

NEWTOWN

Neighbourhood Centre

New(town) Beginnings #4

Dear Neighbour

It's Neighbourhood Centre Week, which this year is all about "Bringing People Together". I like to think we're pretty good at doing that at Newtown Neighbourhood Centre, but it certainly wouldn't be possible without the dozen or so local residents who also happen to be some of our most dedicated volunteers.

It's time to celebrate some of these treasured neighbours who contribute to our community in enormous ways!

First off there's all-around powerhouse Jane, who played a key part in setting up and rolling out our Homeless Outreach Program, which in 18 months has grown to 30 local volunteers, thanks to her commitment and hard work. The Outreach volunteers last year were able to interact with 108 people who are rough sleeping on our streets – I'm still blown away and humbled by what Jane continues to achieve with the Outreachers.

She's one-of-a-kind in the best way possible and has contributed countless hours and an immeasurable amount to NNC. You don't get to meet many Jane's in your life!

Then there's another lovely Newtown resident Berna, who moved to Sydney a few years ago with her young family and Australian-born husband. I first met Berna when she contacted NNC about running kids yoga classes for free. Berna had recently moved to Newtown and wanted to contribute to her new community. She's been volunteering to run Family Yoga Classes on Saturday mornings at the centre ever since.

An experienced businesswoman, Berna had spent the last few years volunteering in refugee camps in Turkey, running yoga and mindfulness classes to many of the displaced children living in limbo. I can only imagine how she touched these children's lives at such a challenging time. Kindness, warmth and generosity oozes out of her.

Texan-born Cliff, a retired school teacher, is one of our longest standing volunteers and has been a Newtown resident for a couple of decades. I often see Cliff meandering around the streets of Newtown, chatting to locals, taking photos, scouring street libraries.

Twice a week he volunteers to teach English Classes to new Australians and has armed many of them with language skills and confidence.

One of my favourite stories is about a refugee from Iraq who Cliff helped with free private tuition so that he could enroll into an introductory TAFE course. Fast forward a few years and the student has since graduated with a Bachelor degree and now works in Canberra. A huge part of his success due to Cliff's generosity.

And then there's Enmore local, Steve. The newest member of our free generalist counselling service and your quintessential nice guy. By day he works in the fast paced world of film and TV, but after hours one of his main passions is for counselling. He's supported many clients through sometimes very treacherous waters, and they all adore him and his approachable, open nature.

These are just a few of the locals who enrich our centre and community. And I'm so proud to call them friends and colleagues.

Mel
Community Strengthening Team

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre

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