

Primary entry #16: Mayfield West Demonstration School



"Learning For Life"

THE VIEW



"Learning For Life"

...from the school on the side of the hill



WORKING TOGETHER: Abdon Fidow, 10, and Nicole Keogh, 10, planting a sandpaper fig in the community garden at Wickham.

— Picture by Callum Roope

A place to learn and grow

By ALEX POBJOY, CALLUM ROOPE and JARROD SINGLE

THE Fig Tree Community Garden is a place where everyone is welcome.

Hidden away in Albert Street, Wickham, it is a good place to meet new friends, learn about plants and try some freshly grown fruit, vegetables and herbs.

It was started about two years ago, on one of the greens of the Croatian Wickham Sports Club.

Bill Robertson, one of the regular volunteers, said that the garden had been designed by members of the community for the community.

Other areas in the garden include a life-size chess board, a cubby house, a sandpit, a sound garden, a greenhouse and a worm farm.

To help with watering, water tanks have been installed. There are also sculptures that have been donated by local artists.

Members of the community are encouraged to donate their time as well as plants, grass clippings, food scraps for compost and recipes.

"I reckon this is a great place to learn and be a part of the community," said 11-year-old Noah Oerlemans, a recent visitor to the garden.

While the garden relies on community support, groups including the Work for the Dole scheme are also involved.

On the last Sunday of each month from 10am the garden hosts a communal gardening day with a free barbecue.

Students AIM High

By NOAH OERLEMANS, BRIANNA EHSMAN, JESSICA CAFAGNA and JEREMY DOWNING

ABLE, interested and motivated students are being targeted to participate in a program called AIM High.

Designed for selected year 6 students from the nine partnership schools of Callaghan College Waratah Technology Campus, the program involves students in a range of workshops.

Program co-ordinator Ian Ross said the program had been designed to run one day a week, on a long-term basis, to enrich primary students and let them get to know a high school environment.

Art attack, robotics, film making, rocketry and forensic science are just a few of the day-long workshops students are participating in.

The workshops are designed to provide extension and enrichment to year 6 students in areas that they would not normally learn about at primary school.

In its first semester, the program is based on a similar program being run at Menai High School, in Sydney.

Mr Ross said the people involved were very excited about it and lots of good things were happening.

Year 6 student Ashley Costello, from Mayfield West Demonstration School, said that she was enjoying the program because she was getting to meet new people and do lots of different learning.

Each semester a different group of students will be offered the opportunity to take part in the program. Primary schools can nominate students or they can nominate themselves.



LEARNING IS FUN: Hayden McShane and Thomas Choo, both 11, watch as the robot they programmed goes through its routine.
— Picture by Jessica Cafagna

Students must be capable and show that they want to learn.

Shirlee Maxwell, whose son Thomas, 11, is a participant in the program, said that she felt the program was a great opportunity because it introduced the children to lots of areas they wouldn't normally experience.

She said she was surprised at how quickly the students became comfortable in a high school setting.

"The program encourages kids to aim high as they head towards a future that will include the higher school education, and then further education and/or employment," Mr Ross said.



HAIR RAISING: Losing their hair for J1 Children's Ward at John Hunter Hospital was a worthwhile cause for these teachers and year 6 student Phoenix McVernon.

— Picture by Kaysey Neale

Hair's a great fund-raising idea

By KAYSEY NEALE, NICOLE KEOGH, JESSICA BINGHAM and SHENAE BARRY

JADE Hill, 7, was diagnosed with Neuroblastoma, a rare childhood cancer, when in preschool at Mayfield West Demonstration School.

Since then she has spent many long days in the J1 Children's Ward at John Hunter Hospital.

The school decided to raise money for the Children's Ward, which has both oncology and surgical patients.

Four teachers from the school and year 6 student Phoenix McVernon volunteered to have their heads shaved.

As an extra incentive, students who donated money went into a draw for the chance to use the clip-

pers to help with the teachers' new hairstyles.

Sharon Talbot, one of the teachers involved, said that while she was a bit scared, "it is a terrible disease and you need to support your own."

Jade was able to watch the hair shaving as she has now returned to school.

"She loves it," said Jade's mother, Kim Hill. "Jade is back to her old self."



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Editorial

By HENRY WILSON, BLAKE CHRISTIE, JOVIN BAKER, CALLUM ROOPE, NOAH OERLEMANS and JODIE KOS

IT IS a major decision to choose to start a new life in another country. The reasons often are because of family and the better opportunities that a new country offers.

Leaving behind family, friends and a known way of life must be scary, even when people are able to speak the language and the lifestyle is similar.

When the country being left is at war, in poverty or both, it must be even more frightening. Especially when the language spoken is nothing like the one already spoken and the way of life does not resemble what is known.

In the past few years many refugees from countries throughout Africa, in particular, have come to start a new life in Australia.

According to Michael Adderley from Northern Settlement Services, many people from Africa are settling in Newcastle, especially in the suburb of Mayfield.

Zach Karithi, an African support worker, said that many of these people had lived all their lives in refugee camps with no modern facilities and then when they came here, they had to learn it all.

The most obvious need these people face is to learn English. But it is also the little day-to-day things about life that must be learnt. Buying food, catching a bus, visiting

a doctor and enrolling a child in school are all brand-new experiences.

The pressure on families in situations where everything about life is so different is enormous. It can cause confusion and frustration for everybody.

Through support networks, charity and church groups, about 160 volunteers are helping families from other countries in our area and teaching them about life in Australia. Classes in English, life skills and social opportunities all allow friendships and understanding to be built.

Many Australians who have come from non-English speaking backgrounds have contributed widely and successfully to Australia. Some are well known, like heart surgeon, the late Dr Victor Chang, or actor Eric Bana, while others are valued members of communities and families.

Sometimes, though, people can only see the differences and not the similarities in each other.

Each year since 1999, Australia has celebrated Harmony Day on March 21. This is a day to think about equality, fairness, friendship and respect.

Like all causes, it is a good way to raise awareness. However, it needs to become an everyday awareness.

At school we are taught to treat others like we would like to be treated. We are told to stand in another's shoes before we judge them.

Maybe, we could start by remembering the power that can come from a smile and an outstretched hand of welcome.



LILLY PILLY RANGERS: Teacher Marianne Russell and students Zoe Miller and Callum Roope check one of the 200 lilly pillies planted to improve the school's environment. — Picture by Mayble Parker

Act local, think global

By JODIE KOS, JOSELIN McKITTEK and MAYBLE PARKER

WE all use energy and an increased understanding of this has led to environmental change at Mayfield West Demonstration School.

"Everyone has a carbon footprint, even children," said Marianne Russell, a teacher at the school.

Becoming more aware of the need to give back to the environment, rather than take, has been something that Mrs Russell has been passionate about for a long time.

To raise student awareness and to improve the way the playground looked, Mayfield West Demonstration School became involved in a Newcastle City Council initiative called Green School, Green City.

More than 200 trees were planted in the school in 2006 by students. These trees were donated by Trees in Newcastle.

"Lilly pillies were chosen for around the school's fence line because they are an evergreen rainforest native, which is very hardy and attracts birds," Mrs Russell said.

Students known as the Lilly Pilly Rangers were given the responsibility of caring for the trees in the important early stages after planting.

Students have also been planting trees in Weribi Park to help make a green corridor through Mayfield.

To help save water, taps that turned themselves off were installed throughout the school during the Christmas holidays. Planning is also underway for the installation of rainwater tanks.

The goal is friendship

By HENRY WILSON, BLAKE CHRISTIE, JOVIN BAKER, CALEB ROSS and ABDON FIDOW

FOOTBALL, or soccer as it is more popularly known in Australia, is known as the world game.

In Mayfield, where many refugees from African nations are settling, football is being used to build friendships, understanding and tolerance.

Michael Adderley from Northern Settlement Services, formerly known as the Migrant Resource Centre, said that children got to meet new people and play at school.

"However, it is much harder for adults with little English to become a part of communities," Mr Adderley said.

"This is where sport is breaking down the barriers. They all love soccer."

Mr Adderley said that in refugee camps soccer was a very popular game.

"All you really need is a ball," he said.

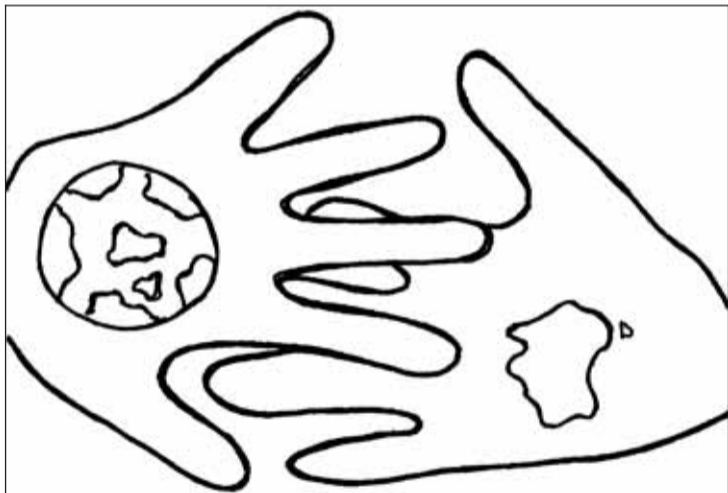
Northern Settlement Services was approached by a group of football-loving adults of African heritage last year.

They wanted to play football but needed assistance to buy equipment.

St Vincent De Paul provided soccer boots and balls and a ground for training was found at Newcastle TAFE.

The group now has around 30 and 40 players aged between 16 and 40.

With the start of the football season, these players have signed on with local clubs, some even getting a run with Broadmeadow Magic.



— Illustration by Brianna Eshman

Respect your Elder

By LEIGHA GRAY, ASHLEY BROOKE and BRITANNI CAIRNS

DURING the past sixteen years, Kay Elder has welcomed hundreds of children, parents, teachers and visitors to Mayfield West Demonstration School.

As the school's administrative manager she is the face of the front office.

Her responsibilities include looking after finances, ordering stock,

enquiries and enrolments.

When Mrs Elder started at Mayfield West Demonstration School, it was a return to the suburb that she grew up in.

"The biggest change to Mayfield was the closure of the BHP," she said. "I still remember the dirty specks on our washing."

Mrs Elder plans to remain at the school for a "few more years yet".

"I love my job," Mrs Elder said.



LOVES HER JOB: Kay Elder has welcomed many students, parents, staff and visitors with her warm smile since 1990. — Picture by Leigha Gray

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