



Edmund Rice Community & Refugee Services

Mid-year Newsletter- August 2012



Welcome to the first Edmund Rice Community & Refugee Services (ERCRC) newsletter for 2012. ERCRC is a ministry of the Christian Brothers that provides free homework support, tuition and a range of social services to students of a disadvantaged or refugee background in the Brimbank area of Melbourne.

Where are we now? Program Coordinator's update by Dane Stammers

Well it has certainly been a big year so far for ERCRC. Most would know that we kicked off 2012 with some interesting and exciting changes under our belt; the primary & secondary students now attend different Homework Clubs on different days, an extra night has been added for secondary/tertiary students (Tuesdays) and we have introduced a 5 week tutoring model for our peer (high school aged) tutors to list a few.

There are so many people who have contributed to these changes and to the great work of ERCRC this year. This overwhelming amount of support has enabled us to provide almost 2000 hours of free homework support and tuition to students in the St Albans area.

We have also provided invaluable experiences to leagues of young adult volunteers, who attend the program and gain a better understanding of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. They also engage with issues of social justice and what it means to be empowered through community service.

There have been 39 new student enrolments this year in the Primary Homework Club alone. Students and their siblings cycle through the program, and the centre continues to grow and expand through the halls of the Errington Community Centre.

The parents often tell us that they are happy with what the Homework club is doing for their children. We take this as a welcome and humbling reminder that our wonderful volunteers are still meeting the community's need for supplementary education and English learning support.

As well as receiving some very encouraging feedback from the community, we are also witnessing first hand changes in students' level of engagement with learning. We have noticed improvements not only in the academic fields, but also in their social skills and level of confidence and self-esteem.

We hope that through reading this newsletter you will get an insiders view into the first half of our year. Inside you will find short stories and reflections as told by those who were there, on the ground, at the Homework Club coalface so to speak. Enjoy!

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*PEGS tutor, Nick and students;
Gog, Yak, Deng and Sunday*

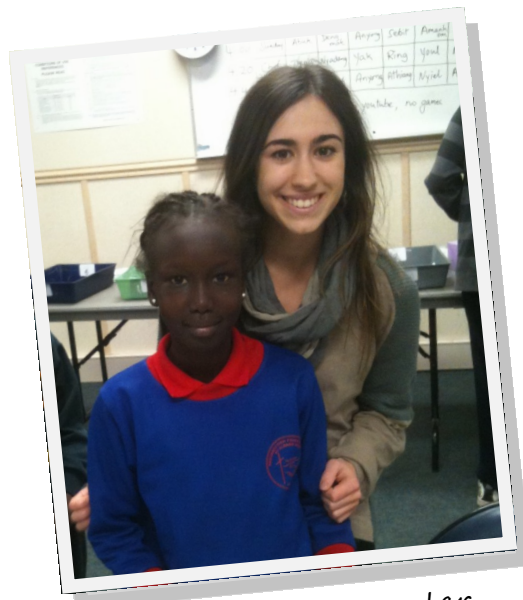
Tutor Profile: Laura Campanaro

I first attended Homework Club at the beginning of Year 11 in 2010 and I love attending as I'm a strong believer in community involvement.

Every week at Homework Club is a success! This year I've had a great time helping a Grade 3 student learn to read the time and a Grade 6 student to memorize all of her times tables so that she

is prepared for high school.

I'm currently studying Arts as an undergraduate degree at the University of Melbourne and hope to be accepted into Law for my postgraduate studies. One place that I will continue to be surrounded by students long, long after my experience at University, will be at Homework Club!



Laura and her regular student Nyaluak

Easter Camp Reflection by Tim Cronin

I always have a moment on camp that really defines the whole week. On the last day we were rolling out of Amberley to drop the kids to their parents and I had the privilege of being asked to take a young man with me in the car as he'd had a run in with a few other boys. This young man was feeling pretty down when we drove off and he just couldn't be sent home feeling like this. The two other leaders I had in the car with me were visibly exhausted, almost asleep, but did that stop them?

With the music pumping as loud as it could we drove off towards Sunshine cracking terrible jokes, singing Rihanna's latest hits and talking

about the fun had and friends made on camp. A young man who had got into the car with a frown, jumped out when we arrived, shouting "THAT WAS THE BEST EVER!" With one last bad pun he ran off to his mother laughing hysterically. As I looked around I saw all the other kids doing the same, running with great big smiles to their families after what was a brilliant week.

That really just summed up the week of camp and its leaders where you'd struggle to find a kid who wasn't smiling or laughing. If there wasn't a smile on a kid's face, three seconds later countless leaders would be right there trying to make them laugh like their life depended on it. Nothing could stop this week being one to be remembered for both kids and leaders.



Tim and Deng on camp at Amberley



Student spotlight on Athiang Ajang, grade 4



The first time I went to homework centre I was really scared I didn't know anyone and I went back home the second time.

I promised my Dad not to cry when I go there again because I need help with my homework and no one would help me at home so when I went there I did my homework with a little help and I still do the same now.

Sometimes I still feel scared when my friends are not there to help me but that doesn't matter because there are other people to help so I'm happy.

Scienceworks and IMAX Excursion

by Nick Borell, year 11 tutor from St Pat's Ballarat

On the 29th of July, twenty four students from grades 4-6 went on an excursion for the day. There was a fair bit of preparation that went into making the day-trip happen. Fourteen volunteers came along as buddies, some of whom were St Pat's and Loreto students. We headed to science works in the morning and then split up into smaller groups to tackle the exhibits.

All of the kids had great fun with the activities and the volunteers really embraced the spirit of the day. At around twelve thirty we had a nice provided lunch and jumped on the bus and went into Melbourne's CBD to go to the IMAX theatre, where we watched a 3D film called 'To the Arctic'. The movie was great and the kids loved it.

The best thing I got out of the day was seeing how happy all the kids were. All the kids at St Albans' homework club are amazing! I can't wait to organise another event soon!



The energised kids and exhausted buddies after a day of fun

Yay for Homework Club! An interview with past student and current tutor Yay Mayoum

Why do you attend homework club?

I like to help young people with their homework, and talking to them about school is a fun experience for me. And also the course that I'm doing requires me to do work placement somewhere that engages with young people. So I now volunteer both as part of my work placement and by personal choice.

For what period of time did you attend homework club and how did it assist you when you were young?

I started attending homework club when I was in high school from year 7 until year 8 and during that period of

time my English wasn't very good. So I used to get help with science, maths, and English subjects. Regardless of the homework I needed help with, there was always a tutor who understood the subject and could explain it to me.

How does it feel to have come full circle (going from student to tutor)?

It's a great feeling, knowing you have been there before and now you are helping those young people. It feels like I'm returning the favour. It makes you realise that all the volunteers that give up their free time to help, are passionate about what they are doing. Overall it is a privilege to give back to

my community.

What are your future plans for work and/or study?

At the moment I'm studying youth Work at Victoria University and my plan is to get into the social science side of youth work. My goal is to get my degree and maybe work around Australia for a few years and then go overseas and open a youth centre in South Sudan.

That is one of my main objectives, to actually help young people in South Sudan by educating the local people on the importance of adequate resources, education, and health on a young person's development

School segment

By Brendan Douglas of St Bernard's College (SBC), Essendon

Being involved at ERCRS has been a stimulating experience for all who have participated this year. Year 10 students at SBC need to commit to two hours of community service once a week per term. Tutoring at the homework club has been a very popular way of meeting this commitment with the boys expressing how much they enjoy working closely with the children. We know that the experiences we get working with the children are as meaningful for the tutors as they are for the children being tutored. Significant change has occurred at ERCRS over the years and it would seem that the relationship between SBC and ERCRS is one that will blossom well into the future.

Thank you...

To our adult volunteers, our students, their families and the great staff at ERCRS, thank you for all of your hard work and unbridled energy!

To the *Treacy Centre, Parkville* and the ERCRS board for their overwhelming financial, administrative and nurturing support of our mission.

To the passionate students and staff members from the following tutor-providing schools;

St Patrick's College, Ballarat - Ave Maria College, Essendon - St Bernard's College, Essendon

St Columba's College, Essendon - Parade College, Bundoora - St Kevin's College, Toorak

Loreto College, Ballarat - Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School, Essendon and Keilor East

A special thanks goes out to *Minter Ellison lawyers*, the *Australian Communities Foundation* on behalf of the *Stan Willis Trust* and the *Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs* for their generous funding support.

St Patricks College, St Bernard's College, Caroline Chisholm Catholic College and Holy Eucharist Primary have also contributed generous monetary donations to our social and educational programs.

We would also like to extend our thanks to Mary Cahill of the *St Albans/ Keilor Schools Network* and the wonderful staff at the *Centre for Multicultural Youth, Edmund Rice Camps Victoria, Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service*, the *Brimbank City Council*, the *Amberley Centre* and *Catholic Regional College St Albans* for their financial, administrative and incredible in-kind support.

"Both research and wisdom show us that regardless of the adversity they face, if a child can develop and maintain a positive attachment to school, and gain an enthusiasm for learning they will do so much better in their lives."

(Child Safety Commissioner, Vic 2007) Courtesy of the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre.

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