

the alkira sun

Christmas Edition



Issue 6
December 2011



Festival Reaching for the Sky



The Alkira Sky Festival on Sunday 26th February will be a beauty!

Every week there are new ideas and activities that will make the Festival a true family event.

From the time people arrive at Lilydale there will be fun and activities for everyone – from face painting, jumping castles and clowns, food and wine stalls, and displays of aircraft to climb over, have photos with, and even see aircraft engines in pieces to see how they work! A highlight of our ground entertainment will be the internationally

acclaimed Australian Welsh Male Choir performing in the hangar.

In the air there will of course be the parachute jumps, joy flights and acrobatic flights for the more daring – all at reduced prices and Alkira will benefit. Our latest aerial addition is a mini air show at lunchtime including exhibitions by a vintage jet fighter and a bi-plane.

We are indebted to our many business partners, Rotary and the Freemasons who are again helping us to promote and manage the day.

Bookings are open for all aerial activities, and with only three months to go those jumping will need to gather their sponsors. So don't delay!

This is an occasion not to be missed, with all proceeds going to Alkira. Please put the date in your diary, tell your family and friends and be sure to bring them along as well – they won't thank you if they miss this great occasion.

For more information contact Elizabeth Curran on 0423 869 429 or Bob Slater on 0418 317 057.

Its a small world...



From our partnership with Melbourne Olympic Parks Trust, and through them an introduction to Treasury Wines Estate, we were introduced to Coldstream Hills Winery to seek support for the Sky Festival. To our surprise the General Manager, Jason Steele, is the grandson of Mary Steele who was made an Alkira Life Governor in 1956. Jason is now right behind the Sky Festival with an offer of a licensed wine tasting tent and sales of his prestigious product at very attractive prices on the day.

As if that wasn't enough of a coincidence, coming back from an Airfield site visit our travelling organisers in search of Festival participants, stopped at a roadside Hot Dog Van to see what they were like. The hot dogs were very good, so we asked the vendor for contact details to see if we could book them for our Sky Festival. It turns out the owner's sister, Julie Hackett attended Alkira for many years until she passed away in the late 1980's. Now the owner, Maree Walker, is right behind us not only with her hot dog van, but also her ice cream van.

Everyone has connections.... who will be the next to find one to assist our Sky festival? You never know until you ask!

EDITORIAL

A CHRISTMAS WISH FROM THE CEO

2011 has been an incredibly busy and exciting year for Alkira with a great deal accomplished by the organisation as a whole and by members of the Alkira Community on an individual basis.

It is timely then that I thank everyone from the people who use our services, their families and carers, to Alkira's dedicated staff and wonderful band of volunteers, through to our Board of Management. Together, I believe, we

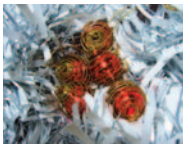
make Alkira the warm and caring place it is; where all of us come together as a community to 'reach for the stars'.

May I wish you, your family and friends a very happy and safe Christmas and a prosperous New Year!

Thank you!

Ray Cranwell

Chief Executive Officer



Cup Day Celebrations Gracefield Drive



Around 30 people from most of Alkira's Residential Homes visited the residents at Gracefield Drive for Melbourne Cup Day celebrations which included a bbq lunch and Melbourne Cup Sweeps organised by Nan and Nicoletta.

Everyone brought some food to share and Michael took charge of the sausages on the bbq which were very tasty. Patricia looked the part, donning a burgundy coloured fascinator. With three sweeps running in the Melbourne Cup, there were winners and place-

getters everywhere – even the horse that ran last was paying dividends in our sweeps.

It was a wonderful day, enjoyed by everyone and a great opportunity for people in our Residential Services to get together



Quality Certification Audit at Alkira

We are very happy to advise that Health & Disability Auditing Australia Pty Ltd (HDAA), headed by David Hamer, has completed the quality audit in relation to the Victorian Disability Standards and the Quality Framework. **Certification of the Standards for Disability Services in Victoria (SDSV)** has been granted from 17th November 2011.

This Certificate covers a period of three years. Between certification audits there will be at least one surveillance audit, to follow up on any identified improvements and to ensure Alkira continues to provide quality services.

Of the 86 Industry Standard indicators and 111 Life Area indicators, Alkira only had 23 minor non-conformities requiring improvement. There are no major non-conformities. Of these 23, 5 need to be addressed within 3 months and the others before the next audit.

This is a fantastic outcome for Alkira for our first Certification Audit!

We would like to thank the Alkira community for your involvement in our quality journey.

The audit is based on an evaluation of sampled services and service users, along with documented evidence of improvements we have identified in our Action Plan for implementation. It is important for Alkira not to become complacent based on this result and to continue to support continuous improvement.

The Audit for Certification Report along with the accompanying Evident Reports provides a detailed summary of the audit findings, achievements, improvements and observations. If anyone would like to read these reports a copy is available for viewing at each Alkira site, or can be accessed on our website at www.alkira.org.au, or a copy can be emailed to you upon request by contacting Administration staff on 03 9890 1365 or emailing info@alkira.org.au.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the audit process, please contact Ray Cranwell - Chief Executive Officer or Karen Morton - Quality & Systems Officer, on 03 9890 1365.

Communication Working Group

A team of 10 people, made up of people who use our services, parents, Board members and staff, formed a working party in April 2011 to determine how best to identify and improve communications to our stakeholders, as detailed in Alkira's strategic plan Towards 2013.

Their focus was on the major stakeholders of Alkira (people who access our services and their families and carers, Alkira staff & volunteers, companies who provide work for the Work Skills program, and companies who use the ShredAbility service) and feedback was obtained through Communication Surveys. Whilst we only received 154 surveys, which is approximately 1/4 of the 589 surveys sent out, there was sufficient information to work with.

A Report was presented to Alkira Management and the Board in October that details communication methods, identified gaps and suggested improvements. If anyone would like to view this report please contact Karen Morton, Quality & Systems Officer, on 03 9890 1365.

Thank you to everyone who provided feedback and the members who spent many hours working through the surveys, discussing gaps and possible improvements. This will help us to improve our communications.



Lesley Anne Race

3rd July 1942

19th October 2011

Lesley came to Alkira in 1958 as a girl of sixteen. Her late parents, Alf and Lilian Race, gave their lives to working for Alkira to improve the world not just for their daughter but for others with similar challenges facing them.

Her mother Lilian always wanted Lesley to reach her potential and enjoy life like the rest of us. Lil took the time to teach Lesley to read and this was a great pleasure for Lesley throughout her entire life. She always loved reading the Herald Sun, in particular keeping up to date with what great shows were coming to town that she could go and see. Live musicals were a great love of Lesley's and she attended many of what Melbourne had to offer, always being able to recall the cast in each show. If it wasn't live music, it really didn't matter to Lesley as she would spend hours in her room listening to her favourite CDs, bands such as the Seekers and ABBA, and singers John Farnham and Judith Durham – Lesley loved them all.

The support from Lesley's family throughout her entire life helped make what can be a difficult change for many people, into a smooth transition when Lesley moved from the family home into Alkira's Shady Grove. Lesley settled in quickly and was very independent and continued with her love of reading and music.

Like all of us Lesley had her idiosyncrasies which endeared her to all who knew her: Her love of the word 'gorgeous'. Everything was 'gorgeous', from ice-cream to a butterfly, a postcard to a place, a person to a plate of fried rice - you name it, if Lesley liked it - the word was 'gorgeous'. Her affectionate cuddles: Lesley was a very tactile person who loved nothing more than giving or receiving a hug. She would offer a hug to anyone who spoke kindly to her in what she deemed to be a 'pleasant tone'. Most outstanding, though, was Lesley's love of butterflies. She had a huge collection of butterfly related

items, including stickers, posters, bags, drinking mugs and t-shirts, bedding, photo albums, books and ornaments - all decorated with butterfly motifs. Maybe this is why people would say 'Lesley is like a butterfly'; or maybe it is the other way around 'Lesley was like a butterfly', hence her love of anything 'butterflies'.

There is no doubt Lesley's greatest love was her family. Her late parents, Lilian and Alf, her brother Neil, sister-in-law Elaine, her three nieces Lucy, Felicity and Emma, plus her great-nephews and great-nieces clearly took delight in her and her in them. She loved nothing more than everyone coming together for a meal be it a BBQ or a visit to the local Chinese for her favourite cuisine.

As her family will, we at Alkira will also miss the beautiful, unique woman known as Lesley Anne Race.



David Roddick

15th July 1953

—
22nd October 2011

David Roddick was born to Noel and May Roddick in 1953, just one year before Alkira began. In the five decades plus that ensued David and Alkira would grow in parallel together, sharing many of the same milestones. David's loving parents and his three older sisters adored David as he did them.

David started at Alkira in 1960 when he was seven. Moving through the different areas of Alkira, David endeared himself to the many people he worked and lived with. After moving from the family home, David lived in Alkira's Churchill Street Hostel, and then became a 'founding resident' of Alkira's Shady Grove until his health was in decline and he moved to Strathdon Nursing Home in recent times.

David was a clever man with a great sense of humour. You would often find him having a play on words with you, and giggling to himself as you realised. He took great pleasure in out witting

you, and he loved it when you carried on with the play on words.

From a young age David enjoyed writing names and numbers. He would copy family and friend's names, addresses, telephone numbers and birth dates into his note books, which meant he knew and remembered everyone's birthday. He memorised post codes – if you needed one, you could ask him and he would always be correct.

Anyone who knew David would attest to the fact that he treasured his family. Any other activities or outings on offer would pale into insignificance if there was a family function or outing to be had. An avid Hawthorn Football Club supporter David could sing a rousing rendition of the Hawthorn Football Club theme song and 'Up There Cazaly'. Regular trips to the football with his brother-in-law Graeme were a particular highlight. He loved all

outings that included a 'cappuccino' and 'cake' and looked forward to all social occasions, particularly meals with family and friends. He enjoyed his many years participating in Melbourne's Inner East Special Olympics and loved his holidays with friends through Ozmates. David was also keenly involved in Church activities and if an opportunity presented itself he would enjoy the comfort of his room with his Book of Prayer.

David's charming and gentle personality, his impeccable manners, his deep consideration of others and his outstanding sense of humour all made him easy to befriend. He had a natural ability to form great relationships with the people in his life.

David was one of 'Life's True Gentlemen' and we will all miss him!



Foundation Update

Willandra Auxiliaries Honoured as Foundation Founding Members

Earlier this year the Alkira Board of Management determined that everyone who made a commitment of some kind to the value of \$5,000 or more by 31st December 2011 would be recognised in perpetuity as Founding Members.

Significant donors during the past few years, mainly through bequests, whose contributions have remained in Alkira's Accumulated General Fund, have had their donations transferred into the Alkira Foundation and are

recognised as Founding Members also. This includes the Parents and Friends Auxiliary.

The Willandra Auxiliary and the Willandra Juniors Auxiliary have also over the years been a tower of strength to Alkira operations, and although they have been less active over the past few years their legacy of sustained support and encouragement remains no less strong. In recognition of the two Auxiliaries' long standing support including substantial financial contributions over many years, the Alkira Board of Management has

offered both Auxiliaries the lasting recognition of Honorary Founding Membership. Members of the Auxiliaries will be formally thanked over the next few weeks by members of Alkira's Board of Management.

On a more general note, we are receiving steady enquiries regarding the Foundation, and urge others to contact Bob Slater on either 9890 1365 or 0418 317 057 to discuss your thoughts on how you may be able to support this very worthwhile and necessary initiative.



A Little Christmas Humour Best Ever Christmas Cake Recipe

Ingredients

1 cup water
2 cups dried fruit
1 cup brown sugar
1 cup each SR & plain flour
1 cup sugar
1 tsp baking soda
lemon juice
1 bottle whisky
4 large eggs
1 tsp salt
nuts

Method

Sample whisky to check for quality. Take large bowl. Check whisky again to make sure it is of the highest quality. Pour 1 level cup and drink. Repeat.

Turn on electric mixer; beat one cup of butter in a large fluffy bowl. Add 1 teaspoon of sugar and beat again.

Make sure whisky is still OK. Cry another cup. Turn on the mixerer. Break two legs and add to the bowl and chuck in the cup of dried flour. Mix the turner on. If the dried fruit gets stuck in the beaterers, pry loose with a drewsdriver. Sample the whisky to verify its tonsisticity.

Next sift 2 cups of salt, or something. Who cares? Check whisky.

Now sift the lemon juice and strain your nuts. Add 1 tablespoon of sugar or flour, if you like. Add something. Whatever you can find. Grease the oven. Turn the cake 350 degrees. Don't forget to beat off the turner. Throw the bowl out the window. Check the whisky again and go to bed.



Yassah Zarwue

FOCUS ON

Our Volunteers

Courage Doesn't Always Roar

The rest of that saying goes '... sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day that says I'll try again tomorrow.' Yassah Zarwue, a member of Alkira's volunteer workforce, knows the truth of this better than most.

As a young pre-teen girl in Liberia, Yassah was a primary care-giver to her disabled grandmother - both her legs were paralysed as the result of a fall. There are very few facilities and little assistive equipment for disabled people in Liberia. Wheelchairs are rare and ramps are almost non-existent, so Yassah's grandmother had to be carried. Some days, if no-one strong enough was available, her grandmother didn't move from the same place. Very early Yassah developed a strong sense that disabled people deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.

When civil war tore Liberia apart (1989 – 1996) it tore Yassah's family apart too. In the turmoil and chaos she became separated from her husband and her parents as they all fled from the violence. Finally, she reached the border; heavily pregnant, carrying her 5 month old child in her arms, shooing her other 2 youngsters along, and desperate for rest. The crossing point was crowded, noisy and frantic ... and on the ground was a crying, abandoned baby. Against the advice of those around her, she scooped it up as she made her crossing and in that moment gained a son. His parents have never been located.

Once she reached safety, Yassah became a volunteer with Medicins

Sans Frontiers and for year after year, through Red Cross International, tried to find her family. Eventually she received news that her mother was alive; she had managed to escape and find her way to Australia. It was a great moment when, in 2006, they spoke by phone for the first time in 8 years.

Now, Yassah lives in Richmond. Her 5 children are with her (aged 24, 21, 14, 13 & 7); her mother and sister live nearby. She has recently completed a 4 month student placement at Alkira and is now a volunteer. She supports a person in his new job at Video Ezy, is another person's dancing partner every 2nd Friday and personally assists someone else.

When asked "Why do you want to work with disabled persons, and Alkira in particular?" Yassah beams. Her eyes sparkle, she gives a cheeky chuckle, and in a rich bluesy voice says "Because the clients. They are all so beautiful. They are smiling and happy and I feel so good being with them. They teach me so much. I love them."

[Footnote: In 2012 Alkira will need more volunteers than ever before. We have over 20 young people from the Momentum program requiring various levels of support as they move out into the community for work experience. If you know anyone who might be interested in assisting as a volunteer please encourage them to make an enquiry.]

“The Sunshine Boy, (Unlocking the Autistic Mind) A Mother’s Courage - Talking back to Autism”.



At the Aklira Parents and Carers Get-together on August 15th this DVD was shown. It tells the very moving and inspiring story of a family from Iceland who has a son called Keli, aged 10 yrs, who is non verbal and who has severe Autism.

Keli’s mother, Margret Ericsdottir, travels to the USA and the UK to find different treatments and possible solutions for her son, deciding to make a film about her experiences to assist other families with a newly diagnosed child.

Temple Grandin who is ‘America’s Most Famous Autistic’ gives a lot of insight into the understanding of how the brain works within a person with Autism. Temple has now outgrown her Autism and is currently a Professor of Animal Science at Colorado University and the author of several books.

Temple quotes “Autism is a disorder of the interconnections between different brain systems. Some people appear to be low functioning, not appearing to talk, they can learn to read and type to communicate – these are on a different brain circuit than talking is.”

Dr Simon Baron Cohen, Professor of Developmental Psycho-Pathology,

from the University of Cambridge in the UK suggests that there is a possible connection between Autism and engineering. He surveyed 1000 families looking at the occupations of grandfathers or fathers of children with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder). His studies found there was an increased proportion of engineers amongst the fathers and grandfathers. Engineering is all about understanding systems, this is one possibility – a talent at understanding systems and a very good attention to detail, understanding patterns and how things work.

One of the families Margret met in the USA has a 14 year old boy with ASD called Mitch Helt. The family calls him ‘The Stock Broker’ – he is non verbal and communicates by an alphabet board spelling out each letter to be understood. Mitch understands how the stock market works and when his mother entered him in a stocks contest, he got to the top 4% and his stocks were up 23%. This was amazing!

This documentary is well worth watching with some of the best up to date research and treatments on Autism currently available. The DVD is available at JB HI FI for \$19.95.

New Faces



Bethany Salisbury
Relief Program & Support Instructor



Mari Dursun
Residential Support Worker

Alkira Events

December 2011

Saturday 10th Supper Dance 7:00pm – 10:00pm
Thursday 22nd Alkira T&SS Closes for Christmas Service Users finish at 12:00noon

January 2012

Wednesday 18th Alkira T&SS Re-opens for 2012
Thursday 26th Alkira T&SS Closed for Australia Day

February 2012

Monday 6th Alkira T&SS Closed for Service Development Day
Monday 13th Parents & Friends Social Group Chat 'n' Chew 10.30am – 11.30am
Sunday 26th Alkira Sky Festival – Lilydale

March 2012

Monday 5th Alkira T&SS Closed for Service Development Day
Monday 12th Alkira T&SS Closed – Labour Day Public Holiday
Monday 19th Parents & Friends Social Group Chat 'n' Chew 10.30am – 11.30am