FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Our Vision
Mercy Regional College serves a wide rural community which values growth and diversity in Catholic Education in the Mercy tradition.

Our Mission
In the Spirit of the Gospels we commit ourselves to the core values of community, inclusiveness, learning, care, justice and mercy, excellence and achievement.

Our Focus for 2009
Learning: Through the Mercy tradition we encourage our community to seek knowledge, to nurture curiosity and to love learning.

4th Annual Mercy Dinner
Last Friday the College held the 4th Annual Mercy Dinner. This dinner provided the College with the opportunity to welcome back two past students who are renowned performing artist Sara Tindley and Peter Daffy. Sara and Peter certainly entertained the gathering, with their moving performances, a favourite being Sara’s biographical single “Down the Avenue” and Peter’s interpretation of the classic “Danny Boy”.

The dinner also provided us with the opportunity to reflect briefly on the beginnings of Mercy Regional College and to thank those members of our community who worked so hard and tirelessly to establish the College.

Unlike every other Catholic Secondary School in the Diocese, which was either established by a Religious Congregation at the request of the Bishop of the time or established at the direction of the Catholic Education Office, Mercy began because the people of this region were faced with the possibility of no Catholic Secondary Education for their children. It was at the initiation of members of the various parishes that ultimately lead to the birth of the then Catholic Regional College.

The early Minute books of the Board of Management from 1973 onwards paint a picture of the College facing many barriers and hurdles along the way none-least than the lack of government funding and the prevention of Catholic students travelling on government buses. Today as a College we certainly enjoy the fruits of their labours.

In forwarding his apologies, Mr John Hibbert the first Board Chairperson, went to the trouble of briefly detailing for us his account of how the College was established. I have provided for you a copy of his letter (see page 2). It is therefore with great pleasure and also gratitude that I was able to make a small presentation at the dinner to the members of our first Board of Management. I am sure we are all indebted in some small way to our founding fathers (and mothers) for ensuring that this region of the south west has been able to provide a Catholic education for our children.

Presentations were made to:
Fr Bob Markey
Mrs Dawn Driscoll
Mr John Kavenagh
Mr Pat O’Sullivan
Mr Vincent O’Connor
Mrs Aileen Pekin [accepting this recognition of behalf of her husband Frank].

Official Opening of the O’Keeffe Campus
The Official Opening of the refurbished O’Keeffe Campus will be held on Tuesday 2nd June at 10.00am. Bishop Peter Connors will celebrate Mass and officially open and bless the new and refurbished building. Morning tea will follow. For catering purpose, I would ask that if you are likely to attend the opening please let the College office know by Friday 22nd May.
**Library Hours**

As from Monday 25th May the College Library at the McAuley Campus will be open each day from 8.30am to 4.30pm. This will provide students with a quiet place to study or complete homework at the end of the day, especially as exams approach.

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**Feast Day Celebrations**

Mercy Regional College celebrated its Feast Day last Thursday, the Feast of Our Lady Help of Christians. The Eucharist provided the school community with the opportunity to celebrate the wonderful work of the Sisters of Mercy over many years, which allowed the College to begin in 1973 and continue to grow and develop. The Feast of the patron of Australia, Our Lady Help of Christians was a fitting day to remember the work of these extraordinary women. Fathers Eugene and Neville celebrated the Mass for the Mercy community. Particular thanks are extended to Mrs Jo Saunders for her organisation of the Mass, Mrs Margaret Leahy, Director of Religious Education and the other staff that assisted in preparing for this liturgy.

**Influenza H1N1 (Swine Flu)**

The College has received information from the Catholic Education Office in relation to H1N1 Influenza. This information has been provided by Dr Sharon Goldfeld, Principal Medical Adviser, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD).

Parents who are concerned about swine flu are directed to the following:

- Call the Swine Influenza Hotline: Telephone 1800 606 024 (for expert health information and advice 24 hours 7 days)
- Call your doctor (GP) if you have an influenza-like illness (fever, cough, and fatigue) and have travelled to Mexico or California, Arizona, New Mexico or Texas in the past seven days
- Visit the Victorian Government Health Information website for up to date information for schools, children, parents and the community: <www.health.vic.gov.au>

Standard good general health hygiene practices should continue to be practiced, such as regular hand washing and covering nose and mouth if sneezing and coughing. If children are unwell, they should seek medical attention and avoid public places and close contact with others. The Department of Human Services (DHS), in consultation with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) and the Catholic Education Office will continue to monitor the situation and will provide further advice as additional information becomes available. Please refer to further information from the CECV document on pages 11 & 12.

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**Along the Track**

I have attached to this newsletter, for your interest, on page 10, a reflection title “Being Connected” written by Jim Quilinan from the Diocesan Catholic Education Office in Warragul. I hope you enjoy this reading.
**HSSSA Cross Country**

Monday 18th May saw Mercy Regional College for the fourth consecutive year take out the HSSSA Cross Country title. This was a great team effort. Well done to all members of the Cross Country Team.

Particular congratulations are extended to the following age champion:

- **Junior Male:** Declan O'Connor
- **Intermediate Female:** Caitlyn Hickey
- **Intermediate Male:** Jahd Anderson
- **Senior Female:** Steph Jamieson

This victory means that Mercy Regional College has achieved for the second year in a row trifecta in the Hampden Secondary School Sports Association winning the HSSSA Swimming, Athletics and Cross Country competitions. The first time in the history of the College. Congratulations to all our athletes and the Sports staff led by Mr James Castles.

**Closing Date for Enrolment for 2010**

The Closing date for enrolments for Year 7 2010 is Friday 26th June. Many enrolments are coming in for our Year 7 classes for next year. Once again indications are, that all our Year 7 places will be filled quickly. The College will need to make certain decisions about the number of Year 7 classes that will be run for next year. I urge all parents who are considering Mercy Regional College for their son / daughter next year, to complete the enrolment form and return it as soon as possible, so that we can commence planning for 2010. Please remember that we require an Enrolment Application Fee of $100 to be sent with your enrolment form before an application may be processed.

Andrew Watson
**PRINCIPAL**

**Mercy Awards**

**VCE (Yr 11 & 12) Mercy Award**

James Glennen for his academic improvement in Biology Units 1 & 2.

**Middle School (Yr 9 & 10) Mercy Award**

Jack McKenzie for his enthusiastic approach to his learning.

**Junior School (Yr 7 & 8) Mercy Award**

Kaitlyn Baird for working well and applying herself in all areas of study.

**Wellbeing Report**

Kerin Glennen

**Gender coping strategies.........**

As students follow their path of life they will find times when they are stressed and have difficulty coping, this is part of our maturity in life, however at the time it is real and can be difficult to cope with. Research has been done which studies the coping mechanisms and strategies for both girls and boys. The results indicated that boys are more likely to report stressful events than boys are, and the events girls perceive to be stressful are associated with interpersonal and family relationships. Girls show a greater reliance on the approval of others, are more likely to expect the worst, to blame themselves or to engage in wishful thinking. However, they also use more strategies for seeking help and emotional support than boys do. Girls are also more likely to be dependant on family and teachers for emotional support and respond to expectations held for them. Girls tend to feel dissatisfied with their body shape and may perceive themselves in a more negative light than boys do. Boys are more likely to vent their feelings, act out, or use denial, but also more likely to use humour. However, sadly boys are overly represented in homicide and accidents, as well as alcohol and substance abuse statistics. As a society we may must make certain that our adolescents are supported and see worth in what they are doing. This is a task for all adults to take on, begin the discussions and take a genuine interest in what is happening in the life of the adolescents that you are in contact with.
Drug and Alcohol Education at Mercy
This year sees the continuation of providing Mercy students with relevant and up to date facts surrounding the issues of drug and alcohol within our society.
Presently in Year 9 student’s spend a ten week block exploring not only the facts surrounding drugs and alcohol but also what can be done to minimise risks when faced with the consumption of alcohol.
Year 10 students have two Social Issues days throughout the year focusing on a number of questions and myths surrounding alcohol and drugs in the life of a teenager. The students have already attended one of these days and another one is planned for later in the year. The year 10’s will also continue this theme whilst on camp later in the year.
Year 11’s also have two designated days throughout this year. The first of these days will take place on Tuesday the 2nd of June at the Noorat Community Centre. Information has gone home with students for parents to read and complete permission forms which need to be returned no later than Monday the 1st June. Please support the Mercy Drug and Alcohol program by discussing with your son and or daughter what is happening on these days.
These programs are supported by the SCADE Team, made up of a group of students from each of the above year levels working with Vicki Askew, Victorian Police Youth Liaison Officer, Ambulance Victoria, Barwon Youth Services, a Social Worker and Early intervention services of Victoria as well as several guest speakers.

Sports Report
James Castles

2009 Catholic All Schools Championships
The Catholic All Schools Basketball Carnival was hosted in Ballarat on May 1st 2009. Mercy Regional College had four teams representing the school this year. The MRC team consisted of a male and female junior team, and a male and female intermediate team.
The teams were coached by Kerry Crawley, Simone Moloney, Marcus Rees and Rebecca Rees. The teams played well throughout the day and all students had an enjoyable time.
On behalf of the College I would like to thank all the coaches for helping on the day, your time is very much appreciated and something that isn’t taken for granted. It was also great to see Michelle Bourke, Catherine Moloney, Ray Moloney, Annette Lee, Dianne Glennen and Jack Crawley making the trip to Ballarat to support the teams. Thank you to all for your help coaching, scoring, and supporting the group.

HSSSA Cross Country
This semester the College has competed in three HSSSA events, the Athletics Carnival, Swimming Carnival, and on May 18th the Cross Country Carnival. The HSSSA carnivals giving the students the opportunity to compete against the best athletes in the district. This year the College has continued its success from last year and has won all three events. All students involved should be very proud of themselves.
Winning the HSSSA Cross Country last week can be attributed to both outstanding individual results and overall team participation. The MRC team had 50 students representing the school, with all students trying their hardest.

Congratulations to Jahd Anderson Stephanie Jamieson, Caitlyn Hickey and Declan O’Connor for being crowned Age Champions.

Whilst on Athletics, the College will be competing in the CAS [Catholic All Sports] on September 15th at Olympic Park in Melbourne. All students can view their events on the notice boards at both Campuses.

Well done to all students who represented the school in the Cross Country Team, Athletics Team, or Swimming Team your talents are applauded.
**Coming Events Term 1**

**Term 2**
**Monday 1st June**  
Year 9 Camp begins

**Tuesday 2nd June**  
Mass & Official Opening of O’Keeffe Campus

**Wednesday 3rd June**  
Year 9 Camp concludes

**Monday 8th June**  
Queen’s Birthday Long Weekend

**Tuesday 9th June**  
VCE Exams  
Year 7, 8 & 10 Exams  
Board Meeting @ 7.30pm

**Wednesday 10th June**  
VCE Exams  
Year 7, 8 & 10 Exams

**Thursday 11th June**  
General Achievement Test

**Friday 12th June**  
School Holiday – no classes

**Monday 15th June**  
PTFA Meeting @ O’Keeffe Campus – 7.30pm  
Year 9 & 11 Exams

**Tuesday 16th June**  
Year 9 & 11 Exams

**Wednesday 24th June**  
Ministry Retreat

**Thursday 25th June**  
Ministry Retreat

**Friday 26th June**  
Term 2 concludes at 2.30pm

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**From the Director of Teaching & Learning**  
**Mrs. Lisa Pope**

**Careers Report**

**DOXA CADETSHIP PROGRAM 2010**  
The Doxa Cadetship program provides opportunities for disadvantaged young people by investing in education related programs that help them achieve their full potential.

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Doxa works with schools to seek applications from students to the Cadetship Program. In addition to being disadvantaged, cadets must also have displayed leadership abilities and talents during their secondary education. (Disadvantaged can mean living in the country, slower internet connection etc). A Doxa cadet receives:

- Financial support - $6,000 per year
- Assistance with purchasing university textbooks
- Quality work experience with their sponsor company, along with a mentor
- Personal and professional development program
- Doxa cadets are given the opportunity to gain an extensive experience in the business community. Through the program Cadets will develop their skills and be in a position to apply what they learn at university to work. On graduation, Doxa Cadets have a competitive edge.

To be eligible for a Doxa Cadetship, applicants must:

- Be a current Year 12 student who will commence university studies in the following year (Deferring students will not be eligible)
- Hold Australian citizenship
- Be socially and financially disadvantaged and need support to undertake University studies.

Degree Programs most suited to a cadetship are:
- Bachelor of Commerce
- Bachelor of Arts (Global)
- Bachelor of Laws
- Bachelor of Arts (New Generation)
- Bachelor of Business (Accounting)
- Bachelor of Engineering
- Bachelor of HR Management
- Bachelor of Business & Commerce
- Bachelor of Science
- Bachelor of Finance

More information will be provided in August. Three ex students from Mercy Regional College have already been awarded this scholarship and all have gained very rewarding jobs as a result of this program.

**ADF GAP YEAR FOR 2010**  
Applications are open for the ADF Gap Year. There are limited places so you need to get in early. There are 267 places available in the Navy, 317 in the Army, and 116 in Air Force. For more information go to www.defencejobs.gov.au/education/Gapyear/

**MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY**  
Anyone interested in going to or looking at Melbourne Uni, there is a two day programme available from Thursday, 2nd July to Friday 3rd July to stay overnight and experience Uni life. This is an ideal opportunity for country students to get a taste of university life, obtain first-hand information and resolve any concerns they may have about the move to Melbourne for study. Cost is $95.00. Applications close on 3rd June and can be assessed via the university’s web site on www.futurestudents.unimelb.edu.au/uniexp
There will be a number of information sessions about admissions, undergraduate courses, postgraduate study, career opportunities and the “Melbourne Experience” on Open Day. Also Melbourne Uni will be subsidising rail travel at a flat rate of $10.00. Please see Mrs Pope before 20th July if you are interested in rail travel. For more information on open day visit:  

www.openday.unimelb.edu.au

YEAR 12 SW TAFE INFORMATION SESSIONS FOR 2010

SW TAFE run information sessions for their Health Career courses for the following certificates: Cert IV Nursing, Cert IV Allied Health, Diploma of Children’s Services, Aged Care / Disability work, Remedial Massage, Community Welfare work. If you are interested in these courses for next year come and collect dates off Mrs Pope as you need to attend these sessions to register interest.

GEELONG CAREERS EXPO - WEDNESDAY, 24th JUNE - 6.30PM TO 9.00PM

At Deakin University Geelong Waterfront Campus, Gheringhap Street, Geelong - Free Admission.

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY - EXPERIENCE LA TROBE

30th June: Melbourne (Bundoora) Campus
3rd July: Albury-Wodonga Campus
7th July: Bendigo Campus

Go along and meet our academics and students, and get a hands-on experience of university. Find out about courses, tour the campus and attend workshops. Check out the web site for details on courses - latrobe.edu.au/experience and for course information updates, Visit website: www.latrobe.edu.au/coursefinder

NEW COURSES
The Faculty of Law and Management at La Trobe University has recently introduced two new exciting degrees - the Bachelor of Business Marketing and the Bachelor of Business Human Resource Management. Both programs are offered on a full-time (three years) or part-time equivalent basis at the Bundoora campus, with a mid-year intake being offered for both areas also. For more information on these two new programs, contact: Alvaro Gomez Sanchez on 9479 3683 or visit www.latrobe.edu.au or call 1300 135 045.

PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIES COLLEGE

Open Day 16th August 2009 - 10am - 4pm
For course and career information visit www.psc.edu.au, info@psc.edu.au or phone 9682 3191

MELBOURNE AQUARIUM – MARINE SCIENCE CAREER DAYS

Discover how to get a job in marine science from experts, tour Melbourne Aquarium and receive course advice and information about how to achieve a Marine Science Career. Cost $35.00, Marine Science Career Days will run on 22nd June, 17th September and 30th November.

Aquarist for a Day - Experience life as one of Melbourne Aquarium’s Aquarists. Cost $70.00 per student. This program runs during school holidays, except on public holidays.

Career Based Tours - To take part in a Career-Based tour book into a Tailored General Program and ask for a careers focus. Cost is $12.50 per student. Reduced rates apply for 8.00am and 2.30pm sessions

For more information, call Melbourne Aquarium’s Education Liaison Officer on 9923 5911.

DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

Bachelor of Nursing Course Information Seminar – Friday, 17th July at 7.30pm at Deakin University Warrnambool. For more information Phone 5563 3325 or www.deakin.edu.au

MONASH UNIVERSITY - ACCESS MONASH

Access Monash is a program consisting of alternative entry pathways, special admissions schemes, scholarships and bursaries that can help you gain entry into your chosen degree and reach your potential at Monash University. Monash aim to reward performance and support students who may not otherwise have the opportunity to attend university. For more information visit:

www.monash.edu/access

ACCOMMODATION AT MONASH

Application forms and further information is available from: The Admissions’ Secretary on 9544 8895 or enquiries.mannix@general.monash.edu.au

MONASH SEMINAR SERIES 2009

Find out about the broad range of study options at Monash and the many career opportunities they could open up for you. Bookings are essential. Visit the website: www.monash.edu.au/study/events/atmonash or telephone 9903 4758 for course / seminar dates.

MONASH UNIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT STUDIES PROGRAM – INFORMATION EVENING WEDNESDAY 14TH OCTOBER 7PM

Allows students to jump ahead and complete first year university subjects as part of the Year 12 studies. Students receive an increment on the ENTER score and get a head start on their degree. To register email enhancement@adm.monash.edu.au or book online www.monash.edu.au/enhancement

For course and career information visit www.psc.edu.au, info@psc.edu.au or phone 9682 3191

MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY OPEN DAY - 16th AUGUST 10AM - 4PM

www.monash.edu.au/access
From the Director of Teaching & Learning
Mrs Lisa Pope

Curriculum Update
Over the coming weeks the Heads of Teaching & Learning will begin preparing for information days and handbooks for subject selections for 2010. This primarily affects students in Years 9 to 12, where the students have greater choice in their learning pathways. Parents in Year 9 & 10 will be invited to attend an information day on Wednesday the 15th of July to review the options available to the students as they begin to have greater choice in their learning.

The VCE subject selection night will also be held on Wednesday the 15th of July at 7.30pm. This night is an opportunity for Parents and students to gain an insight into the requirements of VCE in terms of subjects, what is needed to obtain an ENTER and general advice on choosing subjects. Before this night the students will be addressed by a panel of VCE staff to explain the subjects we currently offer at MRC in VCE Units 1-4 and the reasons why you may chose such subjects. This is an informal session to encourage the students to become active in researching and thinking about their future learning needs. Prior to this night, I would also encourage parents to begin discussing with their children their learning areas of interest and any possible career pathways to gauge an understanding of the requirements/prerequisites that may need to be met. After students submit their subject selections, they are then collated and blocked (subjects which run at the same time). The students will then make a final choice of subjects according to these blocks. Before submitting their final selections all Year 10 students and their parents will be invited to attend an interview with a VCE staff member to ensure the students have reviewed all available options to them regarding these choices. The date of these interviews will be released soon.

The following websites are good resources to begin with this process.

JobGuide: www.jobguide.dest.gov.au

VTAC CourseSearch: www.vtac.edu.au/courses/searchcourse.html

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YEAR 7 & 8 Exam Timetable – SEMESTER 1 (JUNE) 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY</th>
<th>EXAM</th>
<th>ROOM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TUESDAY 9th JUNE</td>
<td>ENGLISH</td>
<td>O’Keeffe Campus</td>
<td>HUMANITIES</td>
<td>O’Keeffe Campus</td>
<td>Classes as normal</td>
<td>O’Keeffe Campus</td>
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<tr>
<td>WEDNESDAY 10th JUNE</td>
<td>MATHS</td>
<td>O’Keeffe Campus</td>
<td>SCIENCE</td>
<td>O’Keeffe Campus</td>
<td>Classes as normal</td>
<td>O’Keeffe Campus</td>
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NB - All Junior Exams will be conducted at the O’Keeffe campus.
- Classes will run as per normal in the afternoon.
- School uniform is to be worn.
- Students will need to bring looseleaf to exams.
- Exam conditions apply for all exams.
- Students will not be permitted to leave the room until the designated finish time.
- Students are to bring a novel (not the newspaper) to read if they finish early.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Assessment Item</th>
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</table>
| 7    | Art     | Australian Art Assignment  
|      | RE      | Your Life – Presented as Old/New Testament |
| 8    | Art     | Art Folio & Visual Diary  
|      | Science | Practical Report  
|      | LOTE    | Test: Addresses/Numbers 30-60/People & Pets/Regular Verbs  
|      | English | Boy Overboard Task 4  
|      | Maths   | Length & Perimeter Assessment  
|      | Graphics| Visual Diary & Folio Pieces  
|      | Information Technology | Spreadsheet Test  
|      | Woodwork| Workbook Due |
| 7    | Home Economics | Design Brief – ‘Novelty Cake’  
|      | English | Oral Presentation – “Seabiscuit”  
|      | Science | Research Assignment – 3D Poster |
| 8    | Graphics | Visual Diary & Folio Pieces  
|      | Religion | Injustice in Today’s World  
|      | LOTE    | Test: Addresses/Numbers 30-60/People & Pets/Regular Verbs  
|      | Science | Test  
|      | Textiles| Major Project & Display Booklet  
|      | Woodwork| Workbook Due  
|      | Physical Education/Health | Fitness Unit Assignment: Fitness Components |
| 7    | Maths   | Chapter 6 – Test Factorising  
|      | Camp    | Chapter Topic Test  
|      | PE      | |
| 8    | Art     | Visual Diary & Folio Work  
|      | Religion| “Issues” Task  
|      | English | Oral Presentation of Text  
|      | PD      | Job Interview  
|      | Woodwork| Workbook Due |
| 7    | Woodwork| Production Folio  
|      | English | Macbeth Group Assessment Task |
| 8    | VCAL    | Road to Freedom Written Report  
|      | PE      | Chapter Topic Test  
|      | Art-Photography | Super Imposing Photographic Assignment  
|      | Science | Research Assignment  
|      | VCE Psychology | Exam  
|      | History | Exam Preparation |
| 7    | Business Management 1 | Sac Task (Outcome 3)  
|      | Studio Art 1 | Illustration task  
|      | General Maths 1 | Test-Chapter 6  
|      | Ag/Hort 1 | Outcome 1-Powerpoint Presentation  
|      | Design Technology 1 | Folio check |
| 11   | Methods 1 | Assignment Due  
|      | Outdoor Education 1 | SAC 3  
|      | Physical Education 1 | Test 4 |
| 7    | Chemistry 3 | Test Assessment Task  
|      | Accounting 3 | Trial Exam (SAC 3)  
|      | Biology Unit 3 | Exam Preparation week  
|      | Physics 3 | SAC 3 Assessment  
|      | Psychology 3 | Exam Preparation  
|      | Further Maths 3 | Chapter 20 Test  
|      | Further Maths 3 | SAC 2 |
| 8    | Physical Ed 3 | SAC 4  
|      | Biology Unit 3 | Mid Year Examination  
|      | Psychology 3 | Mid Year Exam  
|      | Studio Art 3 | SAT  
|      | Outdoor Education 3 | SAC 3 |
Free Basketball Coaching

For
GIRLS - UP TO UNDER 18’S.
AND
MIDGET BOYS

Would you like to improve your skills before the next season begins?
Are you committed enough to train through the Winter?
If the answer to both questions is ‘Yes’, Camperdown Amateur Basketball Association has a great new programme for you.

ANY QUESTIONS?
Please ring
Gary Stephens
0410 442 224

COME ALONG TO THE BASKETBALL STADIUM
EVERY FRIDAY NIGHT DURING TERM
5.30 TO 6.30PM
FOR
FREE BASKETBALL SKILLS CLINICS

Our Skills Coach, Gary Stephens, has over 30 years of experience coaching boys and girls at every level from local clubs to Big V. With his help you can develop your existing skills, learn new skills and become a better player.

Western Districts Dairy Youth

Are you a young person interested in the dairy industry??
The Western Districts Dairy Youth is a group of young people wanting to learn all aspects of Showing, Breeding, Photography, and Animal Health and lots more of interesting stuff for you all to learn about. We will be holding workshop days throughout the year.

(ALL BREEDS WELCOME)
If you would like to know more you can see us on Facebook....Western Districts Dairy Youth or Contact Beck Robertson: 55945240.

On June the 14th we will be holding a photography day with Dean and Di Malcolm from Crazy Cow and Melissa from HICO.
Along the track

Being Connected

There is a joke about Christopher Columbus on his journey to America. He didn’t know where he was going when he started. When he got there, he didn’t know where he was. And when he got back he didn’t know where he had been.

Our journey through life can be a journey of exploration like that experienced by Columbus – at times a bit confusing, at other times a leap of faith! Life’s journey is about making connections between our experiences, our beliefs and values, in other words searching to make meaning. In very general terms, we call this ‘personal spirituality’. Spirituality exists wherever we struggle with the issue of how our lives fit into the greater scheme of things. We encounter spiritual issues every time we wonder where the universe comes from, why we are here, or what happens when we die, why is there suffering in this world and so on? We also become spiritual when we become moved by values such as beauty, love, or creativity that seem to reveal a meaning or power beyond our visible world.

Today we often hear that spirituality has become much more popular, that people are more spiritual but not necessarily religious. In America, for example, up to one in five people describe themselves that way. Those who see themselves as "spiritual, but not religious" often reject traditional organised religion as a means of furthering their spiritual growth. The word spiritual has gradually come to be associated with a private realm of thought and experience while the word religious has come to be connected with the public realm of membership in religious institutions, participation in formal rituals, and adherence to official denominational doctrines. But, in reality, both words suggest belief in something beyond our self, a Higher Power of some kind. Both also imply a desire to connect, to enter into a more intense relationship, with this Higher Power. Both connote interest in rituals, practices, and daily moral behaviors that foster such a connection or relationship.

It is for that reason that the Church reminds us that it is in all this searching, in all this connecting the dots of our lives, as it were God seeks us out:

Properly understood, authentic spirituality is not so much about our search for God, but God’s search for us". (Jesus Christ, the Bearer of the Water of Life; Congregation for Interreligious Dialogue, Rom 3:3)

That’s not a new thought. The Hebrew scriptures are filled with stories of God’s search and involvement in the lives of the Chosen People. Some thousands of years ago the writer of the psalms wrote:

You knit me together in my mother’s womb.
Nothing about me, from beginning to end
was hidden from your eyes.
For so many marvels I thank you,
You know me through and through,
My innermost self you know,
When I was being made in secret,
fashioned in the depths of the earth,
your eyes could see my unformed substance.
Yet at the same time you could foresee my future actions,
even before I came into being (Psalm 139)

Our personal spirituality is very much bound up with how we connect the dots in our lives, as it were - the many and varied connections we make, not only with God even if we perhaps do not name God, but with creation (which is God’s gift) and with others (in whom God dwells). Our spirituality allows us to make sense of these relationships but at a much deeper level. Spirituality is not just about the present but how it connects with God, between the present time and what we might call ‘the transcendent’.

Today, at least in the Western world, we suffer from what we might call a spiritual loneliness - it is not easy to be a believer. There was a time when faith, the spiritual dimension and religion were part of our lives, part of our culture. It is one of the surprises one experiences in Jerusalem, for example, where Jewish, Muslim and Christian faiths are so overt, so much a part of the fabric of everyday life. In the words of spiritual writer, Ronald Rolheiser:

At one level it means that anyone who wants to have faith today will need to be much more inner-directed than in previous generations. We have few outside supports for our faith. To be committed believers today, to have faith truly inform our lives, requires finding an inner anchor. (Newsletter 204, 408)

So what sustains us, what gives us hope and direction as God searches us out?
That great theologian, Karl Rahner made the statement that there would soon come a time when each of us will either be a mystic or a non-believer. Today might well be that time, time to connect with that inner anchor which is that deep-seated call by God to each one of us at the very core of our being, the call to connect with our deep desire for Beauty, Truth and Love itself - God.

Becoming a mystic means giving ourselves time to make connections, to see God’s presence and God’s call in those I meet and those I love, in the world around me, in the events of my life. Being a mystic lets God take the initiative.

In the words of the psalm:

My God, you know me inside out through and through.
You know me at rest and in action.
You understand my thoughts from far away.
You trace my travels and my resting places.
You are familiar with all my ways.
Your knowledge of me sometimes comforts me,
sometimes frightens me,
but it is beyond my comprehension.
Such knowledge is amazing. (Psalm 139)

Regards

Jim Quillinan

Phone: 0401 933 023
Email: jquillinan@dcsl.net.au
H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu)

Frequently Asked Questions 25 May 2009

1. **What is seasonal flu?**
   The influenza virus circulates every year and causes an infectious disease known as influenza (flu). Symptoms of flu include: sudden fever, headache, muscle aches and pains, fatigue, cough, sore throat, stuffy or runny nose. The virus can cause a mild or severe illness depending on the type of influenza virus and the age and general health of the affected person. Older people, young children and people with certain illnesses or chronic medical conditions are at higher risk for serious flu complications.

2. **What is swine flu?**
   Swine flu viruses are contagious respiratory diseases usually found in pigs. Various flu viruses can infect pigs but the most common is the H1N1 subtype. A new strain of H1N1 swine flu that affects humans was recently identified.

3. **Will the seasonal flu vaccination protect against H1N1 Influenza (Human Swine Flu)?**
   The Department of Human Services has advised it is not expected the Australian seasonal influenza vaccine will provide protection against this new strain of influenza virus. However, people over 65 and those who are vulnerable are encouraged to be vaccinated as this will at least provide protection against seasonal influenza.

4. **How can I protect myself and my family against catching either seasonal or H1N1 Influenza (Human Swine Flu)?**
   Good health hygiene practices can greatly reduce the chance you will get the flu or pass it on to others.
   - Maintain good health - keeping yourself healthy helps your body defend itself against viruses that make you ill.
   - Try to stay one metre or more from sick people to reduce the spread of illness.
   - Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
   - Throw the tissue in a plastic-lined rubbish bin after you use it.
   - Wash your hands regularly, especially after you cough or sneeze. It is best to wash hands with soap and warm water, scrubbing wrists, palms, fingers and nails for 10-15 seconds. Rinse your hands and dry them well with disposable paper towel or an automatic hand dryer. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
   - Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
   It can be challenging to teach very young children cough etiquette and other hygiene measures. Explaining to children that it is important to keep away germs provides a base to engage them in cough etiquette and hand washing. For younger children, pictures showing what to do can be helpful, as can strategies that make this into a ritual game or fun.
   Discourage children from sharing eating utensils, food or drinks. Extra diligent cleaning of toys and surfaces in areas frequented by young children may be appropriate.

5. **What should I do if I or my family have the flu?**
   If you have or suspect you have the flu you should call your doctor (GP). You should avoid public places and close contact with others, especially children.
   Don’t visit people who have the flu unless it is absolutely necessary. If a member of your family has the flu, keep their personal items, such as towels, separate from the rest of the family.
   Concerns about swine flu should be referred to any of the following:
   - **The Swine Influenza Hotline** Tel. 1800 200 2007 – for the general public and people returning from the US, Canada, Mexico, Panama or Japan with flu-like symptoms
   - **Nurse-on-Call** Tel. 1300 606 024 – for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)
   - **Your doctor (GP)** – if you have an influenza-like illness (fever, cough and fatigue) and have travelled to Mexico, Panama, the United States, Canada or Japan in the past seven days.
6. **My child has a runny nose, but no fever or cough. Should I take them to a doctor?**

   If you are concerned and are unsure what to do:
   - **Contact your doctor (GP)**
   - **Call Nurse-on-Call Tel. 1300 606 024** – for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)

7. **Can I send my child to child care, kinder or school?**

   As with all influenzas, it is appropriate to keep your child home if they are unwell. For the latest advice on who should remain home and for how long:
   - **Contact your doctor (GP)**
   - **Call Nurse-on-Call Tel. 1300 606 024** – for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)

8. **My child is not sick. Should I continue to allow my child to attend normal events and activities, such as school camps, sports days, and excursions?**

   If you have no reason to believe your child is sick, there is no need to change planned activities or avoid going to public places or events.

   Standard good general health practices should continue to be practiced, including coughing and sneezing into a disposable tissue and disposing of it appropriately, washing hands afterwards, avoiding close contact with people who appear unwell, getting adequate sleep, eating nutritious food and keeping physically healthy.

   If you or your child is unwell, you should seek medical attention and avoid public places and close contact with others.

9. **My child has just returned from overseas. Can my child return to school?**

   On 25 May 2009, the Victorian Government asked that all children returning from the US, Canada, Japan, Mexico and Panama be kept at home for seven (7) days prior to returning to school. For the latest advice on affected countries and whether your child should remain home upon return to Australia, refer to the contacts listed in response to question 5 above.

10. **Who makes the decision to place a person into quarantine or close a school?**

    The Department of Human Services is responsible for determining the need for quarantine.

    The decision to close a Catholic school will be made locally by the school’s authorities. The CECV strongly recommends to all Catholic schools that decisions in relation to school closure and quarantine be made in accordance with the advice of the Department of Human Services.

11. **How will parents be informed of a school closure? What happens if the decision is made out of school hours (say at night or over a weekend)?**

    At a minimum, the school principal (or delegate) will formally advise parents in writing. Wherever possible, they will also hold a face-to-face meeting. If parents need to be advised of decisions made out of school hours, parents will be advised by telephone, where possible. It is important that you update your school with any changes to your contact details.

12. **Who can I talk to if my family or my child needs counselling support?**

    In the first instance, parents are encouraged to contact their school principal to discuss any counselling needs. Assistance in this area is also provided by your Diocesan Catholic Education Office.

13. **Where can I get up-to-date information?**

    Visit the [Victorian Government Health Information Web site](http://www.health.vic.gov.au) for up-to-date information for schools, children, parents and the community.

    Concerns about swine flu should be referred to any of the following:
    - **The Swine Influenza Hotline Tel. 180 2007** – for the general public and people returning from the Americas or Japan with flu-like symptoms
    - **Nurse-on-Call Tel. 1300 606 024** – for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)
    - **Your doctor (GP)** – if you have an influenza-like illness (fever, cough and fatigue) and have travelled to the US, Mexico, Canada, Japan or Panama in the past seven days.
    - **Your local hospital** – if you have pneumonia and have travelled to the US, Canada, Mexico, Japan or Panama in the past seven days.