

Partnership with Mirvac benefits Perth's homeless

The outcomes following on from one of Australia's leading property developers nominating UnitingCare West as its WA charity of choice for 2009 have been tremendous, according to UnitingCare West's Wendy Palmer.

Wendy explains that UnitingCare West's Lincoln Street residential facility helps homeless men with problems such as drug addiction, alcoholism, relationship issues and mental health. The program assists people get back on their feet, ultimately equipping them to be self-sufficient in their own rental accommodation.

She explains that, as a result of the partnership with Mirvac WA, thousands of dollars will be poured into the residential house, resulting in increased capacity for an additional homeless person, and the upgrading of kitchen and bathroom facilities.

"We were keen to make the kitchen more functional because, as part of their program, each resident must prepare and clean up from their meals independently and

this is difficult for six men to do in a standard kitchen" explains Wendy

"Given the current financial climate, we are extremely impressed that Mirvac WA has kept its commitment to us and also to Perth's homeless by donating what amounts to over \$37,000 for the upgrade, in addition to a high level of in-house support."

As a result of Mirvac WA partnering with UnitingCare West, the Lincoln Street facility will go from five to six bedrooms, with modifications to be undertaken in the kitchen as well as a complete bathroom upgrade.

"With works due to start in a couple of weeks, this has been a very exciting project and we are extremely grateful to Mirvac for its support," adds Wendy.



New resource to facilitate understanding and reflection

A collaborative initiative involving the seven Uniting Church Schools, together with UnitingCare West and the Sangora Education Foundation, the resource booklet gives teachers information about key social issues faced by West Australians. It also presents ideas for how they can engage students in a range of activities which enables them to explore the social challenges faced within the community.

Wendy Palmer, UnitingCare West's Business Development Manager who has been responsible for the initiative, explains that Service Learning is a term used to describe the student's growth in social knowledge, social awareness and positive social values.

"The community stands to benefit from a student's Service Learning as they move on into adulthood, taking their sense of social justice and the knowledge and skills needed to influence social change with them," she said.

"This outcome can be better achieved where organisations like UnitingCare West support teachers with industry expertise, enabling them to enrich the quality of the Service Learning experiences they present to their students.

"The resource also enables teachers to understand how they can access UnitingCare West's support to help students connect deeply with issues such as social inclusion, teenage parenthood, homelessness and mental illness."



UnitingCare West launched a new teacher's resource at the start of May

The initiative currently remains a pilot program within Uniting Church Schools, however, a wider distribution of the resource may take place in the future.

"Essentially this resource has been produced with input from Uniting Church schools and we hope that it will be a useful resource to teachers who want to influence empathy and understanding in each new generation of citizens," Wendy adds.

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Central Office: 16 Sunbury Road, Victoria Park WA 6100
Postal Address: GPO Box B74, Perth WA 6838
Ph: 1300 663 298 Fax: 1300 663 528
E: admin@unitingcarewest.org.au www.unitingcarewest.org.au

Lending a helping hand

As an organisation, UnitingCare West was deeply shocked and saddened to learn of the devastation caused by the Victorian bushfires.

And despite being located many thousands of kilometres from the disaster area, the organisation was quick to volunteer help and support – which eventuated in two UnitingCare West staff travelling to Victoria to assist sister organisation Uniting Care Cutting Edge in its bid to get aid to local people.

Mission Development Leader Robert Watson explains that when the CEO at Uniting Care Cutting Edge was relocated to the area to co-ordinate an emergency response, both himself and colleague Lesley Wilkinson were deployed over a five week period to ensure the smooth-running of the agency in the absence of its full time CEO.

“This was seen as a very practical way in which we could help fellow Victorians in their time of need,” says Robert. “Essentially we were able to stand in for Rowena whilst she organised the disaster response plan.”



Robert Watson, along with colleague Lesley Wilkinson travelled to Victoria to help those in need.

“My initial reaction was ‘how on earth could anyone have survived this’,” he says. “However, amidst the devastation there were a number of areas that had been left untouched, which demonstrated in many ways the fickleness of the fire.

As well as offering the support in the form of human resources, UnitingCare West also coordinated a response with the Good Samaritans to collect food and clothing.

“It was really pleasing to be able to do something to help and I think one good thing which we were all struck by was the resilience of the human spirit,” Robert adds.

Leaving a lasting gift

UnitingCare West is set to roll out a new bequest program which will make it simpler for people to leave a lasting gift that will assist Western Australian’s facing disadvantage and hardship.

As part of the program, interested people can register to attend a small group session about UnitingCare West, which outlines the organisation’s services.

Wendy Palmer, Business Development Manager, said UnitingCare West was extremely thankful to trustee and investment services group Perpetual for its assistance in developing the program.

“The assistance we have already received from Perpetual in developing and delivering information sessions for

donors who want to understand more about our services and how they can leave a lasting legacy has been extremely valuable,” she said.

Anyone interested in receiving further information about the program, which will be officially launched later this year, should contact 1300 663 298 and ask for a bequest brochure to be posted out to them.



UnitingCare West’s Bequest brochure can be requested by contacting 1300 663 298

From the CEO’s desk

On behalf of the UnitingCare West team, I would like to thank all of our supporters for their ongoing commitment to our work in the community. As you will undoubtedly be aware, 2009 has been extremely challenging so far for many people in our community. The state’s period of prosperity has become a distant memory and we are finding that many of the people who struggled during our boom years are now doubly affected by the economic downturn.

To date this year, the demands for our services, particularly in the areas of homelessness, drug addiction and mental health, have never been greater, and we are reliant more than ever on our supporters to help us help others in the community.

On that note, I sincerely thank Australia’s leading builders, Mirvac, for the generosity it has shown UnitingCare West this year. We very much appreciate the company’s assistance in helping us to make improvements to our Lincoln Street facility.

Donor support is indeed crucial to the sustainability of our organisation and, as you will see in this newsletter, we have recently launched our new bequest program. Leaving a gift to UnitingCare West is a way of continuing to make a difference to the lives of others in the future, and we hope our many supporters will consider remembering UnitingCare West in their will.

As an organisation, we are dedicated to assisting those members of the community who are struggling most. We thank you for your continued and ongoing support.

I look forward to bringing you more news and information in our spring edition.

Chris Hall, Chief Executive Officer



UnitingCare West welcomes funding for new mental health program

New funding received under the Federal Government’s Personal Helpers and Mentors Program (PHAM) will enable UnitingCare West to provide support for people recovering from a severe mental illness in a number of Perth’s northern suburbs.

Executive Manager of Mental Health and Disability Services Fran Tilley explains that this is the first time UnitingCare West has been funded to provide a mental health support service of this kind.

“This is a very exciting project for us because it represents best practice in helping people to overcome social isolation

and reconnect with their community,” says Fran.

“Previously we have provided housing services for people living with mental illness, but to add a support service of this kind is fantastic because this gives us great synergy between the services we offer.”

Under the PHAM Program, support is provided to people by helping them to better manage their daily activities like housekeeping, budgeting and using public transport, as well as working with them to reconnect to their community.

The program also assists with helping people get relationships with family and friends back on track, and connecting them with other services such as drug and alcohol, housing or medical support.

“We are currently recruiting for the service and have already contracted a number of staff,” adds Fran. “We’re very pleased that we can begin to offer this important support service to more than 150 people in the community.”

