

SUMMER 2021

ROSIES

Friends on the Street



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Sharing friendship since 1987



A message from our CEO



Christmas is a time associated with joy, warmth, the Nativity, home, sharing, and memories. For many it also provides the opportunity to take time out of busy lives to express gratitude and possibly look at ways to make someone else's journey a little bit easier.

Christmas and the holiday season, however, is not a happy time for everyone. The problems of everyday life that may have overwhelmed us during the year can be further exacerbated during the holidays. This might be financial pressures, isolation, family tension, separation, grief, substance abuse or physical or mental health and wellbeing—and is often further impacted by the pandemic and associated restrictions. When these issues are so severe to have resulted in disadvantage, homelessness, social isolation and/or loneliness, it is often challenging to feel grateful.

Rosies plays an essential role throughout the year, but one that we are even more conscious of over the holidays – that is to provide a safe, consistent and dependable space and service for our friends on the street. It is a place where everyone can feel that they belong and are accepted for who they are. On a deeper, more emotional level, that feeling of being accepted or embraced makes us feel more secure within ourselves and often fosters a sense of strength and confidence.

Rosies volunteers are passionate in their response to those in need and work together to create and build a supportive community. Not only does Rosies offer friendship and connection to those in need, but we open our hearts and embrace those who share their incredible stories with us, enriching our lives through each and every interaction with someone that we meet.

Thank you to the Rosies Community for your generous support of Rosies. To our volunteers who give the incredible gift of time, friendship and an open heart at every outreach. To our friends on the street, who generously share a small part of themselves and greatly enrich those who are fortunate enough to meet them. To our school community, who outreach with us and provide great support through fundraising, donation drives and community connection. And to our donors, members and supporters, who generously provide financial and in-kind donations, as well as support through thought, prayer and, importantly, spreading the message of the good works of Rosies. It is because of the care, love and strength of the Rosies Community that we are able to continue to reach out to those in our communities who are struggling or experiencing disadvantage.

Wishing you the blessings of the Christmas season and the wonder of love, hope and faith for the New Year.

Jayne Shallcross
CEO



Photo Caption: Wayne & Steve on outreach in Caloundra

Patron defines the meaning of Rosies

Rosies has been sharing friendship and connection since 1987 in Queensland but many in the local community are unaware of the true meaning behind the service. One gentleman and regular patron of Rosies in Caloundra, Wayne, shares his experiences with Rosies.

"I first attended Rosies two and a half years ago," Wayne recalls. I'd experienced the loss of a significant family member and had one set back after another. I was seeking socialisation and regular support when someone mentioned I should give Rosies a try."

Wayne was a little hesitant at first, he was looking for a safe space to engage and interact with people on a regular basis.

"I showed up to outreach at Happy Valley and saw a few people there, everyone was welcoming and friendly. I enjoyed that first Saturday outreach and thought I'd come back again just to be around others and feel connected with the local community" he said.

Wayne continued, "I live alone so it's nice to have a place to go where I can chat to people. I like spending time with the people at Rosies; it helps me to feel connected with the local community and society in general."

Wayne has attended the special outreaches that our volunteers and community partners work hard to put on like the annual Christmas in July outreach, and shared "Christmas in July is a great way to experience the joy of Christmas while it's cold out. It's a great opportunity for a good home-cooked meal, to pick up some nice clothes, and to spend quality time with people in the local community."

Nearly 3 years on from his first visit with Rosies, Wayne attends almost every week calling into the two different outreach locations in Caloundra. "Rosies is really about feeling connected and spending time with people. There are people who attend that are on the street, but others are people who are lonely or don't have family in the area. At first I thought it was just for people who were homeless but it's also about connection and friendship with people."

He continued, "Rosies provides a much needed service in the local community and society in general. A lot of people could benefit from coming along to outreach. Don't be afraid to rock up to Rosies - take the leap and it will be great"

Thousands of people like Wayne find community and connection through Rosies because of the support of donors like you. Your gift no matter how large or small makes a real impact in the lives of people who attend outreach. To donate please visit our website or contact our team to find out how you can keep our vans on the street and in the communities where we are needed most.



Supporting family while sleeping rough

By Teresa Bettles

Shirley* has been a regular face at our Southport outreach since COVID came to Queensland in early 2020. She is quiet and reserved, only taking what she needs – like all of the people who attend Rosies, she has a story to tell.

Life changed dramatically for Shirley more than thirty years ago when her 17 year old son, Bob, was in the first week of his apprenticeship. “While attaching a trailer to the Ute, Bob* lost control of it and it hit him in the head. He spent time in a coma and was discharged from hospital with a brain injury and an addiction to pain medication” she recalled.

Bob received a settlement from the accident which unfortunately went to feed his addiction, until he died four years later in a car accident. “I was living a long way from Bob at the time with my husband and two younger children. Immediately after the accident my health began to deteriorate. I developed a heart condition, arthritis, my hair turned grey; it was not a good time for me” Shirley said.

As if grieving the loss of her son wasn't enough, both of her stepsons passed away over the next few years.

But Shirley soldiered on, she watched her other children grow up and start their own lives; she was happy and things were good. When her elderly mother took ill, Shirley moved across the country to care for her until she passed away. During this time Shirley's daughter, Jan*, married and had two beautiful daughters of her own, but this was only the beginning of another bout of bad luck for Shirley and her family.

Shirley's son-in-law had a heart attack and died, leaving her daughter Jan and granddaughters with no support and few options. Shirley packed up and relocated to Melbourne to help Jan find a place to live and to help care for the baby girls.

“This was a very special time for me, born out of so much sadness, I got to spend so much time with my granddaughters. We share a very close bond” Shirley remembered. However, the cold Melbourne winter was too much for Shirley to bear with her debilitating arthritis, so she would come to Queensland to escape the cold.

With no income or support Shirley spent her time in Queensland sleeping rough and saving all her money to pay for the fare back to Victoria when the weather was warm enough.

“To get assistance from Centrelink I need to have a phone, charged and on, ready to receive calls, which is a little hard when I don't have a roof over my head” Shirley remarked. Shirley would receive assistance for a few months and then have her payments cancelled as she could not meet these requirements.

Due to COVID, border closures, constant uncertainty and fear, Shirley has been unable to return to Melbourne and has been sleeping rough on the Gold Coast consistently since early 2020. “I haven't seen my daughter Jan or my grandbabies in nearly two years. I miss them” she recounted.

At 62 years old Shirley collects 10c cans and bottles from around the local community, and then with everything piled high in her stroller she walks for about an hour to the depot to cash them in. Its hard work but Shirley is able to collect enough containers to make \$50 per week, which she sends to Jan to pay for a babysitter so she can attend a course 1 evening a week. Just another example of how Shirley has spent her life prioritising her family and caring for them ahead of herself.

Shirley has a tent with the majority of her belongings in a tucked away location, however Shirley said she “does not feel safe sleeping there.” She carries around a few yoga mats in her stroller and lays them down in the evening to sleep for a few hours when she can.

Shirley looks after her mental health by listening to the local radio station and attending Rosies weekly, “the radio and Rosies help me keep mentally well” she remarked.

Shirley's story is filled with sadness and loss but also love. Shirley's love for her family and desire to help them in any small way that she can, makes it a story that we could all learn from.

Unfortunately Shirley's story is not uncommon. We've seen many older women who've found themselves homeless or at risk of homelessness due to relationship breakdown, a family loss, or prioritisation of others needs before their own. We are all still dealing with the impacts of COVID-19, stories like Shirley's highlight the importance of safety, belonging, and love. While it still may be some time before Shirley can return to Melbourne and be with Jan and the girls, her Rosies family will always be there with open arms.

**Denotes a name change for privacy purposes*



Knock, Knock... The Kindness of Strangers



On behalf of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, I wish you all a safe, happy and holy Christmas. We have all heard of knock, knock jokes that can make us chuckle or groan, depending on the strength of the humour. I recently read the following story and wanted to share it with our Rosies family, I hope that you may be able to find yourself in this story.

I can imagine that when Jesus turned one, Mary & Joseph talked about the night he was born. There was so much they remembered of that night: Mary thought back to the baby's first cry and the love which flooded her heart, as Jesus was placed in her arms. There was the wonder of it all, that this tiny infant was God's own Son.

She recalled the knock on the door of the stable, [knock] and Joseph answering his hearty welcome, "Come in, come in out of the cold." Shepherds, who told of an angel appearing as they kept guard over their flocks. And the message of the angel, "Behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people, for to you is born this day a Savior who is Christ the Lord." The shepherds went on to tell that the sky had filled with angels, praising God: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace, goodwill among men." The shepherds had come as quickly as they could to find the holy child, and now they knelt to worship him.

Sometime later Mary heard someone knocking. [knock] She recalled how Joseph had answered again with his hearty welcome, "Come in, come in out of the cold." Three wise men approached the child as though approaching the Holy One, they knelt in worship. They brought him precious gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They told their story, of seeing the signs of his birth in the night sky, signs of the greatest king in the history of the earth, and journeying many days, following the brilliant star. But it was their joy which Mary remembered most, the happiness that danced in their eyes, as each one held Jesus close to his heart.

Oh, and one more treasured memory of that night, the innkeeper and his family—they had been so kind. When Joseph had first knocked on the door of the inn, desperate to find a place to stay in Bethlehem, Mary was already

in labor, the baby could be born at any time - at first the innkeeper had shaken his head, weary, downcast, the inn was crowded, with no space left at all, and certainly no space suitable for giving birth. Then a smile had creased his face, his stable out back, the warmth of the animals, clean straw, quiet, undisturbed. He helped them get settled and soon, his wife came out with provisions and sent their young son to fetch the midwife. Throughout the night the innkeeper's wife and daughter quietly helped wherever needed. And when Jesus was born, they brought strips of swaddling cloth to wrap him in, and sang an ancient lullaby of praise to God for the newborn child.

Yes... Mary had so many memories of that holy night. And interwoven with each one, the joy her son had brought into the world and the love that surrounded them. God's love, God's love for Jesus, for her and Joseph, the shepherds, the wisemen, and the innkeeper & his family... God's love for all the world.

And now, 2,000 years later, God's love made known in Jesus still fills the world. And like those who knocked on the door of the stable that night, we also hear words of hearty welcome, "Come in, come in out of the cold." We knock on the door of the stable of Bethlehem [knock], and God invites us to lay down our burdens and enter, and see the baby Jesus, sleeping in the manger. And we pause, and hold the child close to our heart, remembering that he is God's own Son, our Savior, our Teacher, our Friend, our Lord.

That is the message of Christmas but there's something else important here for us, we find it in the kindness of the innkeeper and his family. There was no room in the inn for this family, but the innkeeper and his family, made room for Mary, Joseph & Jesus, strangers from far away, desperately in need.

People will come knocking on our door. Will we make room for them? For the kid at school who needs a friend, for the family member who is doing it tough, for the neighbour who is lonely, for the patron or volunteer feeling isolated, for the young adult who needs a mentor, for the co-worker who is struggling. Will we make room for them?

Take Care and God Bless
Fr Michael Twigg OMI

We are trialling a new short form newsletter and we would love to know what you think.
Do you like the shorter newsletter? (circle one) **yes** **no**

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