

COMMUNITY VISITORS SCHEME

Friends for older people in aged care facilities.

“Each friend represents a world in us, a world possibly not born until they arrive, and it is only by this meeting that a new world is born” Anais Nin

The Community Visitors Scheme (CVS) aims to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life for residents living in aged care facilities. CVS is an Australian Government initiative funded through the Department of Health and Ageing. CVS in the Upper Mountains supports volunteer visitors who are individually matched with residents in 5 local aged care facilities. The volunteer makes a commitment to visit at least once per fortnight but many visit weekly because they enjoy these visits. Linking visitors with residents who are lonely or isolated has led to the development of many special friendships both for the resident and the visitor.

Combined Service Committee (With Katoomba Volunteer Home Visitors): Mary Chan, Dianne Jacobus, Keith Davies, Nellie Campbell and Marlene Churn

CVS Co-ordinator

Maureen Nash

Community Visitors

CVS is funded for 25 visitors in the Upper Mountains. Currently there are 27 visitors who are registered with the service. Since August 2008 we have recruited 4 new visitors who are now visiting residents. Currently there are 2 visitors on leave and 6 have left the service.

The visitors who have been with CVS for:

More than 5 years

Mary Chan, Walter Kryger, Betty Evers, Helen Nelson-Rash, Jeremy Leather, Klaus-Dieter Spasic, Julie Wyer, Peter Aboud,

More than 2 years

Ava Emdin, Jenny Rich, Antoni Cornado-Cornet, Barbara Bessant, Don Newbury

More than 1 year

Gary Judd, Anne Dillon, Beverley Baker, Douglas Baker, Maria Evans, Shirley Ostoros, Keith Davies.

New Visitors

Denis Compston, Wendy Gilmore, Carol Morrell, Imelda Yannatos

Visitors who retired during the year

Thanks to Dorothy Hucker, Diana Smith, Robert Bellingham, Katherine Costello, Abby Rosen and Heather Jansch for the difference you have made in the lives of the residents you have visited.

Funding

CVS received \$29,750 in funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

The Community Visitors Scheme is now mainly administered at the Federal level with little State involvement. There has been a slight decline in visitor numbers which has been due to 6 people leaving due to ill health and personal circumstances. As is common with CVS, if there is a decline in visitor volunteers the situation does turn around and the numbers do pick up again

Highlights and Achievements

- The Book Circle piloted in early 2008 at Morven Gardens Aged Care has been a great success with a core group of residents attending weekly on a Monday morning. Other residents including those on respite attend occasionally. Keith Davies does a wonderful job of facilitating the group. He is also a visitor at Morven Gardens as well as being on our service committee and KNC Management Committee. We thank you Keith for the wonderful contribution you have made across KNC.
- This year our theme for the Seniors day event was 'Around the World in 80 Ways' celebrating the cultural diversity in our community. Yet again we had full house at the Carrington with entertainment from local performers including Anne Sett (looks very familiar!) as the hostess along with Captain John Hockney. Two of the aged care facilities attended and had a fun time. A great flight was had by all.
- Together with Katoomba Volunteer Home Visitors we celebrated our end of year event at the Paragon inviting volunteers to enjoy delicious food and great company. Those who attended shared their own experiences of working as a volunteer
- Providing training for volunteers is essential. This year CVS in joint partnership with Morven Gardens ran training on 'Grief and Loss' for volunteers in November 2008. In May 2009 I co-facilitated with Jo Rogers a workshop on 'Cross Cultural Communication' In June 2009 trainer Margaret Elder facilitated a session on 'Accidental Counselling'. All sessions were well attended.
- Every 3 months I approach businesses in the area and invite them to support our service by giving a gift which one volunteer wins each time. These gifts have included dinner vouchers, movie tickets and fruit baskets. I would like to thank The Edge, The Carrington, Todarellos, and the Katoomba Golf Club. This initiative enables CVS to link into the business community to raise awareness and gain support for this worthwhile service.

Satisfaction of the Service

CVS has continued to develop excellent relations with the aged care facilities and the visitors provide a wonderful service. Just over half of our visitors have been with the service for more than 2 years, some since 2001 and 10 of them have been visiting the resident they were originally matched with.

Some comments from the visitors in relation to their role as a CVS visitor are as follows:
“Wonderful, good for both visitor and resident, great initiative by government, rewarding, makes you appreciate what you do have, satisfying, excellent staff, enjoyable- have been with the resident for 5 years and have a close relationship, really enjoy my visits”.

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Future Plans

- Promote CVS in the community through local organisations and local media.
- Continue to provide training and support to volunteer visitors.
- Continue to be involved in and support Seniors week.
- Maintain positive links with aged care facility staff and residents.

I would like to thank all the visitors who give of their time and who make a huge difference for many of the residents in the aged care facilities. Thankyou to the staff at the aged care facilities for their ongoing support of CVS. Thanks to our CVS Service Committee, KNC Management Committee, support from staff and other volunteers. I would like to thank Jill Hodgson from the Katoomba Op Shop for her generous donation which went towards our volunteer training program. Blue Mountains Council has also been generous in their support of volunteers.

**“And in the end, it’s not the years in your life that count. It’s the life in your years”
Abraham Lincoln**

Maureen Nash, CVS Coordinator