

Boroondara Stroke Support Group

NEWSLETTER



ISSUE 45 2016

President's Report

by Brian O'Meara

With 2016 well and truly with us as Easter looms up, the BSSG committee has been very active tackling a busy and exciting year ahead. Having been successful in our Stronger Communities Program, the funds will go a long way to fitting out our new BSSG home at The Kew Senior Citizens Centre situated in High St Kew. At present we are waiting for renovations to be completed, hoping to move in by June.

In the meantime we have commenced our twice monthly meetings at St George's, as always providing information and help for our members as well as companionship and fun. The lawn bowling and woodwork groups have been back for a number of weeks, as has the One Voice Choir, our Community garden this year has not been as successful as in recent years with a reduced number of tomatoes, but when the time comes for new plantings we shall put our "green" fingers back into the fray.

Recently we appointed a new Treasurer for the BSSG, John Pocock. John is also Treasurer for Yarra Bend Rotary. We thank John for taking over from Jenny and Peter Cheng whom have both earned a well deserved rest after 13 years of very active involvement in the BSSG.

I look forward to catching up to all members and wishing all a happy 2016 and lovely Easter as we progress the BSSG forward.

If you are interested in joining any BSSG activity please contact either Brian O'Meara or Michael Shallard

Joan McKenna

By Joan McKenna

VALE Joan McKenna - a valued member of the BSSG and a recent committee member Below is a reflection on Joan's life as recited at her recent funeral service.

I have the privilege of taking a few minutes to honour Joan's life with a some words of remembrance. Never was a task made so easy as this today - because what I'm going to share with you is actually an account of Joan's life - in her own words! Yes, as ever, she was a step ahead of us!

"My father was in the Navy so my early years saw us move around a lot - Canberra, Rabaul, Garden Island, Kings Cross to name a few. At the end of the war we moved to Melbourne and I was enrolled at Catholic Ladies College East Melbourne, thus beginning a long association with CLC. In the next 60 years I would be a student, a teacher at CLC Eltham, and finally a Board member until 2009.

I worked in the Public Service at the Mont Albert Barracks for a year before entering the Sisters of Charity in 1954. The Novitiate was a happy time for me. I never ever thought of going home. My family's nomadic lifestyle held me in good stead once I was professed in 1956. (Joan lived in 20 different RSC communities over the course of her life).

From NSW I moved to Sandy Bay Tasmania. In those early days we kept a few pages ahead of the students. At Sandy Bay I went to Tech one evening

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a week to learn enough to teach the senior classes for the following week.

After completing a science degree I taught in Canberra and then Brisbane ... and then 23 years after I left Melbourne, I returned there. This time my 'L' plates were for being Principal at Sancta Sophia College Glenroy. After Principalship I took the opportunity to go back to the classroom as a science teacher at CLC Eltham.

After 30 years in education and having had an accident in the surf, I accepted a position as Chaplain to prisoners with psychiatric illness and intellectual disabilities. The next ten years plus were spent between G Division, Pentridge, and Mont Park Mental facility's locked ward. After a sabbatical year spent in Aboriginal communities in Central Australia I spent the following 10 years



caring for carers - at Outreach in Sydney, and later, Comely Bank, Healesville.

In 2010, while on holidays at Shellharbour I suffered a stroke while swimming in the sea. This put my philosophy to "take things as they come" to the test! I realised how much I had valued myself for what I did. Now I am more conscious of 'who I am and what I can be for others'. It is a pity that it takes something so drastic! I am still getting used to being on the 'other side' of caring. At Deepdene, Mary Gabrielle, Anna and Trish walked the line between letting me do the best I can, and looking out for my needs. I have been lucky with all the help I've received.

After rehab (following the stroke) I joined a stroke support group. Life is to be lived - I participate in lots of the group's activities. There is no 'poor me' syndrome. My ministry is to be with people in

whatever state of life and health. It has taken a lot for me to realise that it is not so much 'doing' as 'being' there for them. I am still learning."

Mary Gabrielle takes up the story from there ... Anna and I met Joan at St. George's hospital when it looked as though she was destined for residential care. We thought it worthwhile to ask if Joan could come and live with us at Deepdene.

After some fast talking we brought her home to Deepdene in May, 2010. The first thing we did was take the door off the bathroom to enable better access and she did not look back.

From day one Joan won us over. She was so determined, so tenacious, so positive and so lovable - except when we insisted on certain rules to be followed - and then we clashed for a few minutes!. Joan kept saying she was the luckiest person alive to have *two* people looking after her. Actually Joan looked after us because of her positive attitude. Joan endeared herself to us because as she too loved Sheba the cat and Peppi the dog. They never left her side. In fact it was not unusual for us to come home to find Joan flat out on the bed with Sheba sitting on her chest and Peppi lying beside her. The one thing she said she would miss, when she made the decision to stay at St. Catherine's, was her furry friends!

Joan's ability to be committed to the Stroke Community of Boroondara was extraordinary. She threw herself into it with gusto, learnt to play lawn bowls, got onto the committee, attended the Writing Skills programme at Hawthorn library, supported and took her turn at the Pop-up shop in Hawthorn, and became a volunteer at St. George's as a mentor to stroke victims.

When Joan eventually made her home at St. Catherine's, she gave it everything and loved her time there. Community celebrations, gatherings etc. were often a challenge but her words when asked would she like to come along were always "why not". She was a wise lady, a happy lady, a woman of integrity.

Joan's love for people, her family, especially her beloved 'little people', Matilda and Charlie, and our RSC Congregation was the best in every way." Joan Wilma McKenna, RSC, Sister, aunt, friend, carer - tenacious, positive, loving, funny, wise, mischievous, compassionate, passionate. We loved you, and our lives are blessed by yours.

VALE Joan.

A Lot Has Been Happening

by Vivienne Harkness

Firstly, I am delighted to announce that BSSG has been successful in its submission to the Stronger Communities Program.

There were many applications, so we have been extremely lucky to have been selected.

We have been granted \$16,157, which will go towards furnishing and equipping BSSG's new premises at Kew Senior Citizens Centre.

I would like to take this opportunity to most sincerely thank, on behalf of all our members, our wonderful BSSG supporter - The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP, who initially invited us to apply. Josh stated in the letter we received from him - "The Kooyong Stronger Communities Program committee unanimously supported your application in recognition of the invaluable work that the Boroondara Stroke Support Group does in our local community for those who suffer from stroke and their families".

A strong and wonderful commendation indeed, of which we should all be very proud.

As Project Manager, I would also like to thank Jill Forsyth, Louise Brown and Brian O'Meara for the invaluable long hours and hard work that they put into the preparation of this very detailed submission - without their expertise we would not have been successful.

Secondly, we finally have word from Council that our new "home" or "centre" - call it what you like - will be available to BSSG in early June - so how exciting is that!!

Building commenced on 29/2/16 and Council is doing all they can to make the space as appealing and comfortable for our members, as they can.

We will certainly be in a good place to do that, as together with the SCP's \$16,157 to spend, we also have the \$12,731 granted to us by the Jack Brockhoff Foundation. For the latter, we express our sincere thanks to Stroke Association of Victoria (SAV) and James Garland, consultant to

SAV, who funded James to support BSSG.

So - from June there will be a place BSSG will be able to call home!!

There will be masses of activities available for our members - a library, Nintendo Wii machines, TV screens from where the "blokes" can all watch the footy or cricket together and/or the ladies can watch Sound of Music for the hundredth time!!

There will also be a hand therapy machine -Able-X, art and craft supplies, iPads, comfy chairs and bottomless cups of tea or coffee from our own coffee machine, with milk and goodies from our own fridge. Not to forget the well stocked jar of chocolate coated cookies!!! Plus much much more!! Finally, Easter is coming, so it gives us yet another opportunity to have some fun!

At our meeting on Thursday 17th March we invite you to bring along your creative juices because we are going to make our own Easter "bonnets", similar to the Santa hats we decorated before Christmas!! However, this time, before partaking of a delicious morning tea, we will have the traditional Easter Parade - to music of course! It is hoped that some members of the With One Voice choir will again be able to join us to enjoy some fun singing. We will extend an invitation to our local member John Pesutto MP, who enjoyed himself so much last time, he has asked to be kept advised of such events and also Tim Smith MP, member for Kew. We will also invite patients in the stroke ward to come down and join us, if they feel able. So jump on your Easter bunnies and hop along for a fun morning to be shared together.

"Grandpa" and Zeke

By Mary-Anne Candy

My husband Philip, and I have just returned from 6 weeks, staying in our daughter's and her partner's granny flat, in Newcastle NSW. We were there to help, wherever we could, when she gave birth to our second grandson, Amos, a brother for 2 and a half year old Zeke.

Philip's severe aphasia means that he cannot speak, nor write nor type, for himself, and he is right-side hemiplegic, relying on a 4-pronged stick to walk.

However, our family has been delighted to see how effectively Philip is now communicating with Zeke, whose language, as one would expect, is developing rapidly.

As we travelled north we had anticipated that the birth of the second member of the next generation, could prove to be another of life's challenges for Philip post-stroke. The natural tendency for him, is perhaps, to plunge into renewed grieving for "what could have been", with this new family member.

Inevitably, there were times of deep regret for Philip, but the real encouragement came from "big brother" Zeke, who delights in talking to "Grandpa" (Philip), and keenly observes the way his Grandpa does things on a day to day basis. Philip has excellent non-verbal skills, and Zeke loves to tap into these, watching intensely, how Grandpa can communicate with gestures and wonderfully diverse facial expressions, even without words.

Zeke loves helping Grandpa by holding his stick when we get in the car. He would say "Are you OK Grandpa?"

Grandpa is special because, although he can't pick Zeke up, he can take him for a ride on his scooter, or on his lap on the manual wheelchair.

Zeke is learning that he can ask Grandpa questions, and receive a thumbs up or a thumbs down response for "yes" or "no". In this way he knows what Grandpa wants, at least some of the time!

Together they can play "match-ups" on Grandpa's iPad, or, sometimes, as a special treat, watch an episode of "Thomas the Tank Engine".

We know that these are the earliest developments in a new grandfather-grandson relationship. We are delighted to think that our grandchildren are growing up with an understanding that disability is part of life, and not the end of life. In our personal post-stroke world, we feel it is essential to celebrate every little achievement, and this developing relationship with our next generation is one to enjoy, and to cherish.

What will this special "Grandpa" experience mean to the next generation as they develop into adults themselves?

(Dr Philip Candy had his left-brain stroke 4½ years ago.)

Chicken Caesar Salad

by Liz Berryman

Ingredients

2 slices whole grain bread
1 clove garlic
Olive oil spray
5 baby cos lettuce leaves
150g cooked chicken breast - roughly shredded
40g Shaved Parmesan

Dressing

1 egg at room temperature
2 teaspoons olive oil
60ml fat free French salad dressing (bought)
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard (bought)
Freshly ground pepper (to taste)
1 garlic clove

Method

Remove crusts from bread, cut into cubes. Preheat oven to 180°C. Line a baking tray with baking paper. Place bread cubes on baking tray and lightly spray with olive oil. Bake for 15 minutes or until crisp - you have now made croutons.

Make dressing

Bring water to boil in small saucepan - add egg and boil for 1 minute
Allow egg to cool, crack open and scoop contents into glass jar with lid
Add olive oil, salad dressing and mustard. Close lid and shake until combined and thick.
Season with black pepper.

Halve the garlic clove and rub the cut side around inside of serving bowl.
Place lettuce and chicken into bowl.
Add dressing and gently combine all ingredients.
Sprinkle with croutons and parmesan then serve immediately.

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