

Connections

Newsletter of the Quest for Life Foundation



AUTUMN 2009

Just over twenty years ago, a long time member of our support groups Pamela Denoon, decided to leave me a bequest with the words: 'take a holiday, hire a secretary or start that jolly foundation you're always talking about'. I chose the latter and with help from supporters, the Quest for Life Foundation came into being in 1989.

The services that the Quest for Life Foundation offered in its first decade were mainly counselling, residential programs and support and meditation groups. Each week, more than two hundred people would journey to the Foundation to attend these groups and counselling in Sydney. In addition, non-residential programs were offered around Australia for people living with cancer, grief and AIDS and the health professionals who worked with them.

The second decade saw our move to the Southern Highlands where, through the great generosity of benefactors, the Quest for Life Foundation purchased a beautiful retreat centre. From this base, the residential aspect of our programs grew rapidly with 1000 people participating each year. Our suite of programs increased to meet the needs of people living with grief, depression, loss and other trauma in addition to our programs for people with cancer and neurological illnesses. In this tranquil environment the Quest for Life Foundation trained facilitators, therapists and counsellors who continue to make a valuable contribution to the wider community as well as on our current programs.

Due to the economic downturn it was decided to cease conducting programs at the Centre at the end of 2008. We are in discussion with other not-for-profit groups with a view to a shared occupancy that may well see our programs again being conducted at the Centre. In

the meantime, we have found a very happy home for our residential programs in Bowral.

The closure of the Centre has allowed the Foundation to offer many more programs for people who would never have been able to travel to the Southern Highlands. The first quarter of 2009 has seen Quest facilitators offer programs in every state of Australia. The Oncology Massage training has been in high demand as you'll see from Eleanor Oyston's article. Several facilitators are working under her guidance to bring the therapeutic benefits of massage for people with cancer to communities around Australia.

Other one and two day programs have recently been conducted in Sydney, Young, Orange, Lismore, Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie, Byron Bay and Tamworth with others planned for Armidale, Dubbo and Trangie. Many people travelled two or three hours to attend these programs and the feedback was tremendous. People in country areas are suffering with long years of drought and financial strain and, with the addition of cancer, depression, grief or chronic illness their resilience has worn very thin. With well over a thousand people attending these programs they were deeply grateful that Quest resources were brought into their local area. Training programs were also conducted for the NSW Cancer Council for their support group leaders and other health professionals in the Blue Mountains, Lismore and Port Macquarie.

Our Healing Your Life and Quest for Life residential programs are now held at Berida Manor in Bowral and the Foundation continues to make attendance at these programs financially possible through NSW Health and your donations and bequests.

By the time you receive this issue of Connections a residential program for indigenous (women) elders will have been hosted in Coffs Harbour. Wendie and I recently spent a day listening to extraordinary stories of grief, loss and anguish with twenty elders from the stolen generation. From this day, the women requested a longer and more in depth program to address the needs of their

communities which include grief, abuse of drugs and alcohol and domestic violence. We will also be offering a training day for 30 teachers working with Aboriginal children many of whom are deeply affected by the traumas their families have suffered. Our thanks go to the Becher Foundation and NSW Health for supporting these programs.

In October we will be conducting programs in Kyneton, Bendigo, Echuca, Kerang, Swan Hill, Mildura and Albury/Wodonga.

The work of the Quest for Life Foundation continues to grow and expand with an ever increasing demand for our programs and trainings. Thank you for your love and support both financially and in other ways. The uncertainties of our economy have both increased the need for our services and impacted on people's ability to donate and these are challenging times for lesser well known charities like Quest. Please consider making a generous donation to our Annual Appeal so that we can embark upon our third decade of taking the work of the Quest for Life Foundation out into our rural and regional communities.



Petrea



Programs

Oncology Massage (OM) program

A brief outline of Oncology Massage Modules

OM Module 1 (2.5 days) outlines a basic understanding of the science of cancer; how treatments for cancer affect massage treatment and practical demonstrations.

OM Module 2 (3 days) expands on the science of cancer; understanding the immune system, nutrition for people with cancer and understanding the principles of spontaneous remission (the 4Cs).

OM Module 3 (4 days) for therapists who want to work in hospitals. Topics include infection control, prostheses and massage, chaplaincy issues and medical note taking.

OM Module 4 (5 days) is a practical week of massage in an oncology ward under supervision.

I taught OMM1 seven times from 1 August to mid December in 2008 with 93 therapists completing this training. In 2009 we have held four OMM1 and one OMM2 course with 52 therapists completing the programs.

I have developed an exciting teaching schedule for the second half of this year teaching in Sydney, Newcastle, Melbourne, Hobart, Perth and Cairns.

AAMT (Australian Association of Massage Therapists) has invited me to teach a one-day introduction to Oncology Massage in NSW, Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania and Quest will conduct an OMM1 following each one-day workshop where possible.

In early January 2009 I ran an OM Teacher Development retreat weekend and three experienced oncology massage therapists are now trained and will be running OMM1 programs in their home State. Some of you will know CiCi Edwards-Jensen (Vic), Gillian Deseraux (NSW) and Tania Harrold (QLD).

Karen Molner (SA) and Niki Ruane (WA) are undertaking training in OMM1 and following the upcoming programs in their states will be teaching OMM1 by mid 2009.

This is very exciting as it means that we can run more OMM1 programs without either the student or the teacher incurring high travel costs and this will free me up to concentrate on running OMM2 and 3, liaising with hospitals and developing student manuals.

I have produced a 30-minute DVD of my 'Understanding Cancer' lecture that is proving

very useful for both students and teachers.

Another outcome of Gayle MacDonald's visit is that the NSW Cancer Council has established two 'pilot' massage programs in the Northern Rivers district of NSW and the Shoalhaven district of NSW offering 6 subsidised massage treatments for women following surgery for breast cancer. The current programs are only a beginning and I see the need for specialist oncology massage professionals increasing.

Massage therapists who have completed oncology massage training with me are the NSW Cancer Council's preferred massage therapists when referring clients for massage.

I miss the beautiful venue at the Quest for Life Centre in Bundanoon and there are many challenges teaching each program from a new venue however; we have still taught 145 therapists in four states in eight short months.

I am looking forward to a bright future for Oncology Massage.

Eleanor

Indigenous elders seminar

Extract from the Report from Anna Bloemhard - on the seminar held with indigenous women elders at the Indigenous Communication Centre, Coffs Harbour

People's stories brought tears to all eyes, touched all hearts and created a sense of belonging and care for each other. Petrea gathered the common themes of compounded grief and loss, suffering, worry and pain about loved ones, exhaustion and forgiveness. There were high demands on these women for caring for family members, grandchildren and others in their extended families and communities, sometimes beyond a person's individual ability or strength.

Most stories began with abuse at the hand of 'white' Australia, e.g. stolen generation, families uprooted and discrimination; but also abuse, violence and alcoholism within their own communities and families that caused great suffering, hardship and often, death of loved ones, including children.

Not only were the women able to cry and laugh about the past, but many in the circle moved forward with great success. From all the stories shone a spirit of resilience and often humor in the face of these very difficult situations and the great strengths of these women, some of whom had been alcoholics, been abused and had come through it and were now helping others.

It was obvious that for these women self-care often came last and a workshop with Petrea and Wendie would have to focus on reenergizing women and giving them tools for empowerment, strength and leadership in their communities. Themes of a three day residential program would be those that arose from the circle discussion:

- Dealing with grief and loss, suffering, worry and pain about loved ones/self
- Looking after oneself holistically, body/mind/spirit, to prevent burn-out
- Fostering forgiveness, good relations and effectiveness in conflict situations.

All participants said that they very much enjoyed the day and that such dialogue and support is crucial for these Aboriginal elders. Anna received several phone calls after the workshop telling her how important and supportive the day had been. The longer residential program has been scheduled for May.



Reflections from Bernadette Arena...

I have been working closely with Petrea and the Quest team for about three and a half years and have been on many programs over that time.

It is an enormous privilege to share the journey with people going through all manner of illness or difficult personal trials. Throughout every single program I have been amazed, delighted and humbled at the very obvious change in people over the course of a few days. These changes are many – in demeanor, in energy, in laughter levels – people feel more relaxed and comfortable, happy for the opportunity of quiet reflection. People look different, their faces lighter, less troubled. If only we could take 'before' and 'after' photos!

I had believed that part of the transformation happened because we were in such a conducive environment at the Quest for Life Centre.

But having had our first residential program in our new venue, Berida Manor at Bowral, I was thrilled that the old 'magic' was still with us. The feedback from our first program has been overwhelmingly positive. I have realised that it is the essence of the program that matters, not the venue in which it happens.

Here are some comments from a participant from that program in March who says, "As I



The Quest team – Bernadette, Petrea, Val, Wendie, Ann, Samantha

believe that the program is wonderful, I am very happy for you to use any of my comments in your newsletter with my first name included."

Dear Bernadette and the team,

Thank you so much for facilitating such a wonderful program last week. I am incredibly grateful for everything that I have learnt and for the lovely people with whom I shared the week. All the team was so inspiring and informative. You each brought different aspects to the program, the sum of which was greater than the parts. I have come home with great hope of a better future. I now have the tools to go forward and achieve

some peace and happiness. I know that there is hard and consistent work ahead but I feel up for the challenge.

My start on the program was a little rocky as I almost left on the first night. I realised that this was due to my deep fears and insecurities, having never been on such a program before. In fact, never having been away alone to do something just for me in my entire 54 years! How happy I am that I summoned the courage to stay.

Much love, Elizabeth

Bernadette

Eleanor Oyston's reflections on her years at Quest...

On this special occasion of celebrating 20 years of the Quest for Life Foundation I feel very privileged to have been of service to the people who came to programs over the last nine years.

The year 2000 was a very exciting year of highlights for me, one of which was beginning my work at Quest as a massage therapist on weekend programs.

To 'see a need' and have the freedom to do whatever it takes to meet that need, is indeed a rare working environment.

I have seen meals appear when the request seemed impossible; gardens blossom where barren ground lay a week before; a bike turned into a painter until the job was done; folk on the edge of life begged me not to call an ambulance when things looked bad, then proceeded to get through the night so they were ready for the

group session next day with a smile; I have had the privilege to support family members come to terms with the reality of their situation and learn to love even deeper; and I have shed tears of both sadness and joy, humbled by the grit and grace entrenched in the human spirit.

Sitting beside Petrea as co facilitator on many programs, we shared parts of ourselves that we would share nowhere else and lives changed because of this. This is the ultimate privilege, laced with many of life's most treasured lessons.

Massage opened the door of Quest and has given me a unique opportunity to share the skills and insights gained at Quest with the whole massage community in Australia.

My hope is that with the respect and acceptance that Petrea and the Quest for Life Foundation has consistently built within the medical community will pave the way forward, carrying massage insights and skills into an integrated health system that will flourish through compassion.



Eleanor, Bernadette, Helena

The 'leading edge' work that we did all those years ago is commonplace now and information about nutrition, toxins, meditation and the influence of the mind on the body is presented in many different ways from Oprah to the latest self-awareness tome. The dynamics of the group work in our programs are unique because love continues to flow and compassion 'bubbles' anew.

Eleanor

Reflections from Helena Hinden...

Coming to Quest in 2003 as part of my practical work for a counselling diploma, I gained firsthand experience of the impact that a Quest program has. Having the desire to be part of this special organisation I was determined to come back and was fortunate enough to become a support person on dozens of subsequent programs over the last 5 years. Being part of Quest and observing how

participants change over the few days we spend together is not only rewarding but an amazing learning experience for me personally for which I am truly grateful. I feel privileged to be part of the team at Quest and look forward to continuing to support our clients in the future.

Helena

Quote from Gwen

This is a big thank you for what you have

helped me achieve from the March course at Berida Manor. I am still wandering around looking pleased with myself (an observation from friends).

At last I have found peace in my life, a huge achievement I can assure you. I have spent the last 50 years being angry with the world and a large portion of the population in it, so the way I am feeling now is really a super achievement which would not have happened if I had not met Petrea and Wendie and their wonderful team.

Gwen

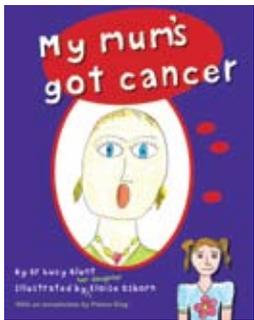
Book Reviews

My Mum's Got Cancer

With an introduction by Petrea, My Mum's Got Cancer will provide the stimulus for children to explore their fears and concerns when a parent has cancer. No parent is ever prepared for a

conversation with their child about a diagnosis of cancer. How do you tell your child that your life, and indeed your child's world, is about to change dramatically? It can be difficult to know how much to tell and which words to use. My Mum's Got Cancer will provide the gentle stimulus to some of the most difficult conversations a parent ever has to have around this traumatic event.

Dr Lucy Blunt is a Clinical Psychologist with a practice in Sydney, she is also a mother and a breast cancer survivor. Lucy's book, along with the candid and humorous illustrations by her daughter Eloise, provides a fabulous catalyst



for conversations with your children. Children readily relate to Eloise's delightful drawings and may well be stimulated to make their own pictures of their experience.

The first book of its kind in Australia, My Mum's Got Cancer provides a safe avenue for the gentle conversations of the heart that deepen the bonds of the loving relationship between parent and child. This is an essential resource for parents, the family, the child, the teacher and the school community to help normalize the treatment of cancer.

Dying to Know

This is a great book full of ideas, information and conversation starters.

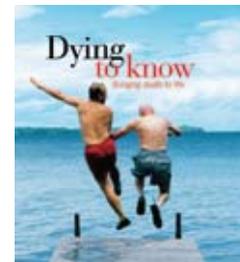
"We're all dying. Sooner or later we're going to croak, kick the bucket, give up the ghost, cash in our chips, shuffle off, bow out or go to our happy hunting ground. It's the one thing we all have in common. Yet no one seems to want to talk about it.

Unlike our ancestors, for whom dying was an important part of living, many of us will face death without any innate spiritual insight. When someone dies, no one seems to know what to say. Dying to Know aims to change all that. Based on the bestselling Change the World for Ten Bucks, Dying to Know is a collection of conversation starters

and idea buds partnered with practical information, quirky facts and specialist advice that lifts the lid on death: planning a personalised funeral; designing and decorating your own coffin; organ donation; coping with the pain of loss; creating online memorials; strange mortuary practices; avoiding teenage suicide; making setting up a Will fun; helping children cope with death; things to do before you die; and a host of other topics. Each is presented in a double-page colourful spread and aims to empower, inspire and, at times, amuse the reader.

The book is also designed as a resource that links the reader to a vast range of services and organisations – everything from mortician's courses to statutory information about Wills. How do you ask Granddad if he wants the Collingwood theme song played at his funeral? Should you tell loved ones you're donating your organs? Why did ancient Greeks bury their dead with a coin in their mouth? Can you be buried in a cardboard box?

Dying to Know is not a book with all the answers. Just ideas, insights, advice and inspiring illustrations about a subject none of us can escape. Read it and then rush into the daylight to get on with the more challenging matter of living."



Diary Dates

May – December 2009

Residential Programs

Our popular core programs, Healing Your Life and Quest for Life are now offered at the Berida Manor in Bowral. These life-changing programs continue to provide practical strategies for those facing significant challenges in their lives. With the help of the NSW Department of Health and our own fundraising efforts we are able to offer subsidies to financially assist those who wish to attend programs but do not have the resources to do so. To discuss which program would best suit your needs or to ask about our subsidies, please contact Bernadette on our new program department number, **1300 941 488**.

Healing Your Life

Suitable for people seeking healing after a challenging or traumatic experience or who live with private anguish, pain, grief or loss. If you're

ready to review your life, clarify your future or get 'unstuck' from a state of mind that is unhelpful, then this program can change your life in powerful and positive ways.

25 – 29 May, 29 June – 3 July, 27 – 31 July, 24 – 28 August, 2 – 6 November, 7 – 11 December

Quest for Life

An inspiring, practical, educational and experiential self-help program for men and women living with cancer or other serious illness. Suitable for people seeking to make a positive contribution to their health and to make meaning of their experience. Partners and loved ones are encouraged to attend also.

21 – 25 September, 23 – 27 November

A day with Petrea King

These days are ideal for people who have attended a residential program and would like

a reminder or top up and for people who may be interested in attending one of Quest's longer programs.

- **12 July - The Journey Within**
Sydney Adventist Hospital
- **8 November - watch our website for the topic and location for this date**

Regional Workshops

Please visit our website for details on when Petrea and Wendie will be visiting your region.

Oncology Massage

Please visit our website for details on the **Oncology Massage Modules** being offered in your State.

New phone numbers

Program enquiries
and bookings 1300 941 488
Shop enquiries 02 4883 6805
General enquires 02 4883 6599

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