



WHITTLESEA WHISPER

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Wish to become a Mentor!!

Help new arrivals and refugees get into work. Share your knowledge and build cultural bridges

For further information contact: Michelle at Whittlesea Community Connections
Tel: 9401 6666

National Volunteer Week

10 — 16 May 2010

National Volunteer Week is the largest celebration of volunteers & volunteerism in Australia, & provides an opportunity to highlight the role of volunteers in the community & to say thank you to the more than 5 million Australians that volunteer more than 700 million hours annually.

For more information go to: www.nationalvolunteerweek.com.au

Volunteering in Emergency Management project



The trainer discussing peer education

The Volunteering in Emergency Management project aims to increase the number and diversity of people volunteering in emergency management, in particular people from diverse cultures, young people and women. Partners in the project include: Whittlesea Community Connections (WCC) the Country Fire Authority (CFA), the City of Whittlesea Council and the La Trobe Bushfire Co-operative Research Centre.

As part of the project, Whittlesea Community Connections is assisting the CFA to engage the community and to promote community involvement in its activities in the City of Whittlesea.. Whittlesea has a growing population of families newly arrived in Australia, many of whom are not aware of fire services organisations nor of ordinary hazards of life here, including house fires.

To promote community awareness of the CFA and of how to prevent and respond to fires in the home, WCC organised a peer education training course on home fire safety. Eleven trainees have been recruited, ten women and one man. All of them are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, representing India, Sri Lanka, Iraq, Hong Kong and Cyprus. While three moved to Australia many years ago, all the others are recent migrants, who have been in Australia for less than two years. After successfully completing the accredited course, trainees will become peer educators for their communities and will be supported by the CFA and WCC to organise information sessions for community members, either in English or in their own language.

The CFA and Whittlesea Community Connections are also working together to organise some community education activities to strengthen the engagement of the Epping Fire Brigade with new communities in the area, while promoting their awareness of home fire safety related issues.



Trainees and a CFA Brigade Administration Support Officer at the induction session

Corporate Volunteering in Bushfire Recovery

Recently, Whittlesea Community Connection's (WCC) Bushfire Recovery Volunteer Coordinators had a request for some help from Growling Frogs which is a Lion's Club of Mordialloc-Mentone project that is building a Children's Retreat in Kinglake. The Growling Frogs group have been hugely successful to date in coming up with the retreat concept, finding the funds for a temporary building structure and getting plans together for something that will go a long way to assist families in the area to make progress with their rebuilding efforts whilst having a safe place for their children to go.

With the portable building in their possession and a local Lion's engineer in place to supervise the erection of the structure, all the group needed was a group of fit and able people to assist with getting the play area off the ground which is why WCC got involved. Due to the nature of the project and time scales involved, we realised it would be most efficient to approach corporate and other coordinated groups for help with providing a large number of people for the one-off job in hand. After a very brief call around before Christmas, a team in one department of the city-based management consultants Accenture stepped in and offered their time, for a day, as part of their corporate citizenship program. What follows is a report from one of the participants in the group who came out to help.



Kinglake Children's Retreat

When a call was sent out for volunteers to lend a helping hand up at Kinglake, I had no clue which way on the map it was. After I looked it up, I realised that the devastating bushfires from last year that have left lasting images in the minds of many of us, was at the doorstep of Melbourne, about an hours drive away!

On the designated day - Jan 29th, a motley bunch of 9 of us from Accenture made our way up to Kinglake Children's retreat, a place aimed at providing a getaway for the young ones from the harsh realities around them, to lend a helping hand to many a parent, who had lost their house and belongings to a raging inferno a summer ago. Ross the in-charge down at the play home, greeted us with a warm welcome and thanked us profusely for stepping up to lend a hand. When Ross went on to briefly relate to us the utter devastation wreaked on the community with people being physically and mentally affected and the strain it placed on relationships as an after-effect, many of us were visibly shaken. A short tour of the facility and a site induction later, we got down to getting our hands dirty. We were assigned to help sort and clean the toys donated to the charity by kind donors. As we got going, it brought to the fore our capabilities as a team. All throughout, there was an element of fun and light hearted banter that hung in the air.

Ross and his fellow volunteers had organised for a sausage sizzle and some fish n chips for lunch, which was followed by a brief backyard cricket session with milk crates stacked up to make up the wicket and a wooden plank served well as a makeshift bat. After getting back to the remaining tasks on hand and winding up around tea time, it gave each one of us an immense sense of satisfaction for having been able to give back to the community and hopefully have made a small difference to the kids in that neighbourhood. A small photo session with Ross rounded off the fun filled day. The scenic drive back home gave time to reflect on the gravity of bushfires and the big difference volunteers can make in getting people back on track. Many a time it is not money that the survivors need, it's just a little helping hand and a smile on the face.

I personally take this opportunity to thank the management for organising this event and speaking on behalf of the group, it was an enjoyable day out in the sun whilst making a difference in the community. Can't wait to go back to Kinglake again!

Kind Regards,
Abhijit Kadam (Abhi)

The 10th Annual Whittlesea International Women's Day Awards Ceremony 9th March 2010.

This year Whittlesea Community Connections proudly organised the 10th Whittlesea International Women's Day Awards Ceremony. The event is held each year to celebrate International Women's Day, an occasion marked by groups around the world and commemorated by the United Nations.

In the City of Whittlesea, the Awards Ceremony recognizes the outstanding contributions through volunteering that many women make to their local community. This year, we received 50 nominations and over 120 people attended the event.

The following women were chosen by our selection panel to receive awards for each category:

- Young Achievers Award- Bianca Opasinis**
- Rural Women's Award- Mary Wood**
- Personal Achievement Award- Adriana Saleh**
- Senior Citizen's Award- Val Brennan**
- International Women's Day Award- Colleen Monteleone.**



Category winners



Award nominee's

Introduction to Volunteering Information sessions

April to June 2010

DATE	TIME
Friday 30th April	10.00am to 12.00pm
Thursday 27th May	10.00am to 12.00pm
Tuesday 29th June	10.am to 12.00pm

These information sessions are open to anyone wishing to learn about volunteering in a relaxed & friendly environment. All sessions are held at Whittlesea Community Connections, Shop 111 Epping Plaza, Corner High & Cooper Streets Epping.

The sessions are FREE, but places are limited.
BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

Please arrive at 9.45am for tea/coffee and to meet other participants. For more information and to reserve a place in any of the sessions, contact Lucinda at Whittlesea Volunteer Resource Service
Call 9401 6666

COMMUNITY NOTICEBOARD

Volunteer Profile

Mrs. Sue Sutherland, local Pheasant Creek/Kinglake West resident since 2002.

How long have you been a volunteer?

I have been volunteering since I have had children. First at Kinder then School canteen then regularly at the local Uniting Church. When we moved into the area I began volunteering with the church at Kinglake West in the Kids Club and Biggest Morning Tea projects.

How did the 2009 fires change this?

I was directly affected by the fires on 7 February 2009. We managed to fight the fire away from our 2.5 acre property in Pheasant Creek, but our neighbours to the left and to the back of us weren't so lucky. I was actually recovering from a spinal fusion operation at the time and my husband and younger son were in Whittlesea that day. By the time the fire hit they were not able to come up the mountain. I was isolated up here with my elder son. I started volunteering at the Relief centre set up at CFA Kinglake West & Mechanics Institute Hall pretty much as soon as it was set up. The Hall, the CFA and the Uniting church across the road all were spared from the fire in a stroke of divine intervention.

What have been the benefits to community/ to you?

Most of the assistance we gave was practical help and access to services, as well as providing a place for people to come and talk about their experiences. We spent many hours listening and crying with all sorts of people. It was very important for me too. I have forged so many strong bonds and it has given me a greater connection to the community at large. It also gave me something to focus on, to think outside of myself and to concentrate on helping others. I was lucky not to lose my house, so I could offer support to those who lost everything.

What would you say to anyone considering volunteering in bushfire recovery projects?

To have an understanding of what the recovery process is all about. Some information and knowledge would help volunteers to listen & assist people, some sensitivity is also needed as to the trials and tribulations people have faced in the crisis. The tasks needed now are various. Pretty practical stuff needed. For eg: Cleaning, Washing, Ironing, Childminding. Really practical tasks to alleviate the burdens of everyday life that rolls on despite the stress of rebuilding & coping with grief & loss. Volunteers are so well appreciated for what they have done and will still do in the future. The help is very much still needed and always highly valued by all of the community in the fire affected areas of Kinglake Ranges.

Sue Sutherland.



2010 Whittlesea Services Expo

Volunteer Events Assistants needed

Whittlesea Community Connections are partnering with NMIT and AMES to deliver the 2010 Whittlesea Services Expo at NMIT Epping on Thursday 20th May. The Expo delivers much needed information on services in the Northern region to students studying English at NMIT who are newly arrived.

A number of Event Assistants are needed to help out with this fantastic Expo. This is a great opportunity to use your people skills, meet new people and get involved in the settlement needs of newly arrived students.

Volunteers are required to attend a pre-event meeting on 29th April at NMIT, Epping and be at the Expo from 8am to 2pm on 20th May. If you're interested in volunteering please contact Michelle at WCC on 9401 6666

AMES Outreach

Adult Migrant Education Services is now out-posting at Whittlesea Community Connections each Friday to provide support for their clients seeking employment. To find out more about what AMES do they will be providing an information session as follows:

WHEN: Thursday 6th May 2010
TIME: 1pm to 3pm
WHERE: Whittlesea Community Connections, Epping Plaza.

If you would like to attend please contact Michelle at WCC on 9401 6666.

Volunteer Drivers & Transport Assistants Needed

There are opportunities available in our community transport service. If you have some time to spare each week, come and volunteer as a drivers or assistant. Vehicles are provided and you just need a standard drivers licence. Men & women from all backgrounds & ages & those who speak languages other than English, are encouraged to get involved. If you are interested or need more information please contact Lucinda on: 9401 6666



Whittlesea Community Connections

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 Epping Vic 3076
 Tel: 9401 6666

www.whittleseacommunityconnections.org.au