

mecwacare

SUMMER 2024

matters

Celebrations



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IN THIS Issue

Welcome to the Summer 2024 edition of mecwacare Matters!

In this issue, we chuckle with Preeti's laughter yoga program and enjoy the Diwali celebrations held around the mecwacare community.

We get into the theme of the Spring Racing Carnival with aged care residents – hats and all. We meet Molly the Shetland pony and learn about Gloria's close connection with horse racing legend Phar Lap.

We travel to Colombia in spirit, enjoying food, music and traditional dance and share the joy of the Pascoe Vale Gardens Community Day.

Catch up with progress at John Hood Terrace and celebrate the amazing fundraising efforts of Sharon and the Susan Barton House team.

Read about Louise's adventure to Uganda and how mecwacare helped make an impact on the local community and enjoy the stunning imagery of Kat's mob-wife photoshoot using clothes from our op shop.

Experience a blossoming partnership at Berwick Brae Gardens and we explore the world through food at Squires Place.

Meet an artist in residence and enjoy our social media spotlight – there's plenty to catch up with!

LETTER TO THE Editor

Do you have any suggestions, questions or story ideas for mecwacare Matters? Contact us via email at fundraising@mecwacare.org.au or on 03 8573 4812.

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ON THE COVER

Fay and Personal Care Assistant Rosediana celebrating the Spring Racing Carnival at Gregory Lodge. See page 6.



Laughter Yoga

“Laughter is the best medicine” according to Preeti, accredited Mental Health Social Worker at the Healthcare Services in Ballan.

She has been teaching laughter yoga as part of the lifestyle program in Ballan for the last couple of years and seen the benefits.

“Some people are hesitant and sceptical at first to join the program. Then they come along and experience a laughter yoga session and find out for themselves that it makes them feel happier, less anxious and energised,” explains Preeti.

So where did the idea of laughter yoga come from? “When I was a child, I went to yoga with my mother and we experienced laughing yoga together. Fast forward to moving to Australia and I was struggling with my own mental wellbeing. I was away from family in India and just with my husband and daughter. It was a bit

isolating and noticed my mood was down.

“Then I remembered how I went to Laughter Yoga with my Mum and thought I’d give it a try at home with my own family and it worked. I started feeling happier, energised and less stressed.”

Preeti then suggested introducing laughter yoga sessions at Ballan. She contacted Laughter Clubs Victoria and enrolled in their internationally recognised Laughter Leader Training and became a fully certified Laughter Yoga facilitator.

There’s now increasing research to support the benefits of laughter yoga Preeti explains, “Laughing triggers the mind into thinking the body is having a good time, so it releases the happy hormones and the laughter becomes real. It’s also an aerobic workout with clapping and breathing techniques part of the 30-minute sessions which gets the blood pumping and oxygen circulating.”

Diwali – Festival of Lights

Cultural celebrations are a big part of life at mecwacare and this years' celebration of Diwali on 31 October and 1 November was no exception.

Known as the festival of lights, Diwali is celebrated widely across India and southeast Asia. Traditionally, lamps and candles are lit for Diwali to symbolise the triumph of light over darkness and good over evil.

The mecwacare Corporate Services office held a Diwali morning tea in our Malvern wellbeing centre which was beautifully decorated with marigold garlands, colourful rangoli and diya lights. Many team members came dressed in traditional Saris and everyone enjoyed a selection of fruit and Indian sweet treats.

At Malvern Centre, the atmosphere was electric as staff wearing vibrant Saris performed traditional dancing and song. Mandalas were designed from brightly coloured sand and residents celebrated with henna tattoos and Indian sweets.

A feast of Indian sweet and savoury treats was provided to residents at Trescowthick Centre against a backdrop of multi coloured decorations. While traditional Rangoli decorations were drawn in coloured powder to bring luck and prosperity to residents.



*Photos: This page and top opposite: People, Culture and Safety team
Middle left: Malvern Centre team
Middle right: Trescowthick Centre celebration
Bottom left: John Atchison Centre celebration
Bottom right: Trescowthick Centre team.*



Spring Racing *Carnival*

This year's Spring Racing Carnival brought an exciting, colourful and engaging series of events to mecwacare's residential aged care facilities. Residents donned their finest fascinators and hats, enjoyed a variety of activities and came together over delicious morning and afternoon teas.

At Annie's Court, residents were delighted by a visit from the Somers Ukulele Strummers, who put on a wonderful musical performance. Some residents even joined in and gave the ukulele a try!

Meanwhile, at Trescowthick Centre, residents received a special visit from Molly the Pony. They enjoyed lively conversations with Molly's handler, Temika, who happily answered questions and shared fun facts about the pony.

At Gregory Lodge, residents celebrated with a 'Fashions on the Field' Hat Parade, proudly showing off their stylish fascinators. The day wrapped up with the announcement of the Melbourne Cup Sweep winners, adding extra excitement to the festivities!

Residents at John Atchison Centre in Hoppers Crossing, expressed their creativity and unique

style in an arts and crafts session, decorating their very own hats with colourful flowers and ribbons.

Dressed to impress, ladies at Malvern Centre enjoyed a fun-filled Oaks Day of racing and sumptuous, traditional high tea.

Photos:
Top left: Fay and Personal Care Assistant Rosediana at Gregory Lodge
Top right: Helen at Trescowthick Centre
Middle left: Judy, Joan and Personal Care Assistant Flordeliza at Annie's Court
Middle right: Olwyn and Margaret at Malvern Centre
Bottom left: Visitor Qin Ying Wang and Molly
Bottom right: John and Lifestyle Coordinator Awhina
Below: Audrey and Molly.



Horsing Around

Molly, the miniature Shetland pony, visited the Trescowthick Centre in Prahran on Oaks Day, bringing delight and surprise to residents.

Accompanied by her trainer Temika, Molly's visit was part of mecwacare's animal therapy program that promotes emotional well-being and fosters social interaction among residents. Molly was a hit with residents who were thrilled to see the little pony, give her pats and feed her a carrot or two.



Melbourne
Cup Sweep
Winner



Phar Lap Connection

Gloria, Vincent House resident, looks forward to Spring Racing Carnival every year as she loves horses and horse racing.

Growing up in a family of jockeys, horse trainers and strappers, Gloria was out doing track work and exercising horses from the age of nine.

"My family were all involved in horses, my uncle was a trainer and my father a jockey, I love watching the races and look forward to watching the spring racing and Melbourne Cup," says Gloria.

"Her father rode one of Australia's most iconic racehorses, Phar Lap," added Ruby, Care Support Coordinator at Vincent House. "He was also close friends with Tommy Woodcock, Phar Lap's famous strapper, so Gloria has always shared a strong bond with horses."

With a deep personal connection to the racing world, Gloria and other residents from Vincent House enjoyed an inspiring day at Living Legends, a home for retired champion racehorses and an educational centre in Greenvale.

The trip to Living Legends, on 31 October, was a beautiful walk down memory lane for Gloria and a wonderful opportunity to create new memories with her community.

Photo:
Gloria at Living Legends.



Photos: Top: Amelia with Molly
Middle: Lifestyle Coordinator Awhina, Molly's handler Temika and Personal Care Assistant Linda
Bottom: Michael with Molly.



Colombian Culture Comes Alive

On Tuesday 3 September, Trescowthick Centre came alive with colour and music for a vibrant Colombian celebration, organised by Linda, a dedicated Personal Care Assistant at our aged care home in Prahran.

"As a proud Colombian, I wanted to bring a taste of my country and our rich culture to our residents," shared Linda. The event involved several volunteer groups that Linda connected with through her network. "I found 18 incredible volunteers here in Melbourne who brought not only time and creativity, but also charisma, delicious food and most importantly, lots of love to share."

The festivities began with two talented dancers who debuted with an electrifying salsa performance, followed by other tropical rhythms. The theatre group Diaspora delighted everyone with an interactive show, Endorphin Pills, while a team of professional dancers performed cumbia, porro and other traditional dances, inviting many residents to join in the fun.

Adding to the incredible atmosphere, a gifted musician enchanted the crowd with her soulful

renditions of Colombian rhythms such as vallenato and bambuco, transporting everyone to the heart of Colombia.

Local businesses Café del Alma, Ozsi Melbourne and Panela Colombia Au generously donated Colombian treats, including buñuelos, cold aguapanela and freshly brewed Colombian coffee.

A talented caricaturist added a playful element, sketching portraits of residents and staff, creating lasting mementos of this special day.

The event was a joyful celebration of culture, filled with music, laughter and the flavours of Colombia. Linda's heartfelt efforts, the enthusiasm of the volunteers and support of our caring team made this event a memorable experience for everyone.

Photos: Trescowthick Centre team with the Colombian celebration volunteers.



Photo: Vasili sharing his gardening expertise with the enthusiastic crowd.

Pascoe Vale Gardens *Community Day*

Pascoe Vale Gardens Community Day brought fun and connection to over 300 visitors. On Saturday, 12 October, Pascoe Vale Gardens Retirement Village hosted a vibrant Community Day that welcomed visitors from the local area, residents, and their families.

The event offered an engaging afternoon packed with family-friendly activities, lively entertainment, and hands-on experiences, creating a memorable gathering for all.

The village grounds were transformed into a fun-filled landscape where visitors of all ages enjoyed a variety of activities. A petting zoo delighted children and animal lovers alike, while a cupcake decorating station let budding bakers get creative with frosting and sprinkles. For the more playful, giant games provided oversized fun, adding a unique twist to classic games like Jenga and Connect Four.

Artisans were also a highlight of the day. Visitors were captivated by spinning and wood-carving

demonstrations, showcasing the traditional crafts and skillful handiwork of the Pascoe Vale Gardens craft group.

The accompanying craft market presented a range of handcrafted goods, offering visitors the chance to take home one-of-a-kind items and support local creators. Those looking for treats were spoiled for choice. Free fairy floss and popcorn added a nostalgic touch, and samples from the Pascoe Vale Gardens café gave visitors a taste of the village's fresh and delightful menu. Authentic Italian pizza and handmade Gelato topped off the culinary delights.

Celebrity gardener Vasili, added to the excitement. Known for his extensive gardening expertise,



Vasili shared invaluable tips on maximising garden potential, answering questions, and inspiring novice and experienced gardeners alike. His warm demeanour and practical advice resonated with the community, many of whom had the opportunity to showcase their gardens and take home new ideas for their own green spaces.

Pascoe Vale Gardens' Community Day was a fantastic opportunity for residents, their families, and community members to come together in a welcoming and joyous setting.

Photos: Visitors of all ages enjoyed a wide range of activities during the sunny afternoon.



John Hood Terrace

Our new \$40 million, John Hood Terrace aged care facility has been thoughtfully designed using the innovative small house model, in line with recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. This model promotes a home like environment for residents, enhancing their quality of life and sense of community.

Set to be completed in late 2025, this exciting new residential facility represents a new standard in luxury and care. John Hood Terrace will offer aged care suites across five levels, with residents on the upper floors enjoying stunning views of the Melbourne skyline.

The redevelopment will maintain the beautiful 1850s façade of the former hostel while transforming the space into a magnificent facility that features 76 beautifully appointed ensuite bedrooms and suites.

Offering a unique blend of historic charm and modern elegance, this thoughtfully designed home

will provide exceptional care, comfort and support, all while honouring the rich history of the building.

Residents will enjoy a range of contemporary amenities, including a vibrant café, a well-being salon and cinema. Located just steps away from public transport and the bustling shopping and dining precincts of Church Street and Bridge Road, this facility is perfectly positioned to offer both comfort and convenience. It will be a sanctuary of aged care in the middle of Richmond’s thriving community.

Photo: Damien Milton and Rob Nowak from Total Construction.

Topping out ceremony

On Friday 8 November, the construction team celebrated the topping out of John Hood Terrace. Topping out, or topping off, ceremonies are an enduring tradition that dates back to medieval Europe and symbolises the relationship between buildings and nature, representing growth, life and sustainability.

At John Hood Terrace, we celebrated the moment the building reached its highest point, marking a milestone of construction. It was the opportunity for all those involved to come together and celebrate this significant phase in the project.

The roof top ceremony was completed with the planting of an olive tree, a timeless symbol of peace and friendship, and barbeque for the development’s key contributors.



Dance for Dementia

Dressed in their finest rock ‘n’ roll gear, residents, staff and guests got grooving on the dance floor for Dance Against Dementia.

Held every September, the national event is the official fundraiser for Umbrella Dementia Cafes. It creates peer support groups for people living with dementia and their carers.

The facility-wide dance-a-thon and afternoon tea was organised by Care Support Coordinator Sharon Smith and the Susan Barton House team.

“Over 50 residents, staff and guests attended our rock ‘n’ roll themed event to raise funds for Dance Against Dementia,” said Sharon.

“In the three weeks leading up to the event, we held impromptu dance sessions. When staff played the song ‘Live Louder’ by Aussie artist Nathaniel, residents and team members would spontaneously break out some dance moves.

“Dance Against Dementia holds special meaning for me and I felt compelled to do something to support the cause,” Sharon explained. “I’ve been

seeing some signs of neurological degeneration in my husband, he had to retire at age 58.”

“I’m also seeing more and more people in the community being diagnosed with dementia at younger ages, so I was really keen to get involved in the fundraising initiative,” she said.

The rock ‘n’ roll event at Susan Barton House raised nearly \$1,000 for Umbrella Cafes. The cafes help to boost the self-esteem of people with dementia, as well as improve their emotional wellbeing, promote and maintain independence, and reduce the risk of isolation, loneliness and depression.

Over \$57,000 was raised for Umbrella Dementia Cafes from dance events held by community groups nationally.

Photos: Residents and staff at Susan Barton House swayed the day away for Dance Against Dementia.



In Vogue – Vintage Fashion

Located in iconic Chapel Street, mecwacare's Windsor op shop features an eclectic range of second-hand items including vinyl records, clothing, household goods and a fantastic book selection. A visit to the store is a must for every fashion and budget conscious shopper.

One of the friendly volunteers working at the Windsor shop is Kat, who's a professional photographer. Specialising in fashion and portrait photography, Kat has a strong interest in creating community-based photos using eco-friendly clothing.

As Kat was putting her portfolio together in 2023, she noticed a trend emerging in magazines and posts from Europe for vintage fashion shoots. Wanting to emulate something similar here in Melbourne, she approached Kate, Op Shop Manager at Windsor.

Photographer: Kat

@kat_fogarty_photography

Model: Liana @weenie_hut_jnr

Makeup Artist: Allison @caked.by.kittx

Stylist: Vanessa

The result is the 'Mob-wife aesthetic' series, photographed featuring vintage clothing from the Windsor shop. It just goes to show, with a bit of thought and effort we can all look glamorous on a budget.



Sustainable gift giving



Why not drop into your local mecwacare op shop for some sustainable gift giving this holiday season? With four shops located in Malvern, Malvern East, Windsor and Ballan, you're sure to find a bargain from a variety of preloved clothing, kitchenware, books, toys and bric-a-brac.

The reuse and recycling of goods not only helps create a sustainable future for everyone, but funds go straight back into the local community to support programs for the elderly and people with a disability.

For mecwacare op shop locations, visit www.mecwacare.org.au





mecwacare in *Uganda*

Louise Mayall is a carer through and through. A nurse of 42 years, it's part of her nature to want to help others. As the Healthy Ageing Advisor at mecwacare's Ballan Health and Care Services, Louise works with older community members to support their long-term health and wellbeing.



Photos: (clockwise from left) Louise with her sponsor family in Abim, meeting three of her four sponsor children, spending time with new friends, and the Abim Medical Care Clinic with Ballan's donation.



It's Louise's desire to share compassion and show love to everyone and that's what led her to Uganda in September 2024. Jordan House, in the capital city of Kampala, was the focus of Louise's trip.

Formerly an orphanage, Jordan House is now a community centre. It runs a kindergarten for up to 75 children aged three to five, preparing them for the local primary school.

Many years ago, one of these children, Ibrah, was matched with Louise and her husband in a child sponsorship program. This year, Ibrah turned 21, finished 14 years in the program and got to meet his longtime sponsor, Louise, at Jordan House.

On her trip, Louise's group also visited Abim in northern Uganda, where she delivered a special package from home.

Ballan's Medical Centre recently completed a spring clean. Unused medical equipment such

as dressings and surgical steel tools were nearing their use-by dates and likely to go to landfill.

Instead, Louise packed a suitcase full of the medical supplies and took them to Uganda. Abim's Medical Care Clinic was in desperate need of essential supplies – so it was the perfect place for Ballan's donation.

"If we can transform one life at a time, then it's all worth it," Louise stated. "When you go over there and see the sheer number of lives that have been changed, it's just so amazing."

The wider mecwacare family is so proud of Louise and her selfless dedication. With her next trip to Uganda scheduled for 2026, we can't wait to see what good Louise can do next.

Growing Together

A flourishing partnership has blossomed between mecwacare's Fisher Street Centre participants and the gardening team at Berwick Brae Gardens Retirement Community.

Over the past few months, participants from Fisher Street have been visiting Berwick Brae Gardens weekly, contributing to the vibrant upkeep of the retirement village's stunning outdoor spaces.

From weeding to planting and assisting with general maintenance, the participants have relished the opportunity to get their hands dirty while making meaningful connections with the gardening team. The Berwick Brae Gardens team has equally enjoyed the collaboration, with one team member sharing:

"It has been wonderful getting to know those participating, welcome them with a coffee and a chat to catch up before heading out to the gardens."

One of the highlights of this initiative has been the planting of spring flowers in the village's

recently built planters. The team also took on the special project of potting cuttings for sale at the Berwick Brae Fete, that was held on 16 November. The participants were thrilled to see their nurtured plants on display at the community event, which brought residents and visitors together to celebrate the season.

Some of these lovingly potted plants were also taken back to Fisher Street, where they are set to feature in an upcoming International Day celebration, complete with a plant stall to support the Centre.

This collaboration is more than a gardening project — it's a testament to the power of community and shared purpose. The weekly sessions have provided participants with the opportunity to learn new skills, enjoy the therapeutic benefits of gardening and connect with the Berwick Brae community.



Photos: Left: Mary waving the Italian flag
Middle: Fotis and Personal Care Assistant Ravneet sharing a dance
Right: Theresa enjoying the main course.



Exploring the World through Food

At mecwacare Squires Place, mealtime is more than just food—it's a chance to travel the world without leaving home. Every month, residents gather for a themed dinner that celebrates different cultures, sharing experiences and creating lasting memories.

In October, the dining room was transformed into a little slice of Italy. "We wanted to honour our residents with Italian heritage and to bring a taste of Italy to everyone's plate," said Kevin, Lifestyle Coordinator at Squires Place. Local performer Lino was also invited to entertain the crowd. "Lino had everyone smiling and dancing — it really captured the warmth of Italian culture," Kevin shared.

The journey continued in November with a sumptuous Chinese-themed dinner. To set the mood, custom menus were created, giving the dining room a restaurant-like atmosphere. "For some residents, it was their first experience

with Chinese cuisine and it led to many lively conversations about the delicious flavours," Kevin added.

These themed dinners are about more than just exploring different cuisines—they're about connection. For the residents at Squires Place, they're a highlight of the month and a reminder of how food can bring cultures and people together.



Photos:
Left: Jesse, participant gardener with Ann, Retirement Living Co-Ordinator, Berwick Brae Gardens
Above: Jesse, participant gardener and Sam, disability support worker from Fisher Street.

Artist in Residence

Meet Charles, a resident at John Atchison Centre, who has rediscovered his love for painting since joining our aged care home.

Although his last experience with painting was many years ago for an art competition, Charles has embraced the joy of creating art once again.

With the support of our volunteer, Neetu, Charles now enjoys painting regularly and continues to refine his skills.

Here he is proudly showcasing his latest masterpiece.

We're eagerly looking forward to seeing his next painting come to life.



Painting helps our residents express themselves and brings a splash of colour to their day.



CREATIVE Submissions

Do you have an artistic hobby? Are you a painter, knitter, woodworker, quilter, or poet?

Send any submissions to: media@mecwacare.org.au.

Keep your eyes peeled for your handiwork in the next edition of mecwacare Matters!

Wordsearch

D	B	I	E	R	U	T	L	U	C	C	A	V	T	O	E	L	E
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- ROYAL
 RACING
 CARNIVAL
 COMMUNITY
 UGANDA
 DIWALI
 CUISINE
- DINING
 DEMENTIA
 COLOMBIA
 CULTURE
 ROBOT
 DANCE
 CELEBRATE
- MATTERS
 LIFESTYLE
 SUMMER
 HALLOWEEN
 PONY
 MONARCH

Wordsearch solutions on page 22.

Leave a legacy

Every donation or gift in your Will provides a meaningful difference.

Your legacy will help the elderly or people with a disability to live fulfilling and purposeful lives.

If you would like to donate to mecwacare or leave a gift in your Will, visit www.mecwacare.org.au or scan the QR code.



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Yvonne celebrated her 102nd birthday with all her loved ones during an afternoon tea at Elstoft House.



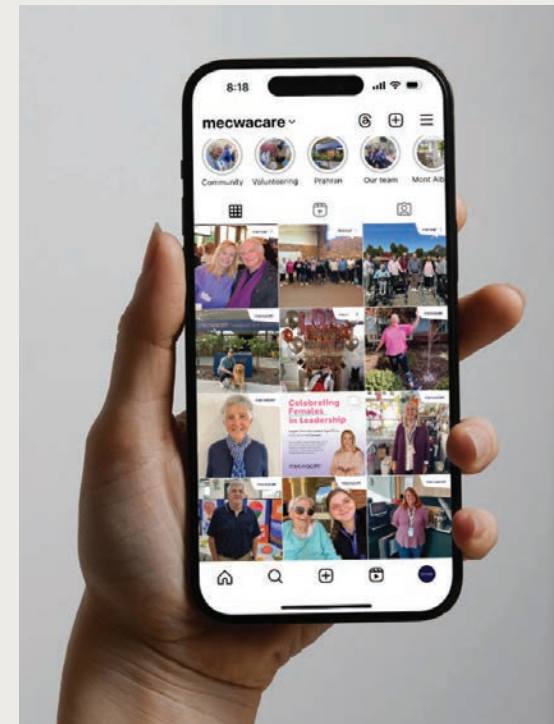
Residents at John Atchison Centre enjoy regular food preparation activities with volunteer Vicky.



Oktoberfest at Rositano House was a blast, with residents enjoying beer, pretzels, music and quizzes.



Residents at Annie's Court are looking forward to the festive season! Recently, they participated in a pine cone painting session to create beautiful decorations for their home.



Instagram



A sense of
Community



"Following mecawacare on social media helps me feel connected to the wonderful community I am a part of."

Social media spotlight

Join our #caringcommunity to learn more about the wonderful people of mecawacare, along with exciting activities across our aged care homes, retirement villages and community centres.



Facebook

mecawacare
14 November at 20:00 · 48
On Tuesday, our retirement village residents from The Pines visited our aged care home next door, mecawacare Wahroonga, to enjoy the Holden Car Club show. They had the opportunity to socialise with fellow Holden enthusiasts, take plenty of photos with the cars and sit in them.
"One of our residents, Barry, was over the moon. He happily chatted and reminisced about his experiences growing up with those cars," said Christina, Retirement Living Coordinator.
"Barry even joked about being tempted to drive away with a few cars! Thank you, Wahroonga, for inviting us."
What a wonderful day of connecting, reminiscing and enjoying some classic cars together.
#notforprofit #retirementvillage #retirementlife #carclub #carshow #caringcommunity



LinkedIn

Our Home and Community Services team in Ballarat recently celebrated Halloween, bringing out their most creative costumes! ...more



Wordsearch solution

D	B	I	E	R	U	T	L	U	C	C	A	V	T	O	E	L	E
H	U	L	I	E	L	T	E	E	O	U	R	W	C	U	R	U	Y
A	U	O	M	R	P	N	I	I	L	A	N	E	S	M	D	B	A
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Rivendell House ended Term 3 with a Barn Dance party, transforming the centre into a western movie scene.



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