

## **Community and Cultural Development**

Laurie Strathdee and Miriam Bevis are in their second year sharing the CCDW position. Laurie took 5 months leave without pay to travel and Miriam has now taken 6 months maternity leave. This year CCD has continued many areas of its work but also has developed into new areas as we seek to respond to new community issues and opportunities.

## **Children and Families**

KNC has been involved in a number of programs in the community that have engaged us with local families, particularly from North Katoomba. .

### **“Money Matters” Workshops**

Many families and individuals in our community are experiencing financial pressures. So KNC applied for and received funds from CDSE to run a series of local workshops on financial skills entitled “Money Matters”. Miriam then organized training in the financial education package called “Money Minded” for workers and volunteers at KNC and across the Blue Mountains region.

Miriam worked with volunteers Jo Rogers and Anne O’Grady to run a series of workshops at Katoomba Nth Hub. This was kicked off with a two session program called “Planning a Budget Family Holiday”. The group was helped to think through the personal and practical issues of family holidays – helping each participant make plans that suit their family circumstances. Then another series called “Stretching the Family Dollar”. Over the four weeks the group explored their attitudes around money, shared practical tips to save money in the home, discussed credit, banking and spending traps. Each week concluded with a healthy and delicious budget lunch – with the final workshop featuring a cooking demonstration by Dave Clark from 2 Front Doors Café. Evaluation from this course was very positive with the attendees demonstrating changed attitudes and behaviour as well as increased skills and confidence around financial issues. There was a great interest for the group to continue when Miriam returns.

### **Hand in Hand Child and Youth Mentoring Program**

Wimlah Women’s Refuge approached KNC to partner with them on developing a mentoring program for children and young people who have been affected by domestic violence. This idea was in response to requests by mothers who had come through the refuge. Throughout the year Megan (Wimlah) and Miriam (KNC) have worked together to research mentoring programs working with children and youth. As there is no program available in this area, the Hand in Hand Mentoring program has been developed as a pilot program for the Blue Mountains. This is a community based, one on one approach. Much work has gone into developing the selection and screening processes, risk management, training and operating procedures and a detailed budget. Several grant proposals were submitted and we were successful in receiving a grant of \$10 000 from the Myer Foundation. In the coming year we will launch the program, recruit and train volunteers and make the matches to begin the mentoring.

### **Transition to High School Program**

The Transition to High School program is organized by Maggie Kuypers from MYST (Mountains Youth Services Team). KNC was able to help out again by participating in the drama workshops and on the two day programs held at Katoomba High.

The Drama program team included workers from MYST, ACRC, KNC and Katoomba High School. We worked over 4 sessions with 50 year 5/6 students at Katoomba Nth Public. It was good to be able to support the students in their preparation to High School and to also be a familiar face at both their orientation days at Katoomba High. At the orientation day it was also good to catch up with last year's year 6 students who we worked with in their transition to High School and also some of the Indigenous Students who had worked on the 2007 Aboriginal Mural project.

### **Triple P (Positive Parenting Program)**

KNC is now able to offer the Positive Parenting training for to parents and caregivers. This parenting course can be held as a seminar series over three sessions or a small group course over eight session (five face to face sessions and three phone support sessions). Miriam has undergone the training and accreditation and in May and June held the first group at the Nth Katoomba Hub. The group filled up quickly with eleven parents attending. Miriam co-facilitated this group with Tristan Rolfe from the Brighter Futures Program at DOCS. Through running the Triple P program we are able to connect with families in our local area and link these families up with each other and services.

### **Winter Magic.**

Laurie again worked with MOCS to provide children's activities during the main Festival. In particular Laurie created the castle entrance to the children's stage.

### **Sustainability**

One of the new directions that came out of our planning day in 2008 was an increased focus on Sustainability. In particular, in line with KNC's mission we are working to ensure that disadvantaged people are included in decision making and programs around Sustainability.

### **Transition Blue Mountains**

Miriam initially supported this group to get established and then Laurie continued this work. This group aims to develop a local plan to Transition to a low carbon economy. With the onset of Global Warming and Peak Oil the future will need to become less reliant on fossil fuels and more sustainable. Transition Blue Mountains is starting to plan now for this future and KNC is there to ensure that disadvantaged people are involved in the planning and implementation of this plan.

To get things started Laurie supported Transition BM to:

- Launch a video of Ro Morrow retrofitting her house to make it more sustainable and cheaper to run. Over 100 people packed the Gearin Hotel for the film and the wide-ranging discussion hosted by Nigel Bell.
- Hold a gathering of local sustainability groups to discuss ways of working together on a long term plan. Over 50 people attended from 30 groups in the mountains.

### **Retrofitting Workshops**

Laurie was then the key person in running retrofitting workshops targeting renters and people on low incomes to show how to cheaply reduce their energy use and therefore their Greenhouse Gas Emissions and their energy bills. BMCC granted \$500 for 2 workshops of 15 people though there was lots of interest in more workshops. We also trained 3 BMCC staff to run the workshops and council is considering including it in their Sustainability Education program. The participants learnt practical skills, including stopping drafts, making cheap plastic double-glazing and making and fitting pelmets. They also learnt about various grants available for households.

### **Blue Mountains Community Exchange Scheme**

Laurie also took over working with this group from Miriam and has been working with this group to re-establish a LETS-like scheme in the Mountains. A Community Exchange Scheme is an agreement within a community to use a local currency as a means of payment. In the BMCES the local currency is called an "EMU". This promotes local and sustainable businesses and services. This new scheme is mostly web-based but KNC is supporting it to ensure disadvantaged people without access to the Web at home can get access at the centre. It is nearly up and running and will be launched later this year.

### **Revitalising the Centre**

#### **Making KNC a child and family friendly centre**

Children are often brought along to groups at the centre with their parents or caregivers as they have no other child care option. So Laurie organised a Playroom adjoining the meeting room to make it safer and more enjoyable for children while their parents are meeting. He also organised child-proof gates at the front so that young children are no longer at risk of running onto the road or driveway.

### **Groups and Activities at KNC**

Bookings for the meeting room have increased in the last year so much that Saturday is the only day with times available most weeks. There is a great variety of groups using the centre from: African Drumming, Yoga and Meditation, AA groups, Breastfeeding Association, Nepean Area Disability Organisation, and the TAFE Computer Classes.

In particular, the TAFE Outreach Free Computer classes are extremely popular, we have managed to fill the class from our waiting list from last year's class and the waiting list continues to grow, indicating the community interest in the program. Since BM Family Support moved out of No. 10 KNC also has partial access to a Counseling Room in this building. This has enabled Credit Line Central West to provide Financial and Gambling Counseling and Relationship Australia to provide Relationship Counseling each week.

### **Promotion**

To lift the profile of KNC and make people aware of our services Laurie organized a new sign out the front, new banners, a new brochure, an improved website with listing of all events on at KNC and a regular column in The Echo, the new local community newspaper. Laurie also organised:

### **Neighbourhood Centre Week, 11-17<sup>th</sup> May, 2009**

Katoomba Neighbourhood Centre celebrated with a week of community events:

- On Monday was “Counting Pennies” a workshop to rediscover the skills our parents and grandparents used to get through tough times in the past. This was run by Pauline Collins from CreditLine Central West
- On Tuesday was a Cross Cultural Communication workshop, run by Jo Rogers and Maureen Nash, for volunteers who are called upon to deal with a wide range of people from different cultures.
- On Wednesday Laurie and Dianne were “On the Street” outside KMart to tell people about what we are doing and what they can get involved in.
- And on Thursday KNC launched the new Children’s Playroom and new Safe and Sustainable Garden with a special community lunch. Over 50 adults and children attended and there was great excitement when the playroom was opened.

### **Blue Fringe Arts**

KNC has continued our involvement in organising the two Blue Fringe Arts Events, the Art Exhibition and the Poetry and Literature Evening. These events continue to be a positive way for people living with mental health issues to celebrate their creativity and connect with other people in the community. Blue Fringe Arts was acknowledged this year for our contribution by receiving a Mental Health Matters award in the Arts Category from the Mental Health Coordinating Council of NSW.

The 2008 Blue Fringe Art Exhibition and awards day was very successful. We were pleased to have the Hon. Barbara Perry MP (Minister Assisting the Minister of Health, Mental Health) open the Blue Fringe Arts Awards Day. We again had an increase in both the number and quality of artworks submitted. Postcards of the works were sold this year which allowed people to support Blue Fringe Arts who would otherwise be unable to afford to. Funds raised helped cover additional costs in printing a new brochure and bookmarks and magnets to promote the website. The website has been a very useful and we are extremely grateful to Kevin Hardwick for volunteering for its creation and upkeep .

The 2009 Blue Fringe Arts Literature Awards and Evening was held at the Blue Mountains City Council Chambers. Again there was a wonderful collection of poems and short stories from the Blue Mountains, Western Sydney and beyond. These were combined into a book thanks to the hard volunteer work of Col and Pat Jennings. The evening was well attended even though we competed with terrible weather. We have received many positive comments from participants and others who attended. The ongoing workshops provided by Varuna Writers House and these Blue Fringe events have built up a genuine community of people living with mental illness who support each other. This sense of belonging and warmth was strongly felt on the evening.

### **Local Government Elections**

During 2008 Blue Mountains City Council held thier local council elections. KNC worked with Elizabeth Evatt Community Legal Centre and Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre to organise a “Meet the Candidates” event. The event was divided into two parts. The first section was an opportunity for the Candidates to learn about the community sector. We presented them with a paper about the services offered and the impact the sector has in the Blue Mountains along with case studies that demonstrated the stories of the people who have been helped through these services. The second section was open to the public for them to

hear from the candidates and ask questions. We had a good turn out and positive atmosphere at both events.

### **Men's Issues**

Laurie is very active in promoting support in the mountains for men. He is on the Men's Emergency Accommodation Project committee which provides short term lodgings in local hotels for homeless men. He is also in the organizing group for Blokefest, a celebration of the positive roles of men, which will be held in September. He also continues to support the Katoomba Men's Shed through fundraising and grant writing.

Laurie and Miriam would like to thank the members of the community we have worked with who are passionate about creating a vibrant and supportive neighbourhood. We would also like to thank the Management Committee and Dianne Jacobus for their support throughout the year.