

# The Advocate

Newsletters for supporters and clients of UnitingCare Harrison

## The **BIG** Sleepover SATURDAY 5 MAR 2016



Edition 1 2016

UnitingCare Harrison assists people to take charge of their own lives.

We have been doing this in Melbourne's Eastern region for more than four decades.

In this current economic climate and rental market, more people than ever are coming to us.

Many of these people are already homeless and in crisis when they walk through our doors.

The generous support of individuals, organisations and corporate supporters enables us to offer both crisis and longer-term assistance to those in need.

Please support our mission with a donation.

UnitingCare Harrison is proud to be involved in the upcoming Knox Festival and is working in partnership with Knox Council to host The BIG Sleepover for a second year. The BIG Sleepover will kick off after the Twilight Cinema on Saturday 5 March 2016 at Wally Tew Reserve, Ferntree Gully.

The BIG Sleepover aims to highlight homelessness and housing issues faced by families and individuals in our local community, and the support UnitingCare Harrison can provide.

We are asking families, local businesses, churches, schools and sporting clubs to come together and raise much needed funds to aid the work of UnitingCare Harrison in providing services to assist families and individuals seeking affordable and stable housing.

Sharon Wolstenholme, Acting CEO of UnitingCare Harrison, stated "The demand for services has continued to increase. During the last 12 months the agency has provided crisis assistance to 2851 people who attended our Knox Office. Of that total figure 1590 were families seeking either crisis accommodation or more appropriate accommodation for their circumstances. The main issues impacting on families seeking accommodation have been financial difficulty, unemployment, domestic violence, relationship and family breakdown. Across the state Homelessness services were forced to turn away nearly 100 Victorians each day in the last financial year."

How you can help - please register at [www.knox.vic.gov.au/bigssleepover](http://www.knox.vic.gov.au/bigssleepover) and join us for the event or donate to this very real issue in our local community via [www.unitingcareharrison.org.au](http://www.unitingcareharrison.org.au) or [www.givenow.com.au/unitingcareharrison](http://www.givenow.com.au/unitingcareharrison)



# Young Mother's Lunch 2015

## Making a difference in the lives of families

The UnitingCare Harrison Youth Team aims to provide a holistic service to our clients that meets their needs and ultimately assist them to thrive.

The team recognised whilst supporting young mothers that one single issue kept being raised by clients – social isolation.

It was highlighted, that most young people who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness, have highly fractured personal relationships. Often, relationships with partners can be difficult or obsolete, family support can often be problematic or limited, and peers drop away as interests, availability and social opportunities diminish.

Young mothers are UnitingCare Harrison's second largest group in terms of youth intake therefore with such a large client base – something had to be done!

As Christmas approached in 2015, it was suggested by the team that UnitingCare Harrison could hold a Christmas lunch for our young mums – what a wonderful idea...

In a flurry of activity the youth team “swung” into action, there was a lot to do in a small amount of time! Meetings were scheduled, tasks allocated, invitations sent and the search to find a Santa initiated.

In the era of limited funding, donations were an important feature of this event. Whilst we sought some SHARE appeal funding, we also needed great deals from suppliers and donations from the local business community. The team hit Knox – and we were pleased with the outcome with many local businesses donating goods and/or services to the event.

Within days, we had organised catering, a venue, gifts for all the mums and children and even a Santa!

The day finally arrived. Melbourne had put on a fine 42° day, but despite the heat the day went ahead at the Gifford Village Community Centre.

From silence to sound – young mums filled the venue and from the onset began talking with one another and the sound of children playing filled the air. This changed to the bang of bonbons, then dulled as everybody got stuck into a Christmas feast. Santa made a very special visit with gifts for all.

On reflection, whilst the day itself was a total success, what was most pleasing was the interaction of the young people. It was great to see young people exchanging phone numbers, exchanging social media details and forming a group who could understand and support one another.

The combined experiences of the group allowed for meaningful conversation, linking of important social networks, recommendations of services and practitioners as well as lasting bonds which we hope are fostered for the foreseeable future.

UnitingCare Harrison's Youth Team plan to run the event again in 2016. This time we will have a new group of young mums who experience a lack of support and community connection. It is our belief that this event is an integral part of the support we provide in order to assist young people to thrive.



## Sarah – A Client Story

Sarah and her two teenage children had no reason to think their housing was at risk, until a relationship breakdown led to their family home being sold from underneath them and they were ordered to vacate. Until that point, Sarah was nursing a workplace injury and her children were working part-time and completing full-time University studies. With limited income and time slipping away, Sarah felt as though she had nowhere to turn, and with English as her second language, speaking to Real Estate Agents about renting one of their properties seemed an insurmountable task.

Sarah contacted UnitingCare Harrison's Intake team, and with the help of an interpreter the family was referred to one of UnitingCare Harrison's crisis properties to provide some time to re-group and make concrete plans for future housing. Sarah's son was also assisted with some funds to replace his glasses, which had been stuck together with sticky tape.

A support worker from our Accommodation Options for Families program was allocated, who was able to work with the family to look for long-term housing, encourage all household members to contribute to living expenses, and discuss possible pathways forward. The worker also assisted Sarah to re-activate an old public housing application that had been declined due to lack of information.

After three months of support, the family received a public housing offer in their preferred area, thanks to the family's housing application being re-activated. However, when the family attended Office of Housing for an interview, they were told that they would not be eligible due to their daughter's casual income being marginally over the weekly income limit for public housing due to working additional casual hours over a peak period. Through the advocacy of the support worker, the daughter's income was re-assessed based on a more typical fortnight of employment, and the family was given the property offer.

At the final appointment with the support worker, after vacating the crisis property, Sarah was beaming with gratitude for the work that UnitingCare Harrison had done to help with her family's housing crisis and to obtain long term sustainable housing.



# Thank you

We would like to acknowledge and thank our supporters over the last few months.

Bakers Delight - Studfield  
Bayswater Rotary Club  
Bayswater South Primary School  
Bedford Heights Retirement Village Craft Group  
Billanook Primary School - Montrose  
Chicks for Charity  
Clayton Church of Christ  
Croydon North Uniting Church  
Curves Gym - Ferntree Gully  
Domtex Australia  
Epworth Eastern  
Ferntree Gully Motor Group  
Ferntree Gully Uniting Church  
Goodstart Early Learning – Ferntree Gully  
GS1 Australia  
Half Pint Ice Cream  
The Empty Christmas Tree (Heathmont Uniting Church)  
Hogs Breath- Knox  
IGA Wantirna Mall  
Kool Kidz on Wellington Childcare  
Lilly Patches  
Maroondah Chiropractic  
Pancake Parlour - Knox  
Ray White - Ferntree Gully  
San Churros - Knox  
Sweet As - Knox  
The Bridge Charcoal Chicken  
Time Zone – Knox  
Wesley Uniting Church - Box Hill

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# Tuning in to Teens

## Emotionally Intelligent Parenting

A six-session parenting program for parents of adolescents aged 12 - 17 years

The program aims to teach parents to:

- be more emotionally self-aware in their parenting
- identify and understand their own emotions
- become aware of the young person's emotional state
- listen and respond with empathy and without judgment
- help their young person to describe and name their emotions
- view their young person's emotions as opportunities for connecting and teaching
- use emotional awareness to guide the young person through problem solving

*"What I found most useful was getting in touch on an emotional level with my teen"*

*"I have learnt so much and would recommend the program to other parents"*

The Tuning into Teens program will be running during term 1 2016.

Dates: Weds: 17th, 24th February 2016

Weds: 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd March 2016

Time: 6.30pm—9.00pm

Where: Knox Youth Info Centre (Knox City)

If you are a parent interested in the Tuning into Teens Program, please contact Janine, the Team Leader Early Intervention Youth and Family Services on (03) 9871 8700 for more information.

## Volunteer With Us

Our amazing team of volunteers are an integral part of UnitingCare Harrison.

They are involved in a diverse range of activities. Nobody can do everything but everybody can do something to aid us in our mission.

Please consider offering your time or skills to help us to assist people to take charge of their own lives.

If you are interested in volunteering opportunities, please call Jane Davoren on (03) 9871 8700.

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