

Heartbeat Victoria Council Inc.

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#### BOARD

President – Robyn Fennell

Secretary – Louise Zambello

Treasurer – Alex Huang

Asst. Treasurer – Arthur Fennell

Editor – Adrian Cloonan

Lynda Andrews, Dr. Rudy Lopes,  
Ted Williams, Dr. Ojas Mehta

VISION: to be an excellent and well recognized peer support organisation that assists in improving the emotional, social and physical wellbeing of people living with heart disease, or a heart condition.

MISSION: to advise and promote associated groups in conducting peer support activities for people living with heart disease to ensure they have a better understanding of the impact of their heart disease or condition; how they might seek ongoing services and support in their local area; and how to raise funds to improve cardiac services.

## “Heartbeat Happenings” September 2017



### President's Reflection by Robyn Fennell

As we move into spring we are reminded of new growth. The seasons' cycle with four distinct weather types, governs the environment and our actions. Spring is often thought of as the season of awakening and growth and a time to “Spring Clean” and start afresh. That fresh start may need to be about seeking a balance in life with all our individual responsibilities, commitments and activities.

You may be a person with heart disease, a carer or an individual with a desire to give back to your community and have chosen Heartbeat Victoria as your champion cause, but does your life have balance? Are you perhaps over committed?

Many organisations (including ours) would not survive if it wasn't for a band of dedicated volunteers, but it is important that volunteers assess the time spent on their volunteer pursuits as part of a life balance exercise.

### The many recognised benefits gained by volunteering

- Volunteers are happier, healthier and sleep better than those who don't volunteer!

- 96% of volunteers say that it “makes people happier”.
- 95% of volunteers say that volunteering “feels good”.
- Volunteering results in a “helper's high”, a powerful physical and emotional feeling experienced when directly helping others.
- Sustained volunteering is associated with better mental health.
- Altruistic emotions and behaviours are associated with greater well-being, health and longevity.
- A strong correlation exists between the well-being, happiness, health and longevity of people who are emotionally kind and compassionate in their charitable helping activities. The experience of helping others provides meaning, a sense of self-worth, a social role and health enhancement.
- Volunteers contribute \$200 billion to the Australian economy annually.

*[Reference - Information Sheet, Volunteering Australia, 16 April 2015]*

### With all these identified benefits of volunteering why do we need to review our commitment to volunteering?

Heartbeat Victoria peer support groups are run by volunteer Committees of Management. However,

members should not expect the same members to volunteer in positions year after year. Any pressure placed on a volunteer to stay in a position may well bring on the possibility that continuing to volunteer becomes a dreaded chore. How can you currently support these members in their positions ensuring their volunteering is a positive experience?

The Heartbeat Victoria Board is aware of the difficulties in obtaining volunteers to take on office bearing positions. This issue will be addressed at the Board's Strategic Plan review to be held on 14 Oct.

**These actions should be considered to support Heartbeat Committees of Management volunteers**

- Utilise the various Manuals with templates for e.g. the Heart to Heart Manual, the Heartbeat Victoria Policy and Procedures Manual complete with templates. Why "reinvent the wheel" when it's all there for members to use?
- Consider two members sharing a position.
- Offer and/or encourage others to take a position when someone is on holidays.
- Share the volunteering roles e.g. allocate a member to organise social activities, become a Welfare Officer, assist with Fundraising, write or add to

a Newsletter, act as Meeter and Greeter for meetings, organise walks, help distribute tea and coffee at meetings and assist with kitchen clean-up duties, offer to be a Media Manager.

- Advertise for volunteers with specific skills to support your Affiliate or Branch.
- Ask the Heartbeat Victoria Board for assistance.
- Is your group closely linked to your local Health Service who can help with speakers and other assistance?
- Use your Community House to assist in computer skills and other services.

It goes without saying, we need volunteers! Not-for-profit organisations depend on donations, sponsors, grants and philanthropic support, but equally depend on individuals giving time and skills and putting themselves forward. I am asking each member to ensure they have that life balance. It's important that as many as members as possible lend a hand to our dedicated team of volunteers organising our Heartbeat Victoria support groups. Volunteering is an incredibly rewarding journey and can be a pleasant pastime, but it is vital that it comes with the feel-good factor, be enjoyable and rewarding. It must fit well with your other activities and wellbeing.

Which leads me to extend a very big thankyou to all our Heartbeat Victoria volunteers.

**New Branch at Knox**

Board member, Lynda Andrews, is co-ordinating the re-establishment of Knox Branch.

Lynda has established links with cardiac staff at Knox Private, Wantirna Health and Angliss Health, representatives from EACH Knox Community Health, Volunteers for Knox and Knox Leisure Work. She has been receiving positive encouragement.

A dinner and information night will be held 6pm Thurs 26 October 2017 at Mulgrave Country Club. Guest speaker (Robyn Fennell – President of Heartbeat Victoria) will talk about the importance and benefits of peer support groups.

Following the presentation, a committee will be formed and a monthly calendar of events agreed upon.

Pres. Robyn Fennell presents Ted Williams with a Life Membership medal at the recent AGM.



## Healthy Living

(by Heartbeat Victoria Board member Dr. Ojas Mehta)



In this first article within a series of articles, I want to discuss what it means to be healthy. We speak of living and feeling healthy, but what does that really mean to us?

I gave this a hard think and have come to terms with the idea that being healthy is a way of life. It encompasses the care and attention of three facets of human condition that directly interact with the external world: the physical Body, the Mind (emotional and perceptive mind) and the Intellect (rational mind). To me, being healthy is a state that allows my body to function optimally and free from disabling disease, the mind to maintain serenity even in the face of environmental turmoil, and my intellect to continue to build knowledge and experiences. This is the

kind of “health” that I strive for.

I am interested to hear what being healthy means to you.

What role does genetics play in health? Why is it that two people with similar lifestyles experience disease differently? Genes play an incredibly large part in how we develop an experience disease but they do not dictate this. Rather, our genetics determine our risk on the development of various diseases. Disease is very much an interaction between environmental and genetic factors, with some conditions affected more by the former than the latter and vice versa. Occasionally, I have had patients who use genetics to explain a poorly controlled disease state and while genetics play a role, I at times worry that it can allow for complacency to a poor lifestyle, blaming genetics for whatever course the disease takes. Ultimately, we must focus our efforts on areas that we can modify easily and it is much more useful to discuss and address these modifiable factors.

Now that I have described health very broadly, I want to discuss the role that medicine plays. It is important to understand that what we have come to regard as Western Medicine focuses on the prevention and management of disease. Individually, there is

still a gap to fill between “managing the disease” and “living healthily”. This can be addressed through various strategies within our lifestyles that affect the body and the mind. These include our choice of diet, physical activity, occupation, social interaction, sleep, mindfulness and meditation.

As a doctor, my expertise lies largely within the realms of Western Medicine. I have touched on these ancillary aspects of health because I would like to emphasise that there is much within your control to address your health and living healthily does not end with “following doctor’s orders” but only begins with that. As I will be writing largely on cardiovascular medicine in the upcoming series of articles, I do not want the importance of addressing the other components of health to be forgotten.

If you feel that my broad definition of being healthy applies to you, I encourage you to think about what strategies you have in place to address each of the components of living healthily: Body, Mind and Intellect.

*Dr Ojas Mehta has completed training in Internal Medicine and will commence Advanced Training in Cardiology from 2018.*

## Goulburn Valley news

Mr. Trevor Saunders CEO of Goulburn Valley Health, was appointed in February 2017.



Trevor spoke at the recent Heartbeat Vic, GV Branch AGM, and provided insight into his life having been brought up in the Northern Territory and lived in rural and remote communities. He outlined his areas of study and work positions prior to taking the CEO role at GVH.

Trevor now lives in Shepparton and is dedicated to providing excellent services to the community.

## New Branch - Sunbury

With the support of the Board of Management and some local volunteers, Louise Zambello (our Board Secretary) has been working on the establishment of the Heartbeat Victoria Sunbury Branch. Having lived in and around the Sunbury/Macedon Ranges area

for well over 35 years, Louise recognised there was nothing in the way of a peer support group offering social, motivational and educational activities to those who have suffered a heart event, their families and/or carers.

Contact has been made with Sunbury Community Health, local medical practices and consultant cardiologists and the response received has been overwhelmingly positive.

An Information Night regarding the establishment of a Sunbury Branch is set for Wed. 25 October 2017, 6pm at the Goonawarra Community Centre, Dornoch Avenue, Sunbury.

Robyn Fennell, Board of Management President, will speak on the importance and benefits of peer support following a cardiac event. Following the presentation, Louise will take everyone through the operational aspects of establishing the Branch and settle on a date for an Inaugural Meeting within a couple of weeks of the Information Night.

The delivery of invitations is well under way to groups including Heart Foundation walking groups, retirement villages, Senior Citizens, U3A, the View Club, Red Cross, Legacy, the Hume Sunbury Men's Shed and the CWA.

## Heartbeat Victoria raffle!

That's right – and tickets (again sponsored by Nuttlelex) are selling fast.

1st prize - \$5000 Helloworld Travel, Shepparton travel voucher.

2<sup>nd</sup> prize – Onkaparinga/Jason queen bedding pack x 2 – value \$1480

3<sup>rd</sup> prize – Samsonite luggage plus RACV accommodation package plus Helloworld Travel, Shepparton voucher – value \$1000

4<sup>th</sup> prize – selection of gift cards – value \$600

5<sup>th</sup> prize – mixed hamper of goods – value \$400

Tickets have been issued to each Branch and Affiliate – but if you want more just contact our Asst. Treasurer Arthur Fennell via our email address or on our mobile number.

Raffle drawn 1pm 30 Nov 2017 – all winners notified.

Results by 5 Dec. 2017 on [www.heartbeatvictoria.org.au](http://www.heartbeatvictoria.org.au)

## Update from AGM

At the 30 Oct. AGM our Treasurer Danielle Coppini did not stand for re-election due to work and young family commitments. We thank her for her services.

Board member Alex Huang has agreed to take on the Treasurer role when he returns from overseas. All other Board members were returned.