



You

February 2022

Yarrunga Offerings & Updates

Welcome to Term 1

Welcome back and Happy New Year to all of our amazing community. As I enjoyed my rest in beautiful Bright at the start of January, watching the Covid numbers escalate quite rapidly, I did wonder if we were going to make it back for the start of term 1. While we extended our building closure for 2 extra weeks to allow the numbers to come down, I am thrilled to see us with our doors open once again. We still have some Covid rules in place, but they are a small price to pay to be able to return to a somewhat normal routine.

We have been hit hard in the last two years with dropping numbers in activities, as some people are reluctant to return, but I want to reassure everyone that we have a stringent Covid Plan in place, regular cleaning by staff throughout the day along with deep cleaning daily, as well as hand sanitising stations throughout. These processes along with the mask and vaccine mandates and our Covid Marshalls checking in every person who enters the building, are to ensure that we are, to the best of our ability, keeping the building and its participants as safe as we can, and to ensure that we can remain open. So, if you are unsure if a return is right for you, know that we are doing our utmost to keep you all safe.

Also, as a reminder, if you are not well, we ask that you please refrain from attending your activity and get tested. If you do test positive, please notify the office immediately so that we can implement our contact tracing plan.

Coming up later this term, we will have our AGM and Neighbour Day.

This year also marks our 25th birthday of servicing our community. We will be holding an event later in the year. If you have some great stories to share with us about your time here, please let us know. Particularly if you were part of the early years. And if you have photos – hunt them out! We would love to borrow them.

Here is hoping that we have a wonderful 2022, building our connections with each other and our community. If you know someone who would benefit from joining a social group or activity, please sing our praises. Everyone is welcome here.

Sam Blackwell
Manager

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CHANGES TO PROGRAMS AND STAFF

Due to low numbers and/or staff changes there are a few changes to our program schedule:

PROGRAM CHANGES

Yoga

After many years with the Centre, our yoga teacher Tracey has retired. Unfortunately numbers for this class had been falling over the past few years and we encountered difficulty in recruiting new participants due to the very competitive nature of yoga classes. So we have decided to take a different approach. We have a facility hirer taking over the yoga classes. Gabrielle Boswell is a local yoga teacher with many years of experience in yoga and meditation. She is currently running classes on a Monday evening, but will possibly run a daytime class if there is enough interest. If you would like to talk to Gabrielle about yoga please contact her directly on 0413 939 530.

Fit Drum

Fit Drum numbers had also declined to the point where we could no longer support the class. However, if you feel that you would like to participate, please contact the Centre and we will put your name on waiting list and see if we can get this class back later in the year.

Living Longer Living Stronger, Friday 9.15am

Again, numbers for this class were very low and the tutor, Mary, was also no longer available to take this class. When numbers for Living Longer improve across the board we will search for another tutor and try to get this class re-instated.

Woodwork

Unfortunately, our woodwork tutor, Jason, is unable to continue teaching evening classes. He is in the process of trying to find a replacement and we hope to have this class back again in term 2.

GOODBYES

Tracey Cuff

After nearly 20 years of teaching at Yarrunga, Tracey Cuff has retired as she wanted to free herself up for a little bit of travel. It was tough to see Tracey go, and we wish her all the best as she pursues new directions.



Deb Salomons

Deb was only with us for a very short time taking the Karen community through our Introduction to Cleaning course. Deb is hoping to move to Thailand this year so will be unavailable for subsequent courses. We wish her and her husband all the best in their move to Thailand.

HELLOS

Judy McCoy

Last term we welcomed Judy McCoy back to our Yarrunga family as she has returned to take the Interval Training class on Monday evenings. If you would like to challenge yourself on the fitness front, please contact the Centre about joining in this class. Judy is a very passionate and dedicated teacher and we are so glad to have her back.

Michelle Gaskell

A warm welcome to Michelle Gaskell who will be taking sewing for our Karen community. Michelle has also very kindly volunteered to be a driver for our Karen Seniors so they can attend a weekly program at the Centre.

TERM 1 ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS

NEW - Community Cooking

We will be continuing our community cooking program – an opportunity to learn how to cook healthy, low cost meals in bulk while you help community members in need. The program will run every Tuesday fortnight – starting 1 March. from 2.30pm – 5.30pm. Cost is free. If you are interested in helping out please contact Nadine at reception.



NEW - Introduction to Commercial Cleaning



We have been working very hard to put together a new adult learning program – Introduction to Commercial Cleaning. It is a great program for people who want to run their own businesses, or people looking to retrain and reskill. There are many opportunities for employment at the moment, so it's a great program to give you an advantage when job seeking. If you, or somebody you know, is interested please ask for dates and details at reception.

NEW - Introduction to Childcare

Another new program we have developed is our Introduction to Childcare. This program will give participants some preliminary information about working in childcare to help them decide whether to apply for formal training. Again, if you, or somebody you know, is interested please ask for dates and details at reception.

Barista Taster



Word around town is the hospitality industry is crying out for people. We will be running our wonderful Barista Taster program again in Term 1. This program teaches the basics of coffee making and the hospitality industry is full of opportunities at the moment – so dive in and get started. This is a great course for school leavers who are still looking for employment, people looking to re-skill and change careers, and even older people who may have retired but are looking for part-time work.

Pickleball

Pickleball combines the elements of badminton, table tennis and tennis. Two or four players use paddles to hit a lightweight ball over a net. So, grab some friends and book a pickleball time. Check out this video to learn more: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fTvPYdKZqOO>

Pickleball will be available as a self-facilitated program most afternoons from 1.30pm – 3pm. Cost is \$5 annual social group membership plus \$2.50 per person when you play. Please call reception to book your day and time.

DID YOU KNOW ...

You may be unaware of some of the activities and programs that the Centre runs that are out of the mainstream offerings:

Conversation Cafe

This was a very successful English language program run last year for the Zomi Chin community – a group of refugees from Myanmar. It was an informal language program to help with day-to-day English language challenges, like visiting a doctor, or ordering a coffee at a cafe. Yarrunga sourced educational materials based on their requests, and the program was delivered by one of their own community members. At this stage the program is on hold while the tutor is on maternity leave, but hopefully will be up and running again soon.



Karen Seniors



A group program for senior members of the Karen community who are often isolated at home. Participants are collected by volunteers from the Croydon Hills Baptist Church. They come to the Centre for a cooked lunch followed by a fun activity such as art/craft, games, physical activity etc. The aim of the program is to get these senior members out into the community to experience exposure to the English language and Australian culture. This program is a joint venture between Yarrunga Community Centre, Croydon Hills Baptist Church and Foundation House.

Community Cooking

This started off with a small but dedicated group of volunteers and a tutor. Due to Covid there were many changes to the requirements and our use of volunteers, but we continued to supply meals for the Winter Shelter program on a regular basis for the past few years, and will be continuing in 2022. If you would like to be involved, we will be cooking every Tuesday fortnight from 2.30pm – 5.30pm. Please contact reception.



Karen Young Women's Program

This is a leadership program for young women in the Karen community that we are currently working on in partnership with Croydon Hills Baptist Church and Eastern Legal Service. It is envisaged that this program will start in term 1.

Enterprise Skills - Sewing



Our sewing group is another class for members of the Karen community. They learn how to make various products, many of which incorporate their traditional Karen fabrics. Their products were previously sold at markets and we are all hoping that Covid will allow them to return to market selling soon.

Wellbeing Hub

Remember our Wellbeing Hub runs on Fridays 10.30am – 11.30am. This is a small social group that gets together to talk about aspects of wellbeing, looking at elements of the PERMAH model, and sharing ideas and experiences. We would love to see more people join the group, so contact the Centre.

Positive Emotion

Last newsletter, we introduced the concept of PERMAH – a theory of wellbeing that measures wellbeing across six different areas.

The first pillar of the PERMAH model is positive emotion which looks at emotional wellbeing. Here are some important points relating to emotions:

- ‘Emotional Literacy’ is being able to recognise and feel a range of emotions and is a great skill to have. The more emotions you are familiar with the better.
- Emotions are simply messengers, carrying your body’s immediate response to what is happening in the outside world.
- Emotions are not 100% reliable though – they may carry vestiges of old stories, confusing what is happening in the moment with past experiences.
- Joyful emotions make you laugh and feel happy. They are telling you that you’re in the zone – keep doing more of what you’re doing.
- Emotions that you find a bit challenging or uncomfortable might be saying that you need to make some adjustments because something that is important to you is being affected.

Researchers have found that the experience of positive emotions can make us feel more optimistic, resilient, open and accepting. They help us to broaden and build the way our brain responds to opportunities and challenges. And they accrue – creating an upward spiral that continues to build our resources.

You don't have to wait for moments of positivity to come to you though, you can actively pursue them through activities such as:

- listening to a favourite song, watching a funny movie or video
- connecting with nature
- thinking about things you are grateful for
- sharing positive stories with friends and family
- reflecting on things that have gone well, and what made this possible
- exercise
- meditation
- play
- practicing acts of kindness

For more information on the Positive Emotion PERMAH pillar – come and join the Wellbeing Hub - it could be eggs-actly what you need!



PROFILE

Samantha Blackwell

For those of you who do not know me, I am the Manager here at Yarrunga. It is hard to believe that I have been here for nearly 17 years. Initially as the Bookkeeper, then Assistant Manager, and moving to the Manager position in 2018.

I would like to go back to my early years. I migrated with my family as a 10-year-old in 1980. It was both an exciting time but also very daunting. My friends back in the UK were very envious, as Australia was so exotic to them. We settled in Mitcham and I went to the local primary school, followed by Vermont Secondary College (High School back then).



On completing Year 12, I went on to become an apprentice Pastrycook, undergoing my learning at the local pie shop at Brentford Square, Forest Hill. This is also where I commenced my first part time job at 14, working after school, weekends and school holidays. After completing my apprenticeship, I became the manager of the bakery as the owner had 2 locations. This was the beginning of my passion for leading and learning.

I married and continued to work until we got itchy feet and decided we needed an adventure. We moved to Alice Springs, where we were exposed to a whole new culture, but also being so far from our families, a need to be involved within our community and meet new people. These people became our surrogate family – it was such a wonderful time there, where we were able to undertake so many interesting working roles, one of which was to manage the best caravan park in Alice. By this time, we had 2 children (under 4) and it placed a great strain on our family and our relationship. So, it was time to move back home to Melbourne. Unfortunately, the marriage did not last, but that is life!

On my return, I joined a plumbing business and decided to go back to school to complete a Diploma in Accounting, working full time and being a single parent. It was tough but I had an end goal – to be able to support my children better.

I have since remarried and had another child (well she is nearly 18 and in her final year of high school). After spending 12 months at home with her as a baby, I needed to get back to work for my own sanity. This led me to Yarrunga, and after 10 years took the plunge back in to education again, undertaking a Diploma in Community Development and an Advanced Diploma in Community Sector Management. I could not have done this without the support of my wonderful husband and youngest daughter, as they took on the running of the house while I studied and completed assignments. I am so passionate about continued learning – you are never too old to learn something new, whether it be a craft, skill, sporting activity or education. Take the leap – you won't regret it.

I am so fortunate to work in such a wonderful place, surrounded by the best staff and community. No day is ever the same, and yet each day is so rewarding.

I am now a Nanna to 2 grand children who live in the United States and I miss them dreadfully. One day when our world is a little more normal, I will travel to see them and to meet my 2nd grandchild who was born last year. Time flies so quickly. It seems only yesterday, that I was leaving my baby with my mother in law while I came to work, and now I am the grandma!

I am pleased to say that in the lockdowns of 2020, I finally commenced my application for Australian Citizenship (don't ask why I took so long!) and after 42 years, a few weeks ago I had my interview and passed my Citizenship test and I am awaiting to attend my formal ceremony. Good things come to those that wait. I am very proud to be a new Australian and thank this country for giving me the life that I have had.



OTHER NEWS

Sporting Club Grants Program - Round 2 Funding

A big thank you to Sports and Recreation Victoria for supporting the Centre with a return to exercise programs by providing funds to purchase antibacterial wipes and hand sanitiser to ensure that we are able to keep our community safe during COVID and our return to programs.

Wiping equipment after use has become a standard part of all our exercise programs, and hand sanitising at the door is compulsory for anybody entering the premises



OTHER NEWS

Power Saving Bonus - extended until June 30

The State Government's one-off \$250 support payment has been extended to June 30.

To be eligible you need to hold a pensioner concession card or receive JobSeeker, Austudy, Abstudy or Youth Allowance.

If you need assistance we can help you apply. Contact the office for an appointment.



Visit from Rod Barton



We had a visit from Rod Barton MP – Member for the Eastern Metropolitan Region in the Legislative Council. Rod spent lots of time talking to us about what we do, the role of Neighbourhood Houses and where we might need assistance from independents.

Going Going Gone

Are you wandering around the Centre, thinking something looks different, but can't quite put your finger on it? Our old wall gas heaters have been removed. So now each room has its own split system heating/cooling that is easier to operate. Thanks to Maroondah City Council for removing the old heaters.