

A SUPPORTER'S STORY

Pat Harris lived for many years in the Mitcham community, where she was fondly known as 'The Dog Lady' and a lover of animals. She was also a supporter of the East Burwood Centre for many years.

When she and a friend 'discovered' the East Burwood Centre, they began using their cooking talents to contribute - selling jams, pickles and relish outside Woolworths supermarket in Blackburn South to raise money for the Centre's Christmas hampers.

Pat then began bringing countless jars of her jam to the Centre, as well as 50 individually wrapped Christmas cakes and puddings each year. Accompanied by large supplies of coffee —

"No-one should ever be without coffee!"

Always independent, she would never let anyone help her carry the heavy boxes of supplies from her car.

Pat spent the last five years of her life in a nursing home, but was kept in touch with the Centre by her friend Gail who read our Newsletter to her.

After Pat died in January, aged 92, Uniting East Burwood received notification of a bequest from her estate - one of many she had left. The \$27,000 will to be used for hampers and for Emergency Relief, including a fridge to keep fruit and vegetables fresh.

Gail said that Pat wanted no thanks. All she did was help people less fortunate than herself.

Pat Harris is a wonderful example of our supporters who, without fanfare, maintain their commitment to the Centre's work. We could not do without them - they are an important part of all that has been achieved in serving the community.

In her final gift, Pat showed how much she still cared.



Reminiscences
shared by Gail,
Barbara Graham
and Denise Femino

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*We acknowledge that we meet and work on land for which
the peoples of the Kulin Nations are the traditional owners and custodians*

CHANGING TIMES

Great community services often begin with one person's vision. One that is familiar to us all is Lifeline, now Australia's major telephone crisis service, which was established after Rev Alan Walker witnessed one person's tragedy in Sydney. Another is Rev John Flynn's vision of a "Mantle of Safety" for the people in outback Australia.

Uniting East Burwood Centre developed on a much smaller scale. As minister of East Burwood Methodist Church (now Burwood Heights UCA), Rev Ern King saw the need for local marriage guidance counselling. With the help of the nearby Anglican Church of Ascension, the result was an agency now in its 47th year.

Among the many changes the Centre has undergone since then, the most significant adjustments have been caused by the dramatic events of 2020 which have had a profound impact worldwide.

Long-serving volunteers over the age of 70 can no longer work their shifts or collect food supplies. The Positive Living Group staff has had to adjust to working remotely with their members in isolation. Opening hours have been reduced and clients coming for emergency relief are unable to enter the building.

The on-site gaps have been filled by new staff and volunteers, and all the frontline workers have undertaken extra training for Covid19 issues.

Our customary fundraising efforts, especially at Bunnings and the Op Shop, are curtailed for an indefinite period. The lack of fundraising has severely affected our longest serving program - Counselling. While Family Services and Kidsplay are continuing, it is very disappointing that counselling for adults can no longer be offered.

Throughout these difficult circumstances, maintaining the personal connections that have always been such a strong feature of the Centre is so important - not just with those who have direct involvement, but for all the people who have supported us. That engagement and support are needed now more than ever.

We can be profoundly thankful that UEBC has survived the current challenges.

The Centre is still there, "open" in a different way. The teams are available when needed, keeping faith with our founder's words -

"A listening ear - a caring voice".

Lorraine James
Member, Partnership Committee

"If you start something worthwhile, nothing can stop it."

- Rev John Flynn

The majority of copies of the Newsletter are now emailed to reduce expenses, with printed versions available to people who do not have email addresses.

Email can be arranged - please notify the Editor, lljames@optusnet.com.au

For this issue, costs of printing and postage have been donated.

WORKING FROM HOME

I need to come clean - before Covid-19 I really didn't give much thought to what '*working remotely*' meant, but on the rare occasion the words crossed my radar, they conjured up a picture of somebody working in a remote corner of the world completely cut off from any form of communication. Naive? - in retrospect, yes!

Since Covid-19, 'working remotely' has become a hot topic and put a whole new spin on working life - and now that I have become one of those people I have a much greater appreciation of what the words really mean.

When it was first mooted that many of the Community Workers may not be able to come to work, there was an innate sense of sadness when that prediction became a truth. We hoped this would be a short term thing - but unfortunately five months later we are still uncertain when the 'great reopening' to regular hours will be.

However, challenging times call for some creative thinking and after speaking with a couple of key people, a decision was made that I could do my NILS work (No Interest Loan Scheme) from home.

Lists, I find, can be invaluable and so I made a list of things I needed for this to work for me:

- ✓ Create an office space where I could contain all my work, my 'devices' and my very comfortable chair.
- ✓ Keep office hours - this has proved to be a difficult one.
- ✓ Make sure that I take breaks - I call that being kind to myself.
- ✓ Allow myself some fun - in whatever form that may take.

Clients were uncertain if the NILS Program would continue and called the Centre to find out. Their particulars were forwarded to me - I would contact them, explain how the system would now work, and give them my contact details should they need any assistance with documentation to proceed with the loan. So far this has worked out well.

Loans for the six month period Jan-July this year are greater in number than during the Jan-Dec period of 2019. Since Stage 4 restrictions, numbers have slowed somewhat, but I believe this has to do with stores required to close their doors to the public. Depending on what the loan is for, some clients choose online shopping and can still obtain a quote for their item/s.

Am I enjoying the experience of working from home? It has its pluses and minuses:

I like:

- + I can wear comfortable clothes - ergo trackie daks and tops - and no I don't spend all day in PJs.
- + The flexibility - I can take breaks whenever I want.
- + I find it more challenging.

I do miss:

- The social interaction - having a chat and a laugh with a colleague or client.
- The face to face contact with clients - having interacted with people all my working life, I prefer face to face meetings.
- That feeling of being 'in the loop'.

What I really found most challenging was trying to learn and understand what a Webinar was; how do I connect with Microsoft Meetings and Zoom. I dread when I make a call to ask someone about connecting to any of the above and I hear the words "oh that is easy; you just need to". How come it works so easily for others when for me it is still a work in progress!

One of the fun things I really enjoy during my breaks is listening to someone play blues or boogie - with my eyes closed and 'dancing' in my very comfortable chair.



I find this oh so good for my mind, my body and my soul, and afterwards I go back to work feeling refreshed and ready to face what lies ahead.

Sheelagh Muhlner,
Community Worker

CHANGING TEAMS

Uniting has undertaken a restructure of staff positions at Uniting East Burwood Centre, resulting in a number of changes. When restrictions are eventually eased and the community can return to its full routines, our 'new' and 'old' staff and volunteers will be learning to recognize names and faces.

We were very sorry to lose Cheryl Moran when she was unable to continue as our Team Leader earlier this year. Our new Team Leader for Family Services, **Alana Blacket**, comes from the Croydon office of Uniting where she was working with vulnerable individuals and families.

Alana has introduced herself:

Hello everyone,
I am excited to have been able to come on board as part of Uniting East Burwood's Team.



I have been with Uniting for almost four years as both a Family Services Team Leader and Senior Worker. Prior to that I worked in the fields of mental health and housing, and have some experience in rural areas.

Supporting the community and in particular families is a huge passion of mine and I am so pleased to be able to bring this to Uniting East Burwood. After my first day on site I saw that the Centre has such a lovely presence. I will be getting to know the wonderful people who have made it into a community hub.

On a personal note I am an animal lover and have two cats, Jelly and Oscar and a dog, Max. I love gardening and reading a good thriller.

I look forward to meeting you all.

Alana



The **Burwood Bulletin** is a community magazine produced entirely by volunteers. 5000 copies are distributed free each quarter.

It is always a very interesting read, featuring people, events and history, as well as an informative community noticeboard and business directory. On several occasions, the Bulletin has published articles about Uniting East Burwood, extending awareness of our work.

Covid19 has affected distribution, but an arrangement has been made for the 157th edition due in Spring. If the usual collection points are unavailable, copies can be collected from the following Neighbourhood Houses from **14th September**.

Amaroo Neighbourhood House, Chadstone
The Avenue Neighbourhood House, Blackburn South
Bowen Street Community Centre, Camberwell
Box Hill South Neighbourhood House, Box Hill South
Burwood Neighbourhood House, Burwood
Koonung Cottage Community House, Blackburn North
Power Neighbourhood House, Ashwood.

Mailing cost of \$6 for an individual copy of this 64-page issue can be made by direct transfer, using your name as the descriptive:

e.g. DLEE to: A/c Burwood Bulletin
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Uniting

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Editor: Lorraine James

Partner with us to make a difference.



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