



New(town) Beginnings #9

Dear Neighbour,

One of the biggest priorities this year for our busy Aged Care team has been to re-establish interaction and contact among members of our previously well-attended multicultural and seniors social support groups.

Thankfully this year's Seniors Festival, which coincided with a long break in Coronavirus community transmission, provided the perfect opportunity to gather in a Covid-safe way allowing our older neighbours to come together after a frightening and isolating year for many.

Alongside our partners, Canterbury City Community Centre and Ethnic Community Services Cooperative, 95 guests were treated to an afternoon of socialising, laughing and learning over lunch at Marrickville's The Great Club.

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre also curated a photographic exhibition to highlight the activities that helped the elderly group members cope during last year. The visual collection tied in well with the 2021 Seniors' Festival theme of "It's In Our Nature", with some of the most popular activities showcased being socially distanced walking, gardening and cooking.

"I liked to see my photos at the event and many people said how nice the photos were – especially the one where I was making the pita bread. It made me feel good to see others enjoying my photos," said Irene, a member of NNC's Greek Social Support Group.

"It was also very nice to get out of my house and I could see that other people were also having a great time, which put everyone in a happy mood."

This was echoed by Dushanka, who has been the social support group coordinator for the Communities from Former Yugoslavia for over 30 years, "The day was buzzing with happy sounds of laughter, music and chatter. It was a pleasure to see the smiles on the faces of our seniors as they greeted and interacted with each other".

For many of our seniors it was the first time they had been out since the COVID-19 restrictions and the event was an opportunity to share with each other how they were impacted and dealt with the lockdown and pandemic.

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre

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“Events like these are a chance for older individuals, who often spend most of their time at home, to be seen and to participate in their community. Building and maintaining connections and a sense of belonging are the main objectives with all of our gatherings” says Rob who manages the Aged Care team.

“It is important to acknowledge and recognise the different cultural groups that are a part of the Inner West – the diversity and contributions that they make to our community is extremely significant,” adds Dushanka.

Guests were also given winter fire safety tips from Fire + Rescue NSW and presented with information about the COVID-19 vaccination along with other health-related information courtesy of Sydney Local Health District.

NNC now hosts five seniors’ social groups including: Communities from Former Yugoslavia, Greek, Portuguese, and a general community group for Inner West Seniors.

“We have between 90 – 100 older Australians attending a group hosted by Newtown Neighbourhood Centre every week. They will either meet at Newtown or go out on a monthly excursion”, explains Rob.

“We’re often asked about what children can do to support their elderly parents or neighbours and really it’s as simple as encouraging them to be part of a group or at least give it a go even if it means you may need to take them the first time”, highlights Marie Kostov, who has been coordinating the Greek group for over 30 years.

“We all need (human) interaction with people our own age”.

A big thanks to Inner West Council, NSW Seniors Festival and Multicultural NSW who funded the event and allowed our guests to have such a special day.

To learn more about our aged care groups, please visit our [website](#).

Mel
Community Strengthening Team

P.S – Next Thursday, June 10, Newtown Neighbourhood Centre is hosting a morning tea for the LOVE Club (Living Older, Visible, Engaged) Gathering from [ACON](#). This community activity is for people over the age of 55 who identify as LGBTQI and aims to create a safe, respectful and welcoming space for older members of our community. If you are interesting in attending, please contact Russ from ACON at rgluyas@acon.org.au or rob@newtowncentre.org.

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