

SOUTH PORT
COMMUNITY
HOUSING GROUP



INSIDE
THIS ISSUE:

Stokes St upgrade	2
Bunning's kits	3
Celebrity chef	3
Get involved!	4
Name our newsletter	4
Goodbye to a friend	4
Activities Day	4

South Port Community Housing Group Newsletter

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1 2009

Welcome to our Newsletter!

Welcome to the South Port Community Housing Group newsletter. With this newsletter we hope to communicate better with our tenants and the wider community. We not only hope to provide information that's relevant and interesting, but also to get people involved in things we are doing from time to time. We are intending to produce newsletters quarterly and are eager to get your feedback and ideas. So get in touch with Jacqui or Sam at the office and let us know your ideas!



**SPCHG Head Office 259
Dorcas St South Melbourne**

For anyone connected to the Youth Program we aim to dedicate a section to you in this newsletter. We want contributions from you to include in this section such as poems, short stories or artwork, we also want you to come up with a name for a space that will be devoted to you. You could win a \$40 JB HIFI voucher by naming your section of the newsletter. Please get your entries for 'Name This Space' in to the office by Friday October 23rd to be in the running to win the voucher!

Meet the Staff

There are 12 employees at South Port Community Housing Group. In the administration area: Janet Goodwin (Manager), Sam Levey (Finance/Admin), Jacqui Christopoulos (Services Development Officer) and Lenore Gerloff (Admin). SPCHG offers 2 programs—the Youth Housing Support Program and the Rooming House Program. Rebecca Blight and Brad Wilde comprise the current Youth Housing Support Team, Barbara Leon who is also a Youth Housing Support Worker is off on maternity leave for 12 months. Donna Watts, Mick Cummins, Danny Glasby and Brad Wilde make up the Rooming House Team—alongside Andrea Levey as Team Leader. The Youth

Housing Support Team are focused on assisting young people who have been homeless in finding somewhere to live and supporting them once they have found a place. The Rooming House Workers deal with the management of SPCHG's 221 tenancies. They deal with a range of

issues including reporting and following up maintenance to dealing with inter-tenant disputes, rental arrears and assisting tenants with finding health or support services if needed.

Below From Left: The SPCHG Administration Team Jacqui, Janet, Lenore and Sam



News from the Manager...

Call This a Home? Some big advocacy groups have recently launched a campaign about rooming houses called *Call This a Home? Find Out the Truth About Rooming Houses*. There was a lot of media about this in July. While the real target is landlords who are illegally exploiting the poor in a very tight rental market charging rents of up to \$300 for rooms in suburban homes without heating or security, the slogans of their campaign reflect badly on all of us. I wrote something in the latest issue of Parity magazine pointing this out. If anyone is interested in reading this let me know and I'll get you a copy. While groups like South Port Community Housing Group, St Kilda Community Housing and Prahran/Malvern Community Housing are all trying to provide decent, secure and supportive housing, when they label their campaign as being about rooming houses the general public could be forgiven for thinking all rooming houses are nightmares. We know they are not!

Registered and Accredited Provider Over the last 18 months we have been seriously consumed by jumping Office of Housing hurdles. We have successfully jumped them all for now, landed on our feet, and have become formally Registered as a Community Housing Provider and Accredited as a Homelessness Service Provider. Thank goodness; back to the real work! **Morning teas** I'd really like to get some direct feedback from tenants and clients about how things are going and what we can do to be continually improving our service. We have a new Services Development Officer, Jacqui, who is organising a series of morning teas in houses during which we can chat about how things are going in your house. I'll be attending all of the morning teas and I really look forward to seeing you there!

Continued Page 3

Stokes Street Upgrade

South Port Community Housing Group first took on management of the Stokes Street property in 1989. Originally containing 15 rooming house rooms and 1 flat, the property has recently been transformed into 12 fully renovated and self contained bedsit apartments. The apartments contain brand new kitchens, bathrooms, furnishings and amenities offering quality homes to the 12 women residing there. The property boasts a new intercom security system and outdoor barbecue area for the women to enjoy at their leisure. Huge structural changes were undertaken by the building team in the interest of creating more



space and utilizing natural sunlight, while maintaining and restoring the building's heritage features. SPCHG would like to send congratulations to everyone involved in making the upgrade a huge success! Thanks to Keith Josseff (Architect), Phil Ham-

bling (OoH Senior Project Manager), Frank Failla (Building Foreman, ADZ Building Services). Also to C+B Locksmiths for increasing the safety of the women by providing a new security system. We would also like to extend our thanks to Andrea Levey (Rooming House Program Team Leader) for all of her efforts throughout the upgrade process. We send a warm welcome to the women who will be making the property their home and wish them all the best in settling into their new apartments.

Left: SPCHG Rooming House Worker Donna with tenant Debbie in her new apartment.



Youth Housing Support Program

Our Youth Housing Support Program (YHSP) assists people aged 16 to 25 yrs who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. We are currently supporting 17 young people to remain connected with their family or other supports and community via our support in Transitional Housing Properties managed by Home Ground Housing or via outreach support.

The Youth Housing Support program was recently recommended to be "Accredited" in accordance with the Homelessness Assistance Service Standards (HASS). Program workers Brad, Bec, Sarah and Barbara would like to thank the clients that attended to chat with QICSA for their valuable feedback which assisted us in becoming a fully accredited program!

This Space: We are looking for contributions to the newsletter from anyone connected to the Youth Housing Support Program, so please get in touch with Bec, Brad or Jacqui with your ideas to name 'This Space.' We'll announce the winner in the next issue and you could win a \$40 JB HIFI voucher. We look forward to hearing your ideas by Friday October 23rd.

Bunnings New Tenants Kits



From Left: Kat (Bunnings), Barbara (SPCHG Youth Housing Program), Jacqui, Andrea, Bwalya (Bunnings) and tenant Kelly

SPCHG was approached by Bunnings Community Co-ordinator, Bwalya, looking for ways that Bunnings could support our efforts in housing people who were homeless. The Bunnings workers came to SPCHG to present the first New Tenant Kits to tenants. We received 30 kits in total which will be distributed to new tenants at time of sign up. A fundraising barbeque was also held in December 2008 at Port Melbourne Bunnings to raise money for SPCHG in order to provide new tenants with other basic household items such as pots, pans and cutlery. The event was a great success with over \$1500 being raised. Thanks to Bunnings for these New Tenant Kits and for their efforts in helping to enhance the experience of people coming into our properties.

News from the Manager...

Conversion of rooming houses to self-contained accommodation Extra Federal Government money for homelessness and community housing projects is available at moment. Given that flats and bedsit units with their own bathrooms and kitchens provide much better long term housing for people than rooming house rooms, we are keen to try to use this opportunity to get some of our housing converted. Stokes Street rooming house in Port Melbourne has recently had its conversion completed. We hope to have three more rooming houses done next year. Relocation must be sensitively maintained; this means the temporary relocation of approximately 30 tenants — a challenging exercise.

Father Bob's appointment

I have worked in social services in this area for over 25 years and have known Father Bob Maquire in the early years by reputation and in recent years through close collaboration on issues affecting local people who are poor and marginalised. Father Bob is a special person; a special priest. I believe that Father Bob has two very rare gifts, and he is all the more special for possessing both. The first is his capacity to relate to the battlers in our community in a manner that engenders trust and comfort. I have seen people gain strength and confidence from feeling that Bob is "on their side" and are comfortable and open talking to Bob where they are not with others from the helping professions. The second is his skill in being an advocate for the poor. There are no stronger advocates in Melbourne. Those of us concerned about systemic disadvantage and the growing gap between rich and poor all gain strength from his efforts and his voice. We at SPCHG are proud to have Father Bob as part of our South Melbourne community. Knowing him well and observing his work at close hand, I could not be more confident that he still has a huge amount to offer.

Janet Goodwin—Manager SPCHG

Celebrity Chef Ian Curley

Highly regarded celebrity chef Ian Curley from *The European* restaurant paid a visit to our Church St rooming house property Wednesday June 10. Ian and assistant chef Trent donated their time to put on a live cooking show for tenants, presenting onlookers with a practical and delicious frittata dish and salad. Tenants were encouraged to try the dish at home with any ingredients they may have laying around or left over. Ian aimed to provide participants with a simple and nutritious recipe, with his tasty samples going down very well with those who attended. The event was organized in conjunction with Michael Ali, VACRO, Port Phillip Community Group and SPCHG.

Right: Ian giving his presentation in the Church Street kitchen



Service User Forums

On Thursday August 6 we held our Annual Service User Forum for tenants at the newly renovated community space at South Melbourne Town Hall. All tenants were invited to come along and give their feedback about SPCHG, and to share any suggestions or ideas they may have. With about 40 tenants participating, we were able to gather a lot of really valuable feedback.

We would like to thank all the participants for their contribution and hope to see you again next year! We will be holding Forums for those connected to the Youth Housing Program and we will get in touch with youth service users about this. Your feedback is important for planning programs and activities that benefit you. Everyone who attends is paid \$20 for their time and participation.



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Get Involved

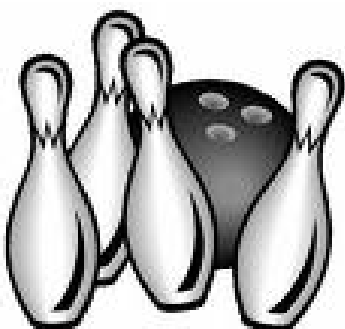
We know there's a lot of talented people out there in our properties so we would like for you to get involved. Do you have a short story, poem, art work that you'd like to share with us and our readers? We're looking for tenants to submit their works for publication in this newsletter. We would also be interested to hear from any tenants wanting to be involved in helping plan the next newsletter. We want to know what you will find useful relating to community life around South and Port Melbourne. We'd also love to hear your feedback and comments about this issue. Just get in touch with Jacqui or Sam.

Thankyou to Grill'd!

In a gesture of generosity that overwhelmed us, the Manager at "Grill'd" in Clarendon Street, South Melbourne, donated \$500 to our organisation to assist a young homeless mum with the costs associated with sending her child to a local school. We were blown away by this spur of the moment generosity made over the counter to our Youth Worker who had just told the story while waiting for his burger! "Grill'd" has also since offered a "free chips with every burger" offer to our tenants. We will be issuing letters of authorisation to all tenants soon for you to present at Grill'd to get your free chips with every burger you purchase!

Activities!

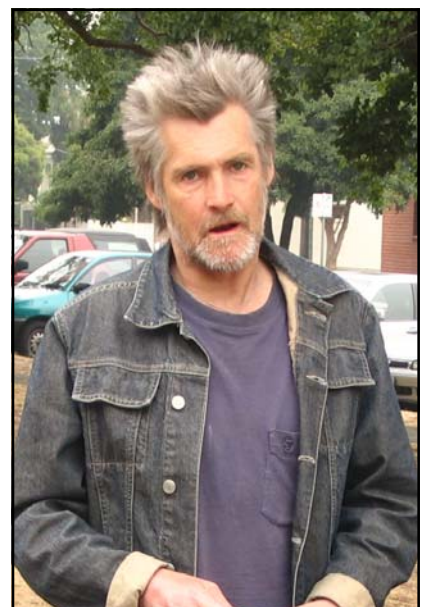
Here at SPCHG we want to give you all the opportunity to get involved in new activities. We will be holding an activities day for all tenants, and SPCHG will cover cost for everyone who participates. So we want to know what kind of activity would interest you. Perhaps a bowling day where we cover games and lunch? Or maybe you'd like to go see a movie? If you want to be a part of the fun and get to know us a bit better, as well as others in the community, be sure to tell us at the office which activity appeals to you. We will organise a fun social event for everyone wanting to get involved.



Goodbye to a Friend...

Peter was my best mate for longer than I can recall. He was, in later years, an 'insignificant', funny-looking little guy. He was awkward and clumsy but his good nature always afforded a smile. Peter was a very generous man and never did anyone a bad turn. He loved his mother, his children, his family and his friends. Everyone around South Melbourne knew him and liked him. His brilliant artistic talent speaks for itself. Unfortunately his health was never great and eventually things caught up with him. His passing has left a big hole in my heart and the hearts of many others. He will be fondly remembered...
Written by David Ewer

Peter Renshaw was born in Ballarat in 1950. he was a tenant with SPCHG for 8 years. Many tenants and staff at SPCHG knew, liked and respected Peter Renshaw. His passing is a big loss to many. He will be sadly missed and remembered fondly.



Pictured right: Peter Renshaw at SPCHG Christmas party in 2006