

Say "hello" to Knox Woodies *by Harry Deschepper*

For almost thirty years the Knox and District Woodworkers' Club has been the Ferntree Gully region's focal point for men and women who have a common interest in any aspect of woodwork.

The club, formerly known as the Ferntree Gully Woodworkers' Club, was set up in 1988 under the guidance of first president, Alf Stephens. In that first year meetings were held in makeshift premises at the local tech school. Following lobbying by club members, the local Knox City Council made one bay of a storage facility available as a permanent workshop. Over the following years members built two additional workshops and a modern clubroom on the site. While all machinery use is limited to the workshops, the clubroom houses a dozen workbenches where members can hone their hand-tool skills. The workshops have 2 table saws, 4 band saws, a jointer and a thicknesser, 2 router tables, pedestal drills, nine lathes in the turning room, and much more and all machines are connected to a state of the art dust extraction system ensuring that dust from woodworking activities is kept to an absolute minimum.

Membership continues to grow and peaked at 206 last year. Age varies with 75% of members aged 45 to 85. We are a very inclusive group and age, gender, occupation or football team preferences are no barrier to membership. Currently we have about 30 female members, most of whom are very active.

Primarily the club exists to offer a comfortable place and good equipment to practice our woodcraft. The club is open daily except Sunday, and most weekday evenings. Each session has an emphasis on a particular interest group but members can work on any project at any time. The social aspect of the club is also very important and we have regular family functions.

In August the club holds its "Be In It" weekend, an event that gives all members a chance to showcase the projects they have worked on in the previous 12 months, and generally we have up to a couple of hundred entries. Wood turning always attracts large entry numbers and other popular categories include chopping and cheese boards, small furniture, rustic and recycled items and small boxes. Last year's winner was a carved traditional rocking horse.

Each year the club participates in two weekend festivals organised by the Knox City Council. These events allow the club to showcase itself to the general public, and give young children the chance to have a hands-on experience assembling a small wooden toy kit. It is pleasing when you see older children who made their kits in previous years bringing their younger siblings for their chance to sand, glue, nail or screw together a helicopter, or toolbox, a dolls cradle or perhaps a wooden teddy bear or robot.



Knox Festival



Toys for Christmas

A strong focus of the club is to produce a large number of toys which can be distributed to the less fortunate members of our community at Christmas. In 2016 the club donated over 600 toys to various aid agencies in the district. This year, we intend to make more gifts aimed at adults. Pop's Shed in Croydon recently donated 50 pen kits, and our members are now busily turning wood blanks to complete these gifts.

Just last February, the club hosted Swiss professional wood turner Matthias Bachofen Beer who demonstrated his skills and talked about his career and craft. In Australia for a short visit, we were honoured that he gave us an evening of his time. We used this opportunity to set up a very successful in-house live feed to our Facebook page, so that members could view the event from their lounge room if unable to attend. (We even had a positive response from a member holidaying in his caravan on the NSW coast.) This was a first for the club and follows the recent addition of a club website.

The club meets at 7.30 pm on the first Wednesday of each month, and further information can be found on our website at www.knoxwoodies.org.au.

Sri Lankan Seniors Connect *by Cassie Honzak*

Villa Maria Catholic Homes' (VMCH) innovative Multicultural Wellness Centre (MWC) in Wantirna South has expanded its reach to help connect more socially isolated seniors.

The centre has gone from strength to strength since opening 17 months ago; building its Chinese and Filipino social groups to 80 and 16 members respectively and recently forming a Sri Lankan group for people aged over 65 of Sri Lankan/Sinhalese-speaking background.

"Being socially isolated can reduce life expectancy and overall health, both physically and emotionally," said VMCH Day Centre Coordinator Lynne Cahir.

"While there are many groups for people of Italian and Greek backgrounds, we found there was not much support for the Sri Lankan community. Language can also be a barrier. Most of the members do speak English but it still may be a bit of a challenge so we always have a staff member who speaks Sinhalese and we encourage members to chat in their native language."

Members meet weekly to socialise, undertake cooking classes, exercise classes, go on community

outings and listen to guest speakers.

Corrine Kelaart, 66, migrated to Australia in 1994. Since 2003, she has experienced racial discrimination and depression. She lives alone and struggles with missing her two children and grandchildren in Sri Lanka.

"Everybody (in the group) is so nice and they make me feel very welcome," Corrine said. "Every Monday I get up extra early, I don't even need to set an alarm, and get ready to come. I would be very lonely if I missed this."

Corrine encouraged more CALD seniors to come along.

"There might be a lot of people like me out there facing a lot of problems who don't have a place to go to. It's been a help for me."

Fellow group member Rita Padmaperuma, who also receives a Home Care Package from VMCH, described it as a "nice community".

"We have a chit chat and a cup of tea, do some chair exercises, have lunch and play some games. I like listening to other people's problems and helping if I can."



(L-R) Corrine, Vijay, VMCH staff member Karen (behind), Punya and Phyllis (front)

The MWC is open to seniors aged 65 years and over from CALD backgrounds, living in Melbourne's eastern metro region. A daily attendance fee includes meals and activities. Fee reduction is available for anyone who is experiencing financial difficulty.

For more information about the MWC call Rani Wong on (03) 9800 7255.