



We're about young people
OVERCOMING adversity &
building INDEPENDENCE.

NEWSLETTER

JUNE. 2020

FROM THE MANAGER

Darren McGhee, Manager / Principal

Greetings,

There isn't any doubt that the current times and its challenges have forced us as individuals and services to act in different ways. Methods of communication that were uncommon have become common. Working arrangements have adjusted, social distancing, and many limitations have been regulated to ensure community safety.

In this time the needs of the young people we work alongside haven't changed. They have been joined by many more in our community. The loss of part time and casual employment positions is now being experienced by many more young people, international students who can't go home or don't receive benefits and have no casual income are in trouble, vulnerable people quarantined into their accommodation, families having to adjust to financial income lost, young people struggling to cope with the isolation and the fear while we all are experiencing some type of grief and trauma as a community, adjusting to an uncertain future.

Although YOS and indeed The Salvation Army maybe dwarfed by the current needs, we can and do make a difference. YOS has reached out to many young people and families during this time, providing emergency relief, checking in with people that are known to us and creating new friendships as we drop some of our program eligibility to encompass those in need. We remain hopeful as our schools adapt to a combination of distance and face to face learning styles. Together we have become closer. In this time, we call upon our Lord to give us new vision and open up different pathways so that God's love for all can flow through the work we do at YOS. The pages that follow are a testimony to that.

YOS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL UPDATE

Education

YOS Lawnton School

YOS Goodna Campus

Pirlirrpa Education Program

*Sam
Manager of Student Learning*

YOS Independent School in 2020 has undergone many changes to date, not to mention learning during a pandemic. This year we have seen the commencement of new staff in our school that has included Teachers at both campuses, an entire new Health and Well Being Team at both campuses and the position of Manager of Student Learning created.

There has been the implementation of vocational certificates, as YOS Independent School moves in the direction of supporting students to explore the world of work, identify career options and pathways. Students are also being equipped with practical and social emotional understandings that will serve them to access further training and employment and further support themselves through school if they wish to advance their education.

The commencement of Term 2 saw YOS Independent School transition across to home-based distance learning, whereby the entire school team were involved in the modification of curriculum and contact time to ensure that students were able to stay engaged and continue to learn.

Anxiety, fear and isolation factors resulting from COVID-19 meant that our education team had the huge task of making sure that students still felt connected to our school community and that distance learning was not only providing educational support, but also well-being support. Checking in with students to make sure they were coping became extremely important, as did allowing students opportunities to connect with one another in chats and video conferences during distance learning.

I want to thank our Education Team and Administrative Staff for their capacity to adjust and adapt at a time when events have unfolded rapidly. COVID-19 has also brought to the forefront a deeper appreciation of the importance of connection with our school community amongst not just students and staff, but also our parents, who too have had to shift rapidly to assist in supporting their young person.

The hope is that as we come out on the other side of this pandemic, accompanied with the lessons we have learnt, it will expand the impact of interventions and introduce new ways of working with each other to provide quality opportunities to all.

PIRLIRIPA EDUCATION PROGRAM UPDATE

Pirlirrpa Education Team

2020 has been a year of change for our world, our nation and all of us within Pirlirrpa Education Program.

First of all, a heartfelt, THANK YOU, to our students. You have proven yourselves time and again in your kindness, positivity and resilience to do what is right, even when it is hard. You are all inspirational, you make us smile and we look forward to being with you every day.

Our program staff have changed this year. We honor Sam for her tireless and skillful approach to teaching and student care. We also appreciate Maree and her contribution to the program as Health and Wellbeing Worker, partnering with students as they progress in their individual journey's. You both made such a difference. (Both Sam and Maree have transitioned to new roles within YOS).

We have a new permanent teacher. Sunny, you have allowed for such a positive transition. We have also had new Health and Wellbeing workers, Lianne, who served well for approximately a term, and now Cheryl (YOS Drive for Life program Coordinator) who is taking care of us in Term 2.

All students have had to experience much change and uncertainty this year. Along with program changes, students have been gaining and maintaining employment in these difficult times. They've also been attending TAFE, navigating distance learning, addressing relationship conflicts, experiencing disappointment and 40% of students have experienced residential moves already this year. Then, some things have remained the same. Subjects and curriculum remain, our pet fish and turtles also remain. TAFE subjects of hospitality, allied health and beauty continued on from 2019. Startsmart incursions for smart saving, earning and spending in Term 1. We have also kept Heidi, our English teacher and Mandy, our Art experience volunteer, both bringing their best every day and we are always grateful for them.

Despite the obstacles, we have retained 100% of our students with all being enrolled in VET certificates. 80% of year 12 students are additionally engaged with TAFE in School certificates. 100% of students are on track to complete their QCE despite each one having reasons not to.

Looking ahead, we have much to look forward to – a return to incursions and excursions, gaining First Aid Certificates, our annual Volunteer expo and Open Day, five Year 12 graduates this year and everyone to reunite at GRADUATION in November! We continue to do our best, express gratitude and overcome individual obstacles that would block our journey. Overall, this semester has been difficult but we will get there and it will be worth it.

CHELSEA'S STORY.... SO FAR

Chelsea commenced with YOS as a Year 10 Student in 2018. Prior to coming to YOS her past experiences at mainstream Primary and High School were both unproductive and destructive. Chelsea required tutoring from Grade 2 to Grade 9. Speech Pathology Assessments, Psychologists, Guidance Counsellors, Chaplains and extra support were accessed but did little to improve Chelsea's performance or well-being at the school.

Chelsea's response to her lack of belonging and safety at school was to become behaviourally challenging for teachers. In addition, when Chelsea tried to articulate her needs, she was dismissed. This resulted in being shamed for poor behaviour in front of her class and broader school, including staff, her peers and parents. These methods and difficulties with the school often resulted in additional ridicule from other students. Chelsea disconnected from any learning and accepted the story that she was a below average student. Her Mum was only told of Chelsea's poor behaviour and results. When her mum expressed concerns about learning difficulties and possible testing for barriers, she was assured that it was only an attitudinal issue and that Chelsea was refusing to learn. Chelsea then disengaged entirely from school early in year 9, her mental health and associated medical conditions becoming overwhelming. This resulted in her being unable to leave the house due to anxiety, poor self-esteem and choosing social isolation.

Her interview to attend the YOS education program was very difficult for both Chelsea and her mother. Chelsea needed to be coaxed out of the car and into the building, even in Mum's presence – the one place she felt safe.

Starting with YOS, Chelsea's social and emotional needs were explored and her individual learning plan, along with her safety plan, were developed to include learning and assessment adjustments. Well-being sessions, a case worker and access to safe spaces allowed Chelsea to develop and practice self-soothing strategies while remaining in class. This provided the opportunity Chelsea had longed for, to both belong and experience vulnerability without criticism. Chelsea thrived. Given environment, opportunity and appropriate challenges, Chelsea demonstrated the great courage and intelligence that was always in her.

Since coming to YOS she has not looked back, going from strength to strength since starting the program back in 2018. For the first time in her school life she has shared that she loves school and is willingly attending and achieving academic success. In the 17 months that Chelsea has been with YOS, she has transferred her confidence to the TAFE environment, completing her Certificate II in Allied Health in 2019, progressing to the Certificate III in 2020. Chelsea has also gained employment, addressed relational conflict and restored relationship with her father. She is now making plans to continue her studies after Grade 12 in the Health Industry as a Nurse. Her mental health and overall wellbeing have improved significantly as has her relationships and family life. Chelsea now has hope for the future and plans with purpose in all that she does.

During the course of Year 11, Chelsea participated in a video testimonial for TAFE QLD in regards to the promotion of using the Harrison Assessment Tool. This video will be used by TAFE QLD to market the effectiveness of the Harrison Questionnaire. The video expresses the support the tool provides for a person to accurately identify their work preferences and utilise the results to seek employment.

Chelsea is a very passionate and caring young person and supports her peers in our program, recognising their importance, value and impact they have on each other and that despite many with Mental Illness strongly believes in connection and compassion regarding support.

Chelsea and her family believe that she is so blessed to have received the opportunities at school and through the Pirlirra Program, identifying these experiences as those that have ignited her passion to want to undertake further studies and seek out future employment opportunities to build a career for herself.

DRIVE FOR LIFE UPDATE

Stafford

*Wayne
Drive for Life Coordinator*

*Drive for
Life*

*Stafford
Lawnton*

2019 was a good year for us – we achieved Provisional licences for 25 young people. When you consider that each learner driver is required to do 100 hours driving prior to testing – it was a terrific effort, largely due to those who give of their time and energy in volunteering.

Some of our success stories were young mums who prevailed over all their challenges and succeeded. It's a big day in young person's life when they get their licence. It speaks about a lot of things – all of them positive.

Some of our learners also went on to find employment and even bought their first car. We are blessed to also have mentors who helped in this area, to choose a car. One of the fantastic elements about this program is the friendship established between the young and the old-er and how this plays out in the young person's development.

We hosted a small graduation ceremony at a local café to recognise and acknowledge the maturity of our learners and how far they've come. We had over 30 people attend and enjoy lunch together. The theme was about 'growing up' and what that means for different people. A big part was about the responsibility of getting one's licence. We are aiming to impart not only good driving skills but also a good attitude that, hopefully, will keep them safe down the road.

If you know anyone who is brave, caring and has a heart for young people – perhaps they could be a mentor? Please tell them about this opportunity.

Since Covid-19 has taken effect we have suspended our driving lessons, but we are keen to start as soon as the lights go green.

A big 'congratz' to our P Platers and a big thanks to all our mentors. Champions! Also, gratitude to our funders: Queensland Government's Community Road Safety Grants scheme and The Salvation Army.



***A few happy
P Platers!***



Drive for Life Stafford, Graduation Ceremony lunch

Lawnton

*Cheryl
Drive for Life Coordinator*

During this year, we've had a rolling number of learners at any given time and have connected with more than 30 young people. 4 young people have achieved their provisional licence this year and 3 had tests postponed due to COVID-19. Earlier this year we took part in the University of Sunshine Coast Program Evaluation.

We have a small group of volunteer mentors (6 this year) that give so much of their time, expertise and passion to our learners. And equally, our learners give different knowledge, support and experience that perhaps our volunteers may not fully understand. For example;

- A Volunteer Mentor showed our learners basic vehicle maintenance and even accompanied them when purchasing a roadworthy vehicle
- We've had Volunteer Mentors support other Mentors through peer support and learning
- Our learners have taught Volunteer Mentors how to use technology and even the latest lingo and terminology used by today's younger generation.

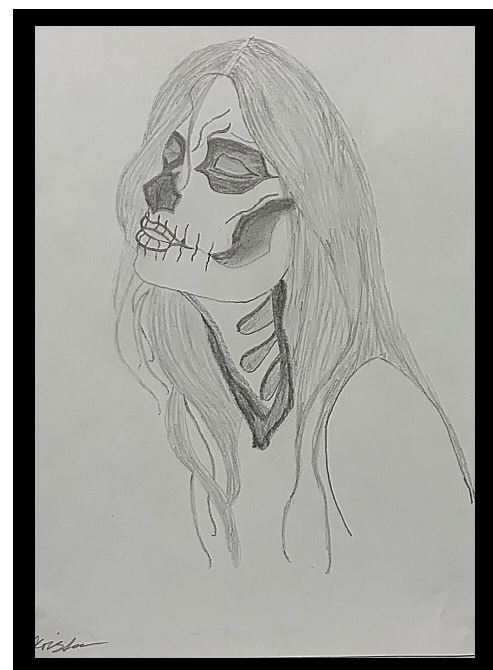
It's all about a mutual relationship between the Volunteer Mentor and Learner, Volunteer to Volunteer, Learner to Learner and Coordinator to all.

Since COVID-19 restrictions began, we've had to be more creative and resourceful in connecting with and supporting our learners. Although we haven't been able to deliver face to face driving lessons, we have been able to assist learners over zoom online video chats and via phone calls, supporting them to get on their way to achieve their learners.

YOS CREATIVES

Here are two images drawn by one of our incredibly talented Lawnton School Students, Jimmy. Here is some information about Jimmy's drawings:

Jimmy finds the Mexican style of the day of the dead interesting and different, and this is what influenced him to draw the girl this way. Jimmy started drawing around a year ago and enjoys doing it as a hobby. His next adventure in drawing is to conceptualize and draw an image on his study desk.



PIRLIRIPA ART EXPERIENCE

The Pirliripa Education Program (Spring Hill) is centered on an inclusive ethos, coupled with provision of supported, individual care and a focus on learning. It provides young people who are marginalised and isolated an avenue to complete Senior Education.

As part of our holistic approach to learning and self-development, we incorporate weekly art experiences in our curriculum, supported by a wonderful volunteer, Mandy. Mandy is a University Education student in the Arts, and her pursued interest in alternative education makes her a perfect fit for the program. Mandy brings weekly activities arranged in partnership with the students, for both engagement and upskilling. Mandy's passion, skill and genuine encouragement of our students allows freedom from perfection and comparison, increases their tolerance for themselves and each other, and challenges their mindsets relevant to choice, mistakes and personal expression.

This element of Pirliripa has been highly successful, with students gaining personal confidence, finding their voice through creative expression, increasing social tolerance and awareness, and increasing their well-being through tactile activities that require both mindfulness and personal reflection.

In addition to this activity, approximately a third of our students express high levels of creativity in their daily lives through a variety of mediums, including: poetry, team ice skating, beauty therapy, artworks, design, dance and sketching. Some of these activities increased dramatically after the art experience element of Pirliripa began.

KICKSTART AND LAUNCHPAD PROGRAM UPDATES

*Craig, Team Leader
Housing Advocacy Team*

Kickstart

Kickstart sustaining tenancy program has been impacted by COVID-19 restrictions mainly by way of changes to young people's income. Kickstart is youth oriented and focused on sustaining tenancies of youth 16 – 25 years.

This year we have seen an increase in brief intervention where short term brokerage or engagement has resolved most tenancy concerns for young people. We have also seen an increase in adults that are needing this same intervention. YOS Housing Advocacy Team (HAT) have seen this need as a space of support that could be offered by our service at this time. Part of being able to offer this support has been the utilization of not just our usual funding stream but also the emergency relief funding offered by the federal government to support people effected by COVID-19.

We, as a team use follow up and ongoing support to see tenancies sustained. For those not within the youth age range of our program, they are being supported with referrals to HART4000 and Encircle for any ongoing support.

A collaboration approach has been embraced by HART4000, Encircle and Department of Housing (Rent Connect) in seeing tenants remain in accommodation and to have their utility bills and external costs for the tenancy also supported with brokerage. We've seen over 20 tenancies in significant arrears (\$1,000+) sustained through Salvation Army funding or collaboration. In one instance, a tenancy with \$5,000 rent arrears was sustained through a brokerage plan that included contributions from the tenants, Rent Connect, HART4000, Encircle and The Salvation Army Youth Outreach Service.

Several tenancies have been sustained with tenants of Brisbane Housing Company (BHC). These tenancies, while seen as affordable do not get relief as their income decreases. They are among the more vulnerable of affordable housing tenancies due to this. We have formed a crucial connection with the housing managers of BHC to ensure that at risk tenancies are assessed and correct support offered.

During this unprecedented time, we have seen closer connections develop with agencies and young people have found that the ease of access in gaining support from the community has been crucial. We hope this will continue throughout the sector and be a stronger part of how services operate together into the future.

Housing
and
Advocacy

Cornerstone Program

Kickstart Program

Launchpad Program

Housing and Advocacy

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Launchpad

Launchpad is a complex of six single occupancy units. They are supported transitional community housing units. The aim of the program is to give young people 16 – 25 years an opportunity to tenant for 12 months in a supported environment to build tenancy and life skills. Within the 12 months the young person is given time to build toward independent living. That will look different to each young person but generally will mean using the time to explore education and employment pathways. It will also be a time for the young person to gain knowledge in areas of budgeting, communication and cleaning that are significant factors in why most tenancies fail. This means that a Tenancy Skills Certificate can be offered that is nationally recognised to be used as a reference to show good tenancy history.

Over the past 6 months we have seen no tenancy breaches, incidents or behavioral concerns with any of the tenancies. The tenants continue to engage in our program and the plans developed jointly with the youth workers. The largest impact felt by the tenants over the past 6 months has been changes in income due to COVID-19, restrictions and loss of work. The Housing Advocacy Team (HAT) have worked closely with each tenant to review rents to more fittingly reflect affordability through this period.

These restrictions have also meant transition for tenants to alternate housing options have been reduced. A decision was made through this period to extend 2 leases past the 12 months as to exit would not be appropriate or offer sustainability.

The tenants continue to show good progress in skills development. At present we have 4 young people in continued study through high school, TAFE or university. We have 2 tenants employed but on reduced hours and 2 tenants who are seeking employment as the restrictions ease. Two tenants are engaged in 2 activities (education and either employed or seeking). A sense of community has formed among the tenants where they support each other. This has been especially welcomed by tenants through restrictions and lock-down related to COVID-19.



CORNERSTONE PROGRAM UPDATE

Housing and Advocacy

Cornerstone Program

Kickstart Program

Launchpad Program

Jonnine, Youth Worker

I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work, live and play. I acknowledge Elders past, present and emerging.

Kaya and Wanju (hello and welcome in my language – Noongar)

Although frustrations have set in with not being able to get out and about due to Covid-19 restrictions, we have still been kicking goals. With me unable to leave my home and having to get others from the team to complete tasks in relation to supporting our Cornerstone clients we have had awesome results. It just goes to show what a deadly team we make.

What a fantastic outcome for a young person who was a victim of domestic violence. We were able to achieve a positive result in getting this young person housed. We all worked together setting up her forever home. Youth Worker, Tam, did much running around to assist in making this happen. Phone calls, emails and discussions were happening left, right and centre, two and fro, supporting her with all the love YOS has. This young person is grateful beyond words and we sure do pray that this is a new beginning for her. Handing her over to the YOS Kickstart program will certainly ensure that she will receive continued support.

Alan (Youth Worker) stepped up to the plate no questions asked, and supported and counselled my troubled young man through, what can be a trying ordeal, an Alternate Diversion Program (ADP) with Youth Justice.

If you ever want something done efficiently, and “now”, just ask our Laura (Youth Worker). Laura has given me some fantastic productive advice and managed an emergency relief referral in record time for my client.

Cornerstone continues to case manage 9 young people with some upcoming court appearances and a young man with some complex issues soon to be released from Brisbane Youth Detention Centre. I have just had another young man released from Brisbane Youth Detention Centre and now the advocacy side of things kicks in. He needs permanent accommodation (among other things), so can I be so bold to expect the same positive outcome as our domestic violence victim? Of course I can, just look at the team I am part of!

When things get back to normal, we might wish we were still in lockdown as there are some trying times ahead of us. The Cornerstone program will become busy as information filters in from my biggest referral agency Youth Justice, and word on the street. I might be locked down, but I still know what's going on, on the street.

THE POWER OF OUR WORDS

Written by Karen Ehman - proverbs31.org.

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue ...” Proverbs 18:21a (CSB)

Bam. Bang. Crash. I could hear the earsplitting commotion from my kitchen where I stood drying the last of the breakfast dishes. It was “demo day” at our house as we were replacing our old fireplace.

It was interesting and entertaining to watch the whole demo and building process unfold. Thankfully, the mason allowed me to capture videos of it for any curious, fixer-upper loving friends.

As the project was winding down, I noticed something. The contractor used many tools in his craft. Some of the same ones that he used to smash the existing fireplace to smithereens were the ones he used to carefully tap the new stacked stone pieces into place. His mallet brought destruction. But then, a few days later, it created beauty.

The same is true with our words. Though words can bring life, they can also deal a death blow.

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue ...” warns Proverbs 18:21a. Have you ever been on the receiving end of life-giving words? Then, at other times, has something cruel or unkind been spoken to you, where the words lodged in your brain, bringing you sorrow each time you recalled them?

This very day, you will have many opportunities to use your words. In our interactions with the people who cross our paths — family, friends, co-workers or complete strangers — we can utter words that instill hope, wholeness and courage to others. Or our statements can kill — dashing dreams, crushing confidence and dragging someone’s spirit down.

Whether we are speaking face-to-face, talking on the phone or even using our digital tongues in a comment thread or text message, remember this: Our words are powerful, and they have consequences. Will your words be a weapon of demolition or a wonderful tool that creates something of beauty?

May we be ever mindful of the way our words might impact those to whom we speak. Let’s aspire to use our speech with godly purpose.

To build ... not to break.

To bless ... not to badger.

To praise ... not to pounce.