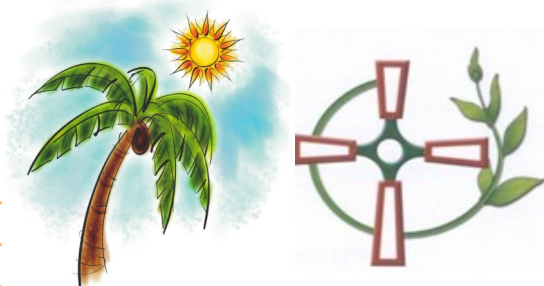




Summer Newsletter February 2013



Welcome to the first Edmund Rice Community & Refugee Services (ERCRS) newsletter for 2013. ERCRS 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.

Director's update by Frank Perkins

As we at Edmund Rice Community & Refugee Services (ERCRS) prepare to begin another year of program services and activities, it is beneficial for all at ERCRS (staff, volunteers and students) to reflect on the journey that we have been on during 2012.

One of the key values proclaimed by Edmund Rice Ministries is that of Liberation. This is expressed in different ways, but is usually interpreted as empowering people (particularly those who lack opportunities) to use the gifts they possess so that each can develop into the best person he or she can be. This may involve walking beside others for part of their journey, listening to their story, building trusting relationships and sharing experiences.

I am constantly amazed, and often inspired, by the positive example of the many volunteers who join us at ERCRS to give their time and their energy to help improve the educational advancement of the students (primary, secondary and tertiary) who avail of the tutoring opportunities offered. The friendliness, patience and diligence of the tutors really helps make each learning session a very productive and joyful interaction for the students. It is a well-worn truism to state that we learn by example, but I firmly believe that it is now ever more important that young people today do have the kind of positive role modelling that I have seen exhibited by people such as the tutors at ERCRS and Edmund Rice Camp leaders.

The Christmas season has at its core a celebration of joy and optimism that our Creator cares compassionately about us humans and our earth, proclaiming among other things, that we have a value in our own right. It is fortuitous that we welcome in a New Year so soon after Christmas, when the positive spirit of the season can 'kick start' us to renew our efforts to be the best we can, both individually and collectively.

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Above: Astede and her tutor, Tenealle

"The friendliness, patience and diligence of the tutors really helps make each learning session a very productive and joyful interaction for the students"

Right:
Chol
and his
tutor,
Mark



Goodbye, farewell

A message from Terry Giles

"My first encounter with the Centre was in 2002. It was situated in an upstairs room in Alfreda Street St. Albans and refugees from Afghanistan and some Vietnamese children attended. The Afghans moved to other parts of Melbourne and then the Sudanese families arrived in large numbers. We then moved over to the old Uniting Church hall and at times accommodated up to 120 primary, secondary students and tutors from the schools in a session. Often the hall was cramped and very noisy so tutoring was quite a

challenge. Finally conditions vastly improved with the move to Errington Community Centre in 2010. Two significant changes have improved outcomes. The first was the introduction of laptop computers to help with homework and project research and second was the separation of the primary and secondary students to attend on different days. As with all tutors, I was passionate about helping the kids and I hope my involvement has brought some positive outcomes into the lives of those whom I have helped over the years."



Br. Terry with Cholesterol Mok, who started attending homework club when he was in grade five. Now in year 11 at St. Kevin's College, Cholesterol is a tutor at the Centre. Cholesterol's siblings Mok, Deng and Anger have also attended the Centre.

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank Terry for seven inspirational years of dedicated service to the ERCRS community.

Dinner celebrations

by Jed Guinto

2012 had reached an end. Proud of all the hard work and dedication that we tutors and staff at Edmund Rice had put in for the year, a celebration was in order!

The venue, The Abyssinian in Kensington; the food, plentiful and vibrant; the company, full of life! In almost no time at all, food was coming left and right and the smells and fragrances were so overwhelming that there was nothing much you could do but close your eyes and enjoy the moment through your nose.

As the night drew to a close we all received letters from students we tutored or were involved with throughout the year. These letters contained the kindest words from both the Edmund Rice staff and the kids, mine was made by a Grade 5 student named Yout. The message inside went something like, "thank you for taking the time to help me this year!"

I think that as teachers, tutors, educators, etc, we may sometimes feel that the 2 hours or so we spend with the kids each week may not be helping them as much as they need. But after receiving words of thanks, I realized that it is these few hours you dedicate to them that makes the biggest difference in the long run. When we spend time with these kids, we are not just teaching them maths or science, we are also mentoring them as positive role models. They get an insight into a world where they can be whatever and whoever they choose to be, if they work hard enough.

In my own view, the greatest gift you can bestow to a child is not the ability to perform science, English, maths or sports, but to encourage their self-belief and strengthen it for their own personal journey through life. This I believe is the main objective of Edmund Rice, of Frank and of Dane. Safe to say, the kids weren't the only ones with mentors this year.

Bikes 4 Kids

By Frank Perkins

Variety the Children's Charity, is a volunteer philanthropic organisation that supports needy children around Australia so that they may have access to recreational and leisure opportunities. One activity that Variety regularly sponsors is the Bikes4Kids program. In association with Kmart, the men and women involved in Variety fundraise in order that children may have the pleasure of owning a bicycle.

This year, two students who are enrolled in the ERCRS Homework Club, were among those children chosen to receive a new bike from Variety.

They were Achel Arop from grade 3 and Anger Mok from grade 4 (pictured)

An enjoyable day's outing resulted in two happy new bike owners. Many thanks to Variety for continuing to find tangible ways of bringing joy into children's lives.



Activity Day report

by Dane Stammers

The 28th November marked the last day of Homework Club for 2012. As usual, close to 100 students, siblings, parents and volunteers turned up on the day to celebrate the year and participate in various games and activities.

Students who had been working hard all year enjoyed the opportunity to put homework aside and just have some fun. Volunteers from tutoring and Edmund Rice Camps were present as well, running soccer games, face painting and Christmas card making for the kids.

The finale was a magic show by Magic Tony. His act, and it's preponderance of doves and rabbits, wowed the onlookers to the point of hysteria. After the madness died down everyone indulged in some delicious African and international cuisines brought by parents and volunteers. Mmmm hmm a great way to cap off a great year!



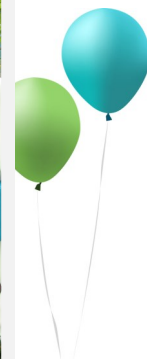
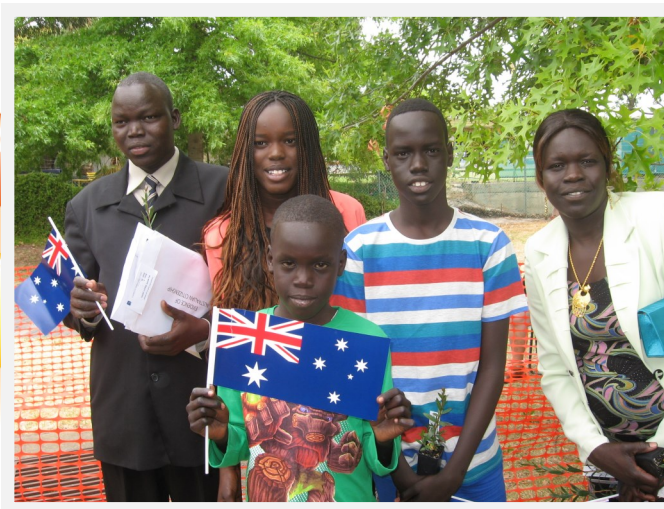
MSAC Excursion

by Richard Walsh, ERCRS staff member

On a cool Sunday morning, 24 grade 3 and 4 students, regular members of our Homework Club, gathered at the Errington Centre with 12 staff and buddies for some introductory activities before jumping into mini-buses for the journey to the Melbourne Sports & Aquatics Centre (MSAC). Once inside the warm and bustling swimming pool area, young and old put on bathers and blue shirts. Students and their older buddies set off to experience relaxing in the warm water, washing down the water slide, bobbing in the wave pool, massages from the water jets, trying a few strokes in the small lap pools and experimenting with noodles, flippers and balls. All survived (with a few coughs and splutters) and welcomed lunch and drinks. It was a playful and most enjoyable way to celebrate the end of term with new friends.



MSAC fun – girls on the left, boys on the right



Congratulations to the Dhieu family; Ateer, Adau, Kuol, Chol and Mary receiving their Australian citizenship on Australia day, 2013

Family Camp Reflection

by Asunta Deng

Family Camp was one of the best breaks I have ever had since I came to Australia. It was full of fun, great activities for children and an amazing family time! A few of the things we did included going to the farm, the fun playground, going to the shops for some morning tea and last but not least we went sight-seeing to the waterfall. I am looking forward to yet another family camp and I can't wait!



Asunta (left) and some campers having fun

Thank you...

To all the volunteers, students and families that make up the ERCRS community, who are the foundation on which we walk, thank you for your tremendous passion and hard work.

To the *Treacy Centre, Parkville* and the ERCRS board for their incredible financial, administrative and nurturing support.

To the teachers and organisers from tutor-providing schools for their enthusiasm and hard work.

To Terry Giles for seven years of humble and dedicated service to the ERCRS community.

To Secondbite for their generous donations of surplus fruit boxes to the sessions.

To Nafeesa Khan, a Saturday tutor, for her tireless and patient efforts in designing our new logo, and to Phil Stammers of MAP Creative for his design contributions and artwork.

A special ongoing thanks goes out to *Minter Ellison Lawyers* and the *Australian Communities Foundation* (on behalf of the *Stan Willis Trust*) for their generous funding support. Also to St Patricks College, St Bernard's College, Caroline Chisholm Catholic College and Holy Eucharist Primary for their contributions to our social and educational programs.

We would also like to extend our thanks to and the 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 in-kind support.

If you are interested in becoming a tutor to primary, secondary or tertiary students or an excursion buddy with ERCRS, just drop us a line and find out when the next info session is happening!



A pair playing chess after finishing their work

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Australian Communities Foundation
On behalf of the Stan Willis Trust



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