50s and 60s, work 15 hours a week, gaining experience and confidence while still able to receive benefits. The program is operating very successfully, with many women moving on quickly as they find permanent employment or take up a study pathway.

Because of the pandemic restrictions, the shop had to close at the end of March, then reopened in June, closed again in August and opened once more on 1 November. During this time, FICE online workshops taught skills such as résumé writing and interview preparation, and also provided information sessions on topics like Jobkeeper and superannuation. Renée, who was employed in the retail sector for many years at a managerial level, also has a livestream workshop that discusses how to respond to job

One volunteer was a stay-at-home mum for 12 years, and had lost her confidence and felt she had no skills. She didn't associate being on the kindergarten or school committee, or being a mum, with having skills. With experienced trainers providing ongoing support and updating her computer expertise, she has regained her confidence and is now studying for a diploma in community services.

It is obvious that Sue and Renée love what they do, and that seeing the smiles return to their clients' faces and hearing them laugh again is what makes their work so rewarding.

Barbara Austin

First Impressions is open Wednesday to Friday from 10 am - 3 pm. Clothes can now also be purchased online; check out the FICE Facebook page or website: facebook.com/cirefirstimpressions and ficestore.square.site FICE is seeking volunteers to help in the shop, whether they are looking for career pathways or just want to give something back to the community. For information, email the FICE team: firstimpressions@cire.org.au

¹ Work for the Dole is a work experience program which places long-term unemployed jobseekers in activities where they can build new skills, experience and confidence to move from welfare to work, while giving back to the community. Participants continue to receive income support and assistance while part of the program.

Resilience

From Surviving to Thriving

Dr Lucy Hone brings years of research, as well as her own personal experience with tragedy, to the conversation about resilience.



PHOTO: TESSA BURROWS

After a life-changing tragedy in her own family, resilience expert and researcher Dr Lucy Hone is uniquely placed to understand exactly what strategies really help when overcoming adversity.

Dr Hone, co-director of the New Zealand Institute of Wellbeing & Resilience (NZIWR), shared both her personal experience and what science knows about resilience in “From Surviving to Thriving”, a free online event, in October. The webinar aimed to help build mental wellbeing in Melbourne’s eastern region, and was organised by community agencies in conjunction with six local councils including Yarra Ranges Council.

Lucy Hone studied resilience in 2009-2010 at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, and later attained her PhD in positive psychology and public health from Auckland’s AUT university. After completing her studies in Philadelphia and returning to her home in NZ, Lucy began putting her studies to work, teaching resilience-boosting strategies to communities devastated by the 2011 Christchurch earthquake. She felt that by helping the people of her community, she had found her “personal resilience calling”.

Unfortunately, navigating tragedy with resilience became much more personal for Lucy—a devastating event changed the course of her life and work. In May 2014, Trevor and Lucy Hone’s 12-year-old daughter Abi was killed in a car accident, along with two close family friends. In an instant, Lucy went from being resilience expert and researcher to suddenly finding herself on the other side of the equation. Now she was a grieving mother, facing the darkest days of her life.

After the loss of her daughter, Lucy questioned the advice of grief experts who told her to expect years of overwhelming grief and possible family estrangement. Needing to find hope and a way through the pain, she turned to her resilience research and evidence-based strategies to help her family navigate such a painful loss. “When Abi died, I had this voice in my head that said: choose life, not death; don’t lose what you have to what you have lost,” said Lucy. “We had two beautiful sons—they were 14 and 15 at the time. They really needed us right then... I became absolutely determined to tune into them rather than having all of my attention swallowed up by Abi’s loss.”

Presenting the webinar from New Zealand, Lucy spoke about the ways of thinking and acting that continue to help her cope with parental bereavement, and about what the best research has shown about resilience.

What is resilience?

Dr. Karen Reivich¹, director of training programs at the University of Pennsylvania’s Positive Psychology Center, defines resilience as “coping with adversity and learning from it.” Lucy urged the audience to learn more about themselves during challenging times such as the Melbourne lockdown, and to understand what ways of thinking and acting help them when things are tough.

Why is resilience important?

Karen Reivich teaches that human beings use resilience in four different ways:

- to overcome obstacles of childhood, such as poverty, abuse or neglect
- to steer through everyday adversities such as road rage and workplace difficulties
- to navigate major life events and losses such as death, illness, or relationship changes



PHOTOS: DENISE/PHOTOS

Helping others and having supportive relationships can help increase our personal resilience

Can anyone be resilient?

“The science shows that resilience isn’t an elusive trait that some people have and some people don’t,” Lucy explained. “Resilience is a capacity that resides within us all, and it requires what Anne Masten calls ordinary magic.”² While genetics do play a part, personal resilience is largely influenced by our thoughts, actions and connections. With the help of self-knowledge and deliberate action, resilience can be developed. Research also confirms that the skills of resilience can be taught.

- to reach out, learn, and take on new challenges in a proactive, rather than reactive, way.

“It is our resilience that enabled us all to carry on functioning okay even when our world was turned upside down this year,” said Lucy. “All of the working from home, suddenly not being able to go to the office, not being able to go to the gym, meet with friends and family, being forced to do things really differently—that is your real-time resilience in action.”

¹ Dr. Reivich is a leading expert in the fields of resilience, depression prevention and positive psychology, and is the lead instructor and curriculum developer for the Penn Resilience Programs. ppc.sas.upenn.edu/people/karen-reivich

² Anne Masten was one of the earliest researchers in the field of resilience and is a professor at the Institute for Child Development at the University of Minnesota. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ann_Masten

What are the characteristics of resilience?

In the early 2000s, biological psychiatrist Dr Dennis Charney³ conducted in-depth interviews with American airmen who had been prisoners of war in North Vietnam's infamous Hoa Lo Prison (known as the "Hanoi Hilton") during the 1960s and 1970s. Despite their years of incarceration, many of the men never experienced Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or mental illness, and managed to lead effective, functional lives. Dr Charney's research, published in 2005, identified the following critical contributors to the airmen's resilience:

- optimistic thinking
- helping others
- having a moral compass
- faith/spirituality
- humour
- having a role model
- strong supportive relationships
- facing fear
- having a strong sense of meaning in life.



Lucy pointed out that all of the above factors are what Ann Masten refers to as "ordinary magic" and that many of them relate to connections with "someone, or something, bigger than yourself." Each person will have different ingredients for success or have those ingredients in different quantities: "As long as you have got some of them, and you're aware of the things that help you cope with adversity, then you're on the right track."

How can we practise resilience?

NZIWR has created a "toolkit" of four coping strategies⁴ that may seem simple, but are

backed by rigorous research and science. Lucy has found these strategies to be "profoundly effective" in her own difficult times, especially after the death of her daughter and friends, but also for coping with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Understand that struggle is part of life

Acknowledge that adversity happens to all of us, and cultivate self-compassion. "Do whatever works for you to really value yourself and be kind enough to yourself to say, okay, this is a tough moment, what do I need to do to be kind to myself right now?" said Lucy. Harsh self-criticism is demotivating, yet studies show that more than 76 percent of us are nicer to others than to ourselves.

2. Choose where you focus your attention

People who demonstrate a capacity for resilience seem to be able to accept the things they are incapable of changing, and focus their attention on what they can change. Concentrating on what is still good

in your world will counteract the negativity bias that encourages us to notice all the bad things. Develop habits that help you tune into the positive things in life.

3. Ask yourself: is this helping or harming me?

This strategy is based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), or talk therapy, which trains people to question whether the ways they are thinking and acting are hindering or helping them in their efforts to get through whatever is troubling them. Asking this question puts you back in control.

4. Don't catastrophise

Try not to indulge in "runaway train" thinking. Dispute your irrational thinking in the same way that a friend would if you dared to voice those inner thoughts out loud. Ask yourself what is the best-case or worst-case scenario, and realise that the most likely outcome is somewhere in the middle. Distract yourself or try techniques such as slow, deep breathing, to give your thinking brain enough time to catch up with your overly emotional, irrational brain.

While the above strategies will help us build our personal resilience, external factors are also important. Lucy pointed out that resilience is also dependent on the environment in which we live, making it more difficult for those who are disadvantaged in society. "It relies upon us having organisations and community structures, good justice, health and education systems, lack of racism, unity, equity and a sense of belonging as well."

Six years after the tragic death of Abi, Lucy knows that it is possible to navigate adversity and to make yourself act in ways that will help you through life's toughest times. She emphasised that the most important findings of resilience research are that we do it together and that we understand we do have choices—that our capacity for resilience is, to a large degree, a direct result of the way we choose to think, and choose to act, in everyday moments.

Lucy acknowledged that Melbourne has had it especially tough during the global pandemic due to the city's lengthy lockdown. She concluded her presentation by encouraging the audience to adopt a survivor's mentality and to understand that what we are facing is a marathon, not a sprint. "Keep building the self-awareness of what is working for you and those you care for, and through that self-awareness you can build up a powerful resource toolbox that will help you in the weeks and the months ahead."

Janet Van Dijk

Originally from London, Dr Lucy Hone has called New Zealand home for nearly two decades. She is a director of the New Zealand Institute of Wellbeing & Resilience (NZIWR), adjunct senior fellow at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, an internationally published academic researcher, and best-selling author. Dr Hone's PhD dissertation was acknowledged for its outstanding contribution to wellbeing science at the 2019 World Congress of Positive Psychology in Melbourne, and her research has been published in several peer-reviewed academic journals. Her work has been featured in documentaries around the world, and her TED talk "Three secrets of resilient people" has had more than 2 million views. Dr Hone helps design and implement wellbeing and resilience strategies for government departments, companies, and schools. In 2017 Dr Hone wrote Resilient Grieving, and in 2020 she co-authored The Educators' Guide to Whole-school Wellbeing with her NZIWR co-director, Dr Denise Quinlan.

You can connect with NZIWR through Facebook, Instagram or the NZIWR website: facebook.com/NZIWR/, @bringing_wellbeing_to_life, and nziwr.co.nz.

³ Dennis Charney is a world expert in the neurobiology and treatment of mood and anxiety disorders. He is Professor of Psychiatry, Professor of Neuroscience, Professor of Pharmacology, and Dean of New York's Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dennis_S._Charney

⁴ NZIWR™ Real-time Resilience Toolkit: nziwr.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/NZIWR_Real-time_Resilience_Coping_with_Coronavirus.pdf

Ripples in Our World

Have you ever skipped stones across a body of water? If you do it just right, the stone jumps across the water a few times before it finally sinks. Then when it does sink, the stone sends ripples across the surface.

When I speak, I like to remember my words are just like stones that I'm throwing out into the world around me. In this day of Facebook and Twitter, we can think about our words (our posts) as stones that we are casting out into our communication world—the social media 'lake'. It might seem clever or amusing to start a lot of ripples with an incisive post or two, especially if you're feeling bored and out of touch. Or to spread some juicy gossip as some kind of heartfelt revenge. But do we really consider how such offhand comments might affect others, and how easily they can be misinterpreted?

Long before the days of social media, the apostle Paul addressed this very problem with the Christians in Rome. They were struggling with sharply divided opinions about each other, based on what they were willing to eat. Some were convinced vegetarians, while others freely ate meat. Here's how he addressed this issue with regard to how they were treating each other:

One person believes it's all right to eat anything. But another believer with a sensitive conscience will eat only vegetables. Those who feel free to eat anything must not look down on those who don't. And those who don't eat certain foods must not condemn those who do, for God has accepted them. ... So why do you condemn another believer? Why do you look down on another believer? Remember, we will all stand before the judgment seat



*of God. ... Yes, each of us will give a personal account to God. So let's stop condemning each other.*¹

Paul makes an important point that the issues we often tend to differ with others on, are in the grand scheme of things, not that important to him. And it's God who has the final word.

So, can we ask ourselves what ripples we are sending out with our words—either spoken or written? Let's consider the intent and impact of our words, and may we instead send out ripples of thoughtfulness, gentleness and joy, reflecting the great love God has for all human beings everywhere.

¹ Romans 14:2-3, 10, 12-13 NLT

Cara Garrity
Speaking of Life



New Challenges for the Salvos

COVID-19 has impacted the world in ways we could never have imagined. Back in March, The Salvation Army had to make the very difficult decision to close our buildings for the safety of our community. For over 150 years, The Salvation Army has supported the most vulnerable people in our community, so this decision was hard for all. It meant that everything we do needed to be rethought. Our Mission Statement for Australia says, "Wherever there is hardship or injustice Salvos will live, love and fight alongside others to transform Australia one life at a time with the love of Jesus."

Here at The Salvation Army Mooroolbark the challenge was overcome by an amazing team of staff and volunteers. Our worship services went online, and Mainly Music sessions are now sent out to families via our YouTube channel. Our biggest challenge was how to continue to meet the need in our local community, especially once lockdowns were established to prevent the invisible virus from spreading.

Thanks to our dedicated teams we were able to start pre-packing food hampers; our food order each week has doubled because of the pandemic. We have seen an increase in struggling families in our local area, and because of this we have opened on Wednesdays

as well as Mondays. Christmas is a busy time for us, and we have already set up the toy room for parents to come and select toys for their children. This year we have not been able to collect in the shops and intersections, but so many generous people in our community have still been supporting us to help buy extra food.

Back in August, we met with the management of a local motel that over the past few months has been housing many homeless people. We had been supplying food hampers to some of the residents, but with limited cooking facilities, they found preparing meals difficult. Seeing the need for meals that could be reheated, we set about preparing 40 meals each week to go to the motel, as well as meals that we could give out through our emergency relief. A team of volunteers comes in each Monday to cook the meals.

The Salvation Army Mooroolbark is committed to supporting others, and the need in our community has never been greater. We would like to say a big thank you to our teams, and to everyone else who, even in this hard time, has been able to support us in supporting others. God Bless.

Captain Ashley Proctor
The Salvation Army Mooroolbark Corps



Supporting the community: Eastern Volunteers takes on the challenges of COVID-19

Eastern Volunteers has been supporting and promoting volunteering in the outer east for 44 years, but the organisation has never faced a year quite like this one.

Vivienne Cunningham, CEO of Eastern Volunteers, described how the organisation had to reassess its entire approach when the COVID-19 pandemic reached Australia. “We basically had to change our whole model in 48 hours. A lot of our volunteer drivers are over 65, so we lost half of our workforce overnight. We had to totally reframe our work.”

Eastern Volunteers provides services directly to the community, from Manningham to the Yarra Ranges, via its own largely volunteer workforce. It also supports volunteering in the community by connecting people with opportunities to volunteer and supporting organisations to offer volunteer positions. The organisation has two main arms: a community transport service, and a volunteer resource service.

Eastern Volunteers’ community transport service provides options for people over 65 who are ‘transport vulnerable’. Vivienne explained that this means people who cannot use their own vehicle, cannot rely on family for transport, and cannot use public transport, taxis or rideshare services because they need some extra support. The service also assists people under 65 who face barriers to easily accessing other services. This might include health or mental health issues, or language barriers.

The community transport service often assists people to attend healthcare appointments, but also supports people to stay engaged in their community. “Many people just want to get out and about for social connection and wellbeing,” said Vivienne, who also chairs the Lilydale Lounge Working Group. “A coffee with friends, the local CWA or Rotary, or visiting a loved one at the cemetery. Just normal things that require getting out of the house.”

“In pre-COVID times we had 135 trips a day on the road! And almost all our drivers are volunteers,” explained Vivienne. “It’s supported transport, so our drivers are trained in working with people who have dementia, or who use mobility aids, anyone who requires some extra support. It’s more of a caring service than just a transport service.”

When the impacts of the pandemic became a reality, the organisation rapidly pivoted its services to meet new challenges. The transport service, having lost the support of many older driver volunteers who needed to isolate at home, was reduced to essential healthcare trips only. Within two weeks, Eastern Volunteers had conducted assessments on 1400 clients to determine their situation and needs. For those without family or other supports, the organisation set up a grocery and medication delivery service to ensure that people still had the essentials.

To implement this new service, Eastern Volunteers created a volunteer bank using the expertise of its other key arm – the volunteer resource service. A key part of the organisation’s usual work is assessing and placing people in volunteer opportunities in the community. Eastern Volunteers also supports around 500 organisations who have wholly or partially volunteer workforces. This includes organisations as diverse as hospitals, local sports clubs, and animal shelters. These organisations are supported to create volunteering programs, and to recruit and train volunteers.

The 700-person strong centralised volunteer bank established by Eastern Volunteers helped the organisation rise to the sudden challenges of life in a pandemic. The volunteer bank included both volunteers and paid staff who could no longer work in their roles. Eastern Volunteers coordinated with councils’ emergency management teams and other not-for-profit agencies to match volunteers to needs and ensure that vital services could still be delivered to isolated and vulnerable people.

Vivienne shared stories from the extraordinary array of work supported by the volunteer bank. “Quite early on we had 350 people deployed to a wide array of roles. We had volunteers assisting animal shelters with virtual foster home assessments to ensure that pets could find new homes. We had volunteers working in language to provide migrant information services, and to assist with welfare assessments, so that elderly people could receive the support they needed.”

“Really it’s been a privilege. We placed all those people in opportunities. Many had never

volunteered before. We assisted organisations to stay open and serve the community during this time.”

The creative, determined response of the Eastern Volunteers team was recognised with a nomination for the ‘COVID-19 Innovation and Resilience Award’ in this year’s Volunteering Victoria Awards.

In 2019, 2.3 million Victorians aged 15 and over spent time volunteering, according to the first State of Volunteering in Victoria report, recently released by Volunteering Victoria.¹ This represents 42.1% of the adult population in the state, and at least 507.7 million hours donated to the community. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare notes the intrinsic benefits of volunteering for both individuals and the community. “Volunteering is an indicator of wellbeing. It also has links to the economic and health status of a nation. It benefits the economy and the health and wellbeing of volunteers by providing a personal sense of satisfaction and making them happier.”²

“Everyone volunteers in a different way,” said Vivienne. “People use volunteering for different reasons. Young people might use it as a pathway to employment. Women might use it as a pathway back to employment or as a way to reskill after being out of the workforce. People in their 50s and above might use it for mutual obligation requirements under Centrelink, or as a way to stay active in the community.”

Vivienne imagines that in the years ahead, organisations will face old and new challenges in trying to create volunteer opportunities that are relevant to how people want to volunteer. Before the pandemic, Eastern Volunteers had spent 12 months developing a new initiative to promote and support inclusive volunteering opportunities for people with a disability. This is work that the organisation looks forward to continuing. “In some ways, COVID may have assisted organisations to think differently about volunteering,” said Vivienne. “We’ll need to build on this and assist them to create opportunities for people in the way people want to volunteer.”

Carissa Sianidis

If you would like to learn more about Eastern Volunteers’ services, or to get involved, please visit their website at easternvolunteers.org.au.

1 State of Volunteering Victoria Report, 2020, accessed at: stateofvolunteering.org.au

2 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2017, accessed at: aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/volunteers

It's about 5 am. My subconscious has woken me from a deep sleep. I'm barely awake, but enough to be able to make out the groaning and rumblings of the garbage truck as it makes its way up our street.

As the truck gets closer, I become more alert, remembering the days when my son was a teenager and living at home. Back then it was his responsibility to put out *our* bin, and when the rumblings of the truck would wake me up, I would sleepily hope that it would stop outside our house, and make its comforting sounds with our bin. If it did, then I could rest, knowing that my son had done his job of putting the bin out. If it didn't, then I had to go through the mental exercise of wondering if the truck had done the other side of the road yet, and whether I should bother to put our bin over the road for a later pickup. If I chose that option, I needed to be very quiet, trying to avoid letting anyone know that our house had messed up bin night—again! Then there were the additional bins, for recycling or garden waste. Having that bin, full of the household rubbish, emptied on garbage night, though, was mission-critical to life functioning normally!

Like most parents, over the years I wondered whether I was doing enough to ensure that my son was learning responsibility.

Years ago, a short article on responsibility in a school newsletter caught my eye. One line really made me think: "Lack of responsibility is becoming a national disease." That might sound a bit over the top, but is it really? Maybe not. We know how a disease can spread, often in ways



PHOTOS: DEPOSITPHOTOS

cold, and a myriad of new and exotic ailments, just by spending time with other people. Could 'social habits' also be transferred so easily and innocently? Is it possible that, as parents, we may unknowingly be encouraging a lack of responsibility, specifically in our kids? Has responsibility, a regular part of life a generation or two ago, become an 'optional extra' now, or a victim of some new social epidemic?

integral to how our society functions. Families, after all, are what society is made of, just as a house is made of bricks. As strong bricks help make a strong house, strong families contribute to a stable society.

Australia has suffered through two world wars—and although they have been tragic and bitter episodes in our nation's history, they were also fundamental in demonstrating the values and principles that our nation stands for. As young men enlisted, went to war, fought and even died for our country, they shouldered a responsibility that echoed the meaning of 'mateship'—looking after each

Learning Responsibility



that are unnoticed, unintended, or just plain mysterious. As we are especially aware at the moment, it's so easy to get whatever illness is going around—the latest virus, sore throat or

If we ponder the elements of responsibility, we can begin to see what's missing from the mix of our social and moral foundation, which is

other and working together for a common cause. Their actions embodied the essence of responsibility: self-sacrifice and putting the needs of others ahead of themselves.

That sense of personal responsibility was taught to following generations. Only a few decades ago, children had many jobs around the home or farm. Not five-minute jobs like emptying the dishwasher, but hard work lasting an hour or longer. Cleaning the chook shed, chopping firewood, or mowing the lawn. It was a long list—do you remember? I'll bet you remember that you weren't going anywhere, or having friends over until everything was done. Maybe your friends even helped you get your jobs done faster, as mine did occasionally.

We all have responsibilities ranging from the mundane to 'mission critical'. Some we are paid to do, but most are—or used to be—just part of living life each day. Unfortunately, we can very easily transmit to our children the feeling that a responsibility is a burden, something we 'have' to do. But we can learn to see it differently.



We could see our responsibilities as a privilege. While it might not seem a privilege to take out the garbage bins or be on time for something, we can learn to value these acts as contributions to the lives of others! When we fulfil our responsibilities, and in doing so help out another human being, we are demonstrating a regard for others.

Let's face it, we love it when things happen for us just the way they are supposed to—and that's often because other people have done their bit, in an appropriate and timely manner. Responsibility is so essential to daily life running smoothly, that its absence only really becomes apparent when someone has slipped up, and the day's wheels begin to wobble and fall off. People get angry, upset, or just struggle on doing what someone else has failed to do. It's easy to see how contagious this can be.

Have you ever noticed how easy it is to make a mess when there is a mess already there? How many people at football games or the cinema just leave their rubbish where they were sitting, instead of carrying it out to a bin? After all, everybody else is doing it. And for those who don't like the mess, it's easy to just complain about it, rather than taking any action.

We would achieve more if, instead, we each took ownership of our own responsibilities and those of our families. For example, if we focus on being tidy and considerate around the home, those values are likely to transfer outside the home into society in general.

Responsibility doesn't come naturally to most people; it has to be taught. We can teach this to our children from an early age, rewarding responsible behaviours with encouragement. Even very young children can learn the basics of responsibility: looking after their own things, knowing where they belong, and keeping them clean and tidy. Helping to look after the family pet also provides a terrific opportunity for learning responsibility and caring. When children have to 'do the right thing' and feed, clean, play with their

pet every day, they soon understand that the pet relies on them for things like nourishment and affection. Even having a plant can foster a regular daily approach to children managing their responsibilities. Such responsibilities become an integral part of their life, rather than an afterthought, which is really what responsibilities are. They're not something we add on when, or if, we think about them, or when someone tells us we ought to. Ideally, we all need to do these things because we care, not because we have to.

Part of the discussion with our kids about responsibility involves respect toward money. We live in an age where it's easy to buy on credit, and advertising is all about instant gratification. In this context, teaching the value of saving, and buying only what we can afford, might seem a bit old-fashioned. However, we can model solid financial principles by using family funds wisely, and including our kids in the managing of the family budget. While they don't need to know all our financial details, a simple statement can help them understand that money has to be budgeted carefully: "No we can't afford that this month, as we have a few extra bills, but we'll look at that again next month."

Having children save a set portion of any money they receive is a great way to set them up for a financially responsible lifestyle. A family I know allows their kids to choose their own special treat for a random week. The kids know it's better value if they can make it last the week—if it doesn't, they have to wait until the next opportunity. They can drink the big bottle of soft drink or eat the packet of biscuits all on the first day, or they can make it last and enjoy it for a few days.

If we include natural consequences in the whole deal, then kids will understand the big picture better. "If I don't do my jobs, and do them properly, I will have to do them again. Or even pay for a replacement for something I've lost, or worse, let die!" Managing time can be a problem area too, especially with homework. What with family matters, jobs, friends,

money, time and possessions, life is one giant responsibility! But if it is not recognised as such, things can get out of control, and cause us more trouble and stress than pleasure.

Which life do we want for our kids? We can promote a positive approach to the things we need to do, you know, the everyday things, the things that can get pretty boring, pretty quick. We can keep the focus on *why* things need to be done—because we care for those around us, just as we want others to care for us. It really does sound old fashioned, doesn't it? But if you remember what life used to be like when people were responsible most of the time, simply because that's how they were, then you'd probably want that to be a part of who your children are too.

Thankfully the dependable garbage men still have a sense of responsibility. If your bin is out there (and not tipped over) they *will* empty it, no question. It's a part of the bedrock of our society. Hey, they do it 365 days a year—thanks, guys!

Talk to your kids about responsibility and its core value in the lives we share. Encourage your kids when they respond with actions that contribute to the family life, and explore the results when someone has 'dropped the ball'—not with accusations, but calmly and patiently. Let's help get lack of responsibility off the national disease register.

All these years later, my wife and I look at my two children—now young adults—and we're pretty satisfied. Yes, they fell short occasionally when they were growing up—what kid doesn't?—but we tried to hold them accountable. Now that they're out on their own with jobs and their own homes, we're proud of how responsible they are in their lives. And I'm pretty sure my son manages to keep up with the 'mission critical' job of putting *his* garbage bin on the street each bin night. And I look forward to hearing the stories of him teaching his son the same thing!

Steve Steel

Unearthing the Station Master's House



This 1887 photo shows the station master's house in the foreground

The recent Heritage Victoria listing of the Mooroolbark station master's house was welcome news to Mooroolbark history buffs. The house, which was built in the 1880s and was in continual use until 1973, had been demolished in 1974, and had been under the carpark for over 46 years. Recently, an archaeological dig to recover items of historical importance was conducted by a team from Dr Vincent Clark & Associates, archaeology consultants.

Local historian Rhonda Simmonds had worked tirelessly on the documentation needed to have the railway station building and surrounds listed by Heritage Victoria. The railway station was the first public building in Mooroolbark, and October marked 133 years since its official opening in 1887. Although

the majority of the information submitted was agreed upon by Heritage Victoria, the application was denied due to the number of changes that the station building had undergone in its lifetime. So it was a pleasant surprise when the station master's house, instead, was listed as worthy of cultural protection

Records show that most station masters stayed at the house between three and six years. The longest residents were Andrew Bell (affectionately known as Andy), and his young bride Vera. They arrived in 1940 and, forgoing many promotions, stayed for 21 years. It was in the station master's house that the Bells brought up their family of eight children.

The archaeological team began by fencing the area, then used an excavator to remove

the asphalt carpark surface. Three trenches were initially created, each approximately 4 metres long by 2 metres wide, and 30 cm deep. Another three trenches were dug a couple of weeks later. The team then got down into the trenches and, using metal trowels and plastic buckets, began carefully excavating to find any artifacts of archaeological interest.

First to be found were the remains of timber housing stumps, then in the wash house/laundry area, a row of terracotta pipes by Mills & Co. with Glen Iris bricks wedged either side for stability. Among other items found were many nails, which would have been handmade by a blacksmith, broken pottery and crockery, part of a colourful tile with a starburst design, an old Melbourne Bitter beer can, glass, bottles, and old shoes.

There were also items associated with women and children living on the site—a lovely little brooch, a few toys, glass marbles, and a sweet little white ceramic doll's head. Information about where each artifact was found on site was recorded, then the items were given an initial clean, bagged and sent to be catalogued by an archaeological specialist.

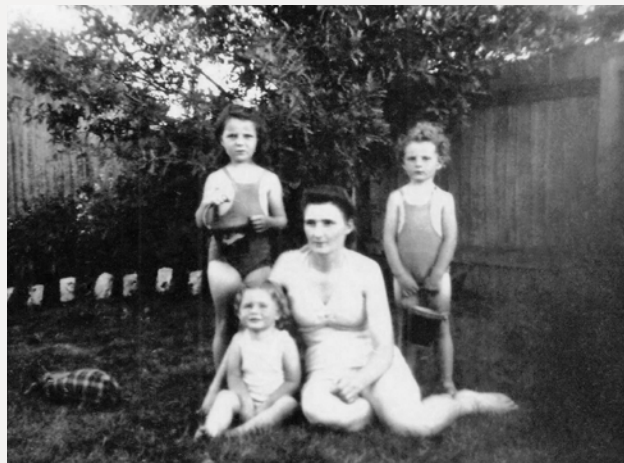
It is expected that a selection of these artifacts will return to the Mooroolbark community as a memorial display at the new station.

Marion Stott, OAM
Mooroolbark History Group
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PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE BELL FAMILY

Station master Andy Bell and his wife Vera moved to the house as newlyweds in 1940



Vera Bell with children Dianne, Ian and Jennifer in the garden of the station master's house in 1947. They are pictured under the iconic oak tree which was recently cut down as part of the level crossing project (see article page 16)

As we continue to face changed life circumstances as a result of COVID-19, Yarra Ranges Council is encouraging residents to remember to practise kindness. The council's 'Be Kind' initiative points out three important areas where we can show kindness: to business, to others, and to ourselves.

With so many businesses struggling as a result of trading restrictions, the Yarra Ranges Council is encouraging people to help bolster local economic development by supporting local businesses. The council recommends that residents shop locally, use local tradespeople, and show support for neighbourhood businesses on social media.

To show kindness toward others, residents can offer their time and talents to their local communities through volunteering, or they can donate to local emergency relief services. People can also help others find the support they need by directing them to community relief and support agencies.

Finally, YRC reminds us to be kind to ourselves in this time of unprecedented change. It's important that we don't neglect exercising, eating well, and maintaining social connections with friends and family. If you are feeling distressed or anxious, reach out to one of the many available mental health counselling and referral services.

For more information and a list of resources, visit the Yarra Ranges Be Kind web page: yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Council/Coronavirus-Updates/Be-Kind-Yarra-Ranges



Yarra Ranges Can't Wait to See You!



PHOTO: YARRA RANGES TOURISM

In welcoming back visitors to enjoy the wonderful eateries, shops and open spaces the region has to offer, Yarra Ranges Council is reminding everyone to take care and to stay COVID-safe.

With local hospitality and retail businesses now open, and as metropolitan Melbourne adapts to the lifting of the 25km travel limit and metro/regional border, visitors are being encouraged to plan and book their trips ahead, and to be aware of the restrictions and density limits in place to help the region re-open safely.

CEO Tammi Rose said that many local businesses were prepared for the ease in restrictions and were looking forward to the support of summertime visitors. "We know that businesses across Victoria have been struggling this year and we've felt this very close to home. As one of the state's most visited tourist regions, visitors are the lifeblood of so many of our local businesses," she said.

"We're all excited to welcome visitors back to our beautiful part of the world, to share our local produce and natural environment as travel opens back up."

Ms Rose said that large crowds were anticipated on weekends and public holidays and that planning ahead would help to reduce overcrowding and avoid disappointment. "We love to see people coming out and enjoying themselves in Yarra Ranges, but as we face a COVID-normal summer, we have to change the way we take day trips and holidays. Please be kind to local businesses—we're all keen for visitors, but we're also all adapting to the changes and challenges of this year."

"The easiest thing to do is to book ahead—this will guarantee you a seat for breakfast, lunch and dinner, and help our businesses to run smoothly. There will be reduced parking as outdoor dining takes over some traditional car parks in main streets. We still have accessible parking available, but we're encouraging visitors and community members to be patient and leave extra time to find a park."

Some areas managed by Parks Victoria may be closed, so plan your trip by visiting the Parks Victoria website before leaving.

"For visitors heading out to some of our parks, reserves and forests, please plan your day with back-up destinations in mind, as you may arrive to find carparks full or an area quite busy," said Ms Rose. "Some of these destinations do have alternative car parks so it's best to research these in advance of your visit."

"Places like the Redwood Forest in East Warburton, the 1000 Steps and the RJ Hamer Arboretum are extremely popular, but we have so many more wonderful places to visit, including hundreds of kilometres of paths and trails, so it's worth taking the time to explore off the beaten track."

There will be an increased presence of Victoria Police officers, council's community safety officers and Parks Victoria rangers throughout the region to ensure visitors and community members are doing the right thing and adhering to the Chief Health Officer's orders—including wearing masks where mandated.

To report a non-urgent crime, event, or suspected COVID-19 breach, call the Police Assistance Line on 131 444 or visit police.vic.gov.au for online reporting. In an emergency, call Triple Zero (000).

Looking to the future

While this year has been full of changes and challenges, the arts and culture sector has adapted in interesting ways and we are looking forward to future events. The Yarra Ranges Council's Culture Tracks events planned for throughout the year were cancelled, but the team was able to put together a series of online events and projects.

The Still Life project is a time capsule of the community's experience during COVID-19, capturing moments from throughout the year. Residents of the Yarra Ranges were encouraged to submit photos, videos and pieces of writing to express themselves and tell their stories. From original compositions to pictures of delightful Spoonville sightings, the Online Gallery is full of community contributions. Visit the Online Gallery at bit.ly/StillLife_OnlineGallery.

A part of the Still Life project, Put Out Your Poetry was a unique initiative that encouraged residents to write poems and have them printed as bin stickers. Households, streets and schools got involved, proudly plastering their pink stickers on their bins for their neighbours to see. Rubbish trucks drove along the roads of the Yarra Ranges, bearing their own haiku stickers. To learn more about #putoutyourpoetry and view the poetry submissions, visit bit.ly/YRC_POYP.

At Burrinja Cultural Centre, explore a fascinating exhibition in honour of Eddie Koiki Mabo, celebrating the man behind the game-changing Native Title Act. *Legacy: Reflections on Mabo* brings together a selection of works by Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists in the spirit of reconciliation, twenty-nine years after the historic achievement. For more information, head over to burrinja.org.au.

This summer, be the first to find out about new performances, workshops and more—stay up to date with our upcoming program of events by signing up to our e-newsletter at culturetracks.info.

Yarra Ranges Council



An Enduring Gift

The image of the tree trunk, as it lay strapped to the bed of the truck, was confronting and still lingers in my mind. I knew it needed to happen at some time, but the swirl of emotions—regret, gratitude, sadness, resignation, hope and wonder—caught me by surprise.

The old oak tree was one of several community trees to be removed as part of the Manchester Road Level Crossing Removal Project. The tree had stood for so many years, and there is keen speculation about who had planted it. We didn't want to see it go, but also understood that there was good reason to remove it, even trying to see if there was any way it could stay as the comforting presence it had been for so many years.

The tree was witness to centuries of progress. Indigenous folks moving along Brushy Creek; the migration of different people in and through the area, as well as the ever-increasing commuter traffic; the movement of the children of a plethora of animal species over time; the changing movement of agricultural goods along the new rail corridor and roads; the rise of a little town, and later a suburb, called Mooroolbark; the visits of so many people, including Queen Elizabeth; the changing landscapes from dusty walking and cart tracks to multi-lane roads and the reshaping of creeks to formalised drains.

As my awareness of the magnificence and importance of trees grows, it challenges me to broaden my perspectives. I've learned that trees communicate through a network of mycorrhizal fungi and that cooperation, rather than competition, enhances their existence.¹ This prompts me to reshape and expand the story I tell.

We may remember, for example, that *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein² was often seen as a cute and informative children's book. Now that



PHOTO: TRACY DE

narrative is sometimes challenged as being a self-centered and 'extractive' story.³ Maybe it is time to consider how and what we, the present Mooroolbark community, plant for future generations. What is the legacy we want to leave for our children's children?

I rejoice that two of our oak trees have some enduring legacy. One oak tree, with many hollows, heads to the Werribee Zoo as a habitat tree and the other has been gifted to local woodworkers.

As I pondered the lessons learned from the oak trees, I reflected on

- life experiences that so often contain mixed and competing emotions
- the generosity and vision of planting for a future we will not personally witness
- the resilience we have as a community: we didn't want it to happen, and we will bounce back
- the curiosity, wonder and awe at an ever-increasing understanding and awareness of trees
- our personal and shared responsibility for shaping our future: planting, tending and cherishing the 'other-than-human' assets in our community.

So, while the image of the severed oak tree on the truck was confronting, I now realise just how much these trees have given, and what a gift they continue to be, especially in the way they prompt me to reflection, resilience and vision.

Neil Mitchell

¹ Wohlleben, P., 2016. *The Hidden Life Of Trees*. Carlton, Vic: Black Inc., an imprint of Schwartz Publishing Pty Ltd.

² Silverstein, S., 1964. *The Giving Tree*. 1st ed. New York: Harper & Row Publishers.

³ *The New York Times*, 15 April 2020. We Need to Talk About 'The Giving Tree', Adam Grant and Allison Sweet Grant

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MISSION STATEMENT

To contribute towards and to help to foster a **growing community spirit** within our neighbourhood.

We seek to achieve this by:

- highlighting the many positives within our community
- encouraging partnership in community initiatives
- contributing to the process of identifying and addressing community needs and concerns

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