



WHITELION
courage to grow

supporting youth at-risk

WHITELION with OPEN FAMILY AUSTRALIA
PLEASE DONATE TODAY: 1300 669 600



Open Family Australia
...knows the street.



STRIDE



Community Connections

AUTUMN 2016

WELCOME

Welcome to the Autumn 2016 edition of our group newsletter.

In this edition, we explore the concept of community connections. At the heart of our work with young people, is their safety and wellbeing. This can be greatly aided through their level of connection in their local community. Within these pages, you will learn about incredible journeys that some of our young people have been on in reconnecting with their local community and the difference the community can make when they support our work.

Our staff and volunteers put in great effort to support these young people. It is for this reason that I would like to dedicate this newsletter to our staff and volunteers who all deal with large caseloads and challenging situations with grace.

They are unsung heroes, but it is their dedication that gives young people hope and encouragement to turn their lives around.

Needless to say, without donations from the community, we could not continue to provide these important life-changing supports for young people at-risk. Thank you for standing by our side.

Maria Quigley
Donor Relations & Bequests Leader

Lauren's Journey from Homelessness to Motherhood

Lauren* has a happy, healthy son. He is a bundle of joy bringing great delight to his mum. However, a few years ago, Lauren's life was vastly different.

Lauren was living on the streets to avoid the drug den that her home had become. Her mother was back in prison, an all too familiar scenario experienced right throughout Lauren's childhood when she would come second to the drugs that consumed her mother's life.

Alone and desperate for comfort, the streets were a cruel world for a young woman; she soon fell pregnant and reached out to our support staff for help.

Now, Lauren has a roof over her head, away from the streets she used to call home, and a volunteer mentor connecting her with community networks and mother's groups.

Lauren is still fighting hard to make positive changes in her life for her son. She works a few hours a week while her son is in childcare and hopes to return to education. We will help her every step of the way to break the cycle of disadvantage and build a more stable, positive future for the next generation. We can do this because of the help we continue to receive from individuals and businesses throughout the community. Thank you.

**An alternative name has been used.*





A LETTER OF THANKS FROM CEO, MARK WATT

2016 will be an exciting and challenging year for the Whitelion Group. A challenge we can face with your help.

The ICE epidemic maintains a strangle-hold on communities in which we operate; while the level of government funding available to battle its fallout continues to decrease. We have also seen a spike in youth homelessness rates and expect this number to rise as winter begins.

On a positive note, in July 2015, we grew our support of disadvantaged young people into Western Australia for the first time following a merger with 'Balga Detached Youth Work Project'.

This is an exciting development as the specialist support we offer young people will now help an even greater number of at-risk youth obtain a safe, positive, financially sustainable and healthy future. *[Read more about our work in WA on page 6]*

The corporate community rose to the challenge of sourcing a replacement

vehicle for our Chatterbox Bus outreach service in Melbourne; and a record-breaking 500+ individuals participated in our annual Bail Out events - the most successful campaign on record.

As you will see in Sally's letter, with your help, we are creating change.

We wouldn't be half as effective without the donations we receive from the public or the key advice provided by our advisory councils, Ambassadors, Board and more than 200 businesses who employ our young people. Not to mention the 357 volunteers who mentor and support our young people.

The community enabled us to provide the following support for youth at-risk in the past 6 months:

- Over 10,000 episodes of care were undertaken through our mobile outreach programs
- Intensive support was provided to 2,130 young people to reconnect with their community

Together we are bringing highly marginalised youth back into our community. Thank you.

Mark Watt
Chief Executive Officer



Are you brave enough?
New South Wales, South Australia,
Tasmania, Victoria, Western Australia

'Bail Out' is an interactive experience that places participants in the shoes of a young person that has been disconnected from our community due to abuse, neglect, drug addiction and poverty and about to experience incarceration.

To get involved, register as an "inmate" online and 'raise bail' to secure your 'release' at www.whitelionbailout.org.au.

JOIN THE PRIDE

357 outstanding people currently volunteer their time to help youth at-risk - but we need more help!

There are various volunteering opportunities available - which one suits you?

Mentoring - ongoing one-on-one support a young person who has had involvement in the Youth Justice or Child Protection systems and are in need of support to achieve their goals.

Street Outreach - out and about in the community, delivering timely assistance to youth at risk.

Skilled Volunteer - provide support using your professional expertise or donating your tradie talent.

Event Volunteer - join the buzz of a large-scale fundraising event by helping the team deliver a fun-filled successful day.

Fundraiser - Are you a hostess with the mostess? Then why not consider a community or workplace fundraising initiative.

To find which role best suits your skills and availability, visit our website and register your interest online. Or call our office on 1300 669 600 to chat with our friendly staff.



A NOTE FROM SALLY...

Hi everyone,

Thank you for helping these guys do what they do.

I was struggling to much to handle and when nobody helped me or cared about me these guys did.

They always smile, listen to me and help me to get on track.

Me and my baby are so thankful for these guys- I know I am strong and deserve a good life.

You guys rock for helping out Whitelion and Open Family Australia.

Sally

Sally seized this opportunity to thank all of our supporters for their help, because she has experienced first-hand the real difference that can be made in a young person's life through charity. Thank you.



"DONATIONS NOT GIFTS" Say Twins

Inspirational twin sisters Hayley and Sarina took their commitment to helping their peers to a whole new level this year, when they selflessly asked their friends and family to donate to Open Family Australia's Chatterbox Bus mobile outreach program instead of receiving presents for their 12th birthday and Bat Mitzvahs. Collectively, the sisters raised over \$15,000!

Pictured (L-R) mother Tammy with twins Sarina and Hayley Feldman.

More Companies Sign Up To Employee Pre-Tax Giving

Australian businesses of all sizes are supporting the community by giving their employees the opportunity to donate to their favourite charity direct from their pre-tax pay. It's an easy way to donate and, because it's pre-tax, you get the tax benefit up-front!

Thank you to the following organisations for supporting Whitelion and Open Family Australia in this way:

BHP Billiton	Dulux Group	Minter Ellison
Bain & Company	Ernst & Young	Mirvac
Deutsche Bank Australia	Incitec Pivot	Orica
	IXOM	PWC

Want to start Pre-Tax Giving in your workplace?

Contact our Donor Relations team on 1300 669 600 to find out how!



GOING, GOING, GONE!

Classic car owner Leonie wanted to see her beloved 1991 Toyota MR2 Targa Coupe go to a good cause. So Leonie auctioned the car at the 2015 Shannons Melbourne Spring Classic Auction... then she gifted 100% of the \$7,000 sale price to

Whitelion! Shannons very kindly waived their sale fee and Practical Motoring joined the ride by promoting the Lot. Now the new owner, as well as hundreds of young people in need, will enjoy the fruits of this auction. Thank you Leonie!

Students Show Their Support

Students at a number of schools are supporting the work of Open Family Australia and Whitelion. Most recently students from Caroline Chisholm Catholic College, Ivanhoe Grammar School, and Melbourne Grammar School have fundraised to support their peers.

To pledge your school's support and find out how your students can help, call our Fundraising team on 1300 669 600.

STATE BY STATE

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Meet the Whitelion's of SA!



The new Whitelion community basketball team is made up of Aboriginal students from the Northern and Western Learning centres. Mentored and coached by Whitelion staff and volunteers, the team was developed to build the confidence and resilience in our young men while teaching positive team relations and communication skills. Whitelion Coordinator Kym Wills has seen the difference the team can make:

“We needed to get the boys to work as a team while connecting with a different social activity around sport and fitness.

All of these boys have been through hardships most of us would never have experienced at their young age. They have lost parents and other family members through drug and alcohol misuse, they have lived on the streets and had first-hand experience with violence in their homes. All of these boys have become disconnected from their culture which has resulted in massive feelings of loss and lack of belonging. **By creating the basketball team we have aimed to reconnect them with community, and to give them a sense of belonging and purpose.** Our players are getting positive feedback from family and friends and it's amazing to watch their pride grow through positive reinforcement and connection to community and each other. **It's really good seeing our boys start to set goals for the future and making positive changes”.**

The team (pictured with COO Steve Clifford and volunteer Remo Alberico) play every Wednesday night in Port Adelaide.

NEW SOUTH WALES

In Claymore, south-west of Sydney, education is the key to helping young people to break the cycle of disadvantage. With support from FACS, Sydney Community Foundation and Snow Foundation, our new education initiative with the local high school is creating great change.

The aim is to tackle the suspension rate - which can total up to 19 suspensions of highly disadvantaged young people on any given day.

To tackle this critical issue, the program has a focus on three very important aspects:

1) Assessments and referral to specialist support - such as mental health issues.

2) Case management – to address barriers to engaging in education e.g. child abuse.

3) Education Re-Entry – into either a mainstream school or an alternative learning centre, using advocacy and intensive support to ensure reengagement.

15 YEARS DEVOTED TO EDUCATION Anh Nguyen has dedicated 15 years to directly supporting young people through our organisation.

It is not unusual for Anh to be stopped in the street by graduates wanting to thank him for helping them pass important education milestones.



VICTORIA

The Wyndham region in Victoria's west is experiencing rapid growth but a shortage of low-cost housing, few employment opportunities, high rates of family violence and a lack of support services is placing a lot of stress on families.

Our teams in the area are seeing this impact first-hand with the number of young people receiving support increasing four fold since 2012.

56% of the young people we work with intensively in Wyndham experience homelessness.

The NOSH - 'Nutrition, Outreach, Support and Health' - mobile outreach service visits locations throughout Wyndham providing material aid, fresh vegetables, information, advice and support to young people.

Staffed by a roster of 35 volunteers (the highest number in the program's history) the volunteers refer any youth in crisis to staff for further intensive support.

Local businesses are also ramping up their support of our work in Wyndham, where we have a goal of raising \$100,000 in the next 12 months.

Join the conversation on Facebook to see how you can help.



INTRODUCING: BALGA DETACHED - WESTERN AUSTRALIA



'Balga Detached Youth Work Project' joined our charity family on July 1st; extending our support of at-risk youth to include those in Western Australia for the first time.

Balga Detached has a 37 year history of supporting highly disadvantaged young people- in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people- that often drift between services or “fall through the gaps” finding their complex and ever-changing needs unmet.

Support is offered to youth in regards to stable housing, alcohol, drug and mental health support plus the

development of skills that increase confidence.

The merger provides Balga Detached with the resource and expertise required to broaden their catalogue of support programs to include services we offer in other States, such as mentoring, employment support and assisting young people with youth justice involvement.

We are honoured to continue and enhance this life-changing work in Balga, Western Australia, to the benefit of more at-risk and marginalised young people in need.

TASMANIA



October's 5th annual Tasmanian employment campaign “30 Jobs in 30 Days” received recognition in Parliament.

Will Hodgman MP, Premier of Tasmania, wrote to our staff: “As I said recently in Parliament, Whitelion has hit the mark every year, finding work for many young people with the overwhelming majority continuing in ongoing employment”

The campaign, supported by outstanding business partners, is a major drive to secure long-term employment for our young people

who struggle to obtain jobs without assistance.

The goal to enter 30 young people into new jobs within 30 days is ambitious but is always successful.

A new initiative is underway with support from the Motors Foundation. The year-long 'Young Lions Leadership Program' is a specialised skills and leadership program that engages young people with prior or current involvement in Youth Justice and/or Out of Home Care System, who display leadership qualities. The course empowers them to set and achieve personal and group goals, culminating in leading the annual National Camp for other youth at risk that we are supporting.

COMMUNITY AWARDS

AUSTRALIAN TRAINING AWARDS

Whitelion's collaboration with John Clennett's Mitre 10 and MEGT Institute was recognised with the 'Excellence Award for Industry Collaboration' at the Australian Training Awards.

For providing meaningful long-term employment while assisting disadvantaged young people to obtain their Certificate II in Retail.

MELBOURNE AWARDS

Whitelion was awarded the 'Contribution to Community by a Community Organisation' award at the Melbourne Awards in November. The award celebrates projects that enhance the lives and wellbeing of residents through new and innovative approaches to community services and volunteer work.

WHEN A CHILD UNDER 18 CAN'T LIVE AT HOME, AND THE STATE STEPS IN...

ONE TEENAGER'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCE IN RESIDENTIAL CARE

Luke* is only 14 and he is already living away from his family - in Residential Care.

Removed from his family home and placed in a Residential Care Unit shortly before his 14th birthday; Luke is finding the new house hard to adjust to.

The parental roles are filled by a roster of paid staff, the cupboards and draws are locked at all times to keep items secure and to prevent self-harm or harm to others.

Knowing that he may be relocated to another home with little notice is very unsettling for Luke and the other children in the Unit. The other boys and girls vary in age from 7 to 17. Everyone's personal story and degree of trauma, mental health and development issues is different; but the outcome is always the same. Their families are incapable of caring for them.

Luke's family home had always overflowed with drug use. His father, step-mother and their friends smoked marijuana there on a daily basis. Luke started smoking it before he turned 13 and soon became disengaged from school and dropped out.

When the relationship between his father and step-mother deteriorated, his father relinquished care of him. His step-mother tried to provide for the young boy but that support didn't last long and State services stepped in.

With the location of Luke's mother unknown, no other family connections and a lack of foster families available; 'Residential Care' was the only option available.

It's been 9 months now since Luke first entered the Residential Care Unit where he was then referred to us. He is now a changed boy.

We connected Luke with a volunteer Mentor through whom he has learnt how to create a normal relationship with someone other than a paid worker.

The routine and structure that now exists in Luke's life has created an environment in which he is thriving. He has taken on leadership roles in the Residential Care house and joined a sports team influenced by positive role-modelling behaviours he has learnt from his Mentor. He now recognises himself as a valued member of society. He has drastically cut back his drug use and returned to school full time where he has set a clear pathway to his newly elected career choice.

Luke's outlook on life has greatly improved. He has taken full advantage of every opportunity offered to him and we can see bright things in Luke's future.

**In the interests of safety, an alternative name has been used.*



A closer look at the 'Out of Home Care' environment many of our young people come from:

What is 'Out of Home Care'?

Authorities place a child aged under 18 in 'Out-of-Home Care' when the child's immediate family can't provide a home for them which is free of abuse and/or neglect.

The Homelessness Link: youth homelessness can occur when a young person leaves a violent home prior to state involvement, or if there is a lack of planning and support around an 18 year old's exit from care.

Leaving 'Out-of-Home Care'

Some youth are able to return to their family home if changes are made in that environment; but for many, turning 18 marks the end of 'Out-of-Home Care' and government support.

Moving to independent living at 18 is a major change for young people in care as professional support services they relied on fall away. We help teens and their carers to develop a 'leaving care strategy' to cope with this drastic shift in lifestyle so they can continue to lead a healthy and positive life.

How do we meet youth in Care?

Referrals come from child protection services, police, youth justice, schools and residential care units. Many young people we meet through street outreach are also in Care.

'Out-of-Home Care' in the news

The Royal Commission is examining child abuse in out-of-home care. While we are not connected with the hearing, we are committed to continuing to support young people in each level of Care.

TIERED LEVELS OF 'OUT-OF-HOME-CARE'

Kinship care

The child lives with relatives or members of the child's social network approved by the State.

Home-based care

The child lives with a Foster Family: volunteers who are not usually known to the child beforehand.

Lead tenant

Teens aged 15-18 who are in transition from State Care to independent living can sometimes live in independent accommodation, but an appointed person provides support and guidance in developing independent living skills.

Residential care

The young person lives in a 'home-like' residential building run by paid staff, usually housing up to six children who are aged from 7 up to 18 years of age, sometimes younger. Young people are free to leave the unit during the day for school and social activities but rules apply around curfew, chores, bedtime etc as they would in most family homes.

'Therapeutic' models have a stronger focus on supporting their emotional, mental and developmental needs.

What support do we give young people in 'Out-of-Home Care'?

- Support to stay in education
- Assistance into employment
- Healthy lifestyle, leadership and goal-setting skills development
- Matching with a volunteer Mentor to provide emotional support, community engagement and the opportunity to develop a relationship with a positive role model who isn't paid to be in their life.

Monthly Giving:

THE DIFFERENCE YOU WILL MAKE

Committing to a monthly gift will ensure young people in crisis continue to receive support now and into the future. This style of giving means more support can be directed to youth in need as it cuts down our administration costs plus knowing a set amount is coming in helps in planning our finances accurately.

Is Monthly Giving Right For Me?

Spreading your charitable donations over a year may be more convenient for you. Decide how much you would like to donate in a year, give it in small monthly payments, and **receive one tax-deductible receipt** at the end of the financial year for the total of your monthly donations that year.

Can I make changes to my giving and receive less post?

Yes- make amendments or cancel payments at any time by calling us on 1300 669 600. You can also change how much post you receive.

Small regular gifts that help more young people like Luke

YOUTH ARE OUR FUTURE AND THEY NEED YOUR HELP

Committing to a monthly gift will ensure our service is here to help disadvantaged young people and children in crisis well into the future; taking them out of treacherous environments and into safety. **This style of giving means more support can be directed to youth in need.**

Are monthly gifts simple to set up?

Very. A monthly gift is set up on your terms at a value that you choose.

Establishing a monthly gift is straight forward. To have payments charged to your credit or debit card on the 15th of each month you can:

1. Set up a monthly donation on our website
2. Complete and return this form
3. Or phone Donor Relations on 1300 669 600 to establish monthly gifts via internet banking

Thank you for keeping young people in need in your thoughts.

Yes I would like to make a monthly gift of \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Please Charge My: Visa Mastercard American Express

Name On Card: _____ Expiry Date: ____/____/____

Card Number:

Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible.

Monthly gifts will be processed on the 15th of each month.

You will receive an aggregated tax receipt at the end of the financial year reflecting all monthly donations made in that year.

Please return to: Donor Relations, 155 Roden St, West Melbourne, VICTORIA 3003

OR SET UP YOUR MONTHLY GIFT TO YOUR PREFERRED CHARITY ONLINE:

www.openfamily.org.au

www.whitelion.org.au

FIVE SIBLINGS IN ONE VIOLENT HOME



This is the story of 17 year old Cassie*, a young woman who was experiencing a life of violence and neglect, when she reached out to us for help.

“I wanted to leave. I didn’t know how, but I couldn’t cope anymore. Being their mum and dealing with her anger all the time”

Cassie was 17 when she first came to our service. Her mother was drinking, gambling and neglecting her children, leaving Cassie to care for her five younger siblings. Trying to keep the household together; cooking, cleaning and helping her siblings with their homework all while trying to pass VCAL and stay in school was taking a toll on young Cassie. As a result of her situation, she was losing all hope and was close to giving up. Cassie couldn’t see a way out.

“I would send the kids to school, find them food to eat and tried to protect them from Mum when she went crazy” Cassie recalls.

“Every day I would wonder when I would get to live a normal life like everyone else. I was falling apart. I couldn’t handle it any more. I would cry all the time.”

When Cassie first met our outreach team, she was struggling at school due to the issues at home and was also suffering from poor mental health including severe social anxiety and a fear of authority figures.

We began to help her every way we could. Our Outreach team stood by Cassie’s side as Child Protective Services helped Cassie and her siblings into safe housing, and again as she applied for a family violence intervention order against her mother.

Standing in court, fighting for protection from your mum is not a position any teenager should be in.

Cassie is much happier now. She is in stable housing, keeping up with her school work and working hard to pass Year 12 VCAL. Her mental health has greatly improved now that the stresses of running a family household and battling a violent mother have been lifted from her young shoulders. She sees her siblings every week and can see marked differences in their own lives.

“I couldn’t be their mum any more. But I look at them now and they’re in a way better place, smiling all the time and they have nice clothes. It’s good.”

Donations we receive from the community mean that we were able to be there for Cassie; to connect her with child protection services, attend court with her, link her with a family violence counsellor and provide her with much more. Cassie then knew she was not alone, someone cared.

Cassie is gradually building up the confidence she once had in herself before it was shattered by her mother. She has created a peaceful environment in her new home and her social anxiety and fear of authority figures is slowly falling away. Everyday tasks that were once a hindrance to her, such as going to the bank or joining a library, she can now complete alone. Although these acts seem miniscule, they are big steps for Cassie; it takes a lot of will power to control her anxiety but she is proud of each small accomplishment.

Cassie is remarkable. She has experienced more violence, stress and pain than one person ever should. But she is resilient and determined. She received help when she needed when it most, due to donations we receive from the public and that has made all the difference. Thank you.

**In the interests of safety, an alternative name has been used.*