



THE RAILWAY EXPRESS #4

A SPECIAL WEEKLY NEWSLETTER TO HELP US STAY CONNECTED

AROUND THE HOUSE

We hope you are well, in good spirits and are keeping warm during this cold patch - hibernating at home suddenly feels more natural now the temperature has dropped! Staff are continuing to work from the office for part of the week, which means that from 10am to 1pm Monday to Thursday you are able to drop by to donate food for the Asylum Seeker Support Service, drop off your batteries and small e-waste items for recycling, borrow a book or just to say hello.



It was great to see the following people this week at the House: **Simon, Alfred, Ryan and Donald** who dropped by to use the computers; **Joy** who was dropping off more food donations (good on you, Joy!) and walking her "grand dog"; **Jane** who dropped off food donations and books; **Kath, Fiona, Jeremy, Lydia, Alem** and **Elva** who stopped by to say hello; and **Eileen** who dropped off food donations - and shared with Lisa G how to play free online scrabble, for which she was most grateful! Lisa G visited **Rosie** at her home this week and Alison visited **Carolyn** and enjoyed a chat with her in her sunny front yard where she showed off her new walking shoes!

We are pleased to let you know that we are now able to offer our online **Tai Chi** class **FREE OF CHARGE!** The class will take place at **11am on Thursdays** via Zoom. Tai Chi has a lot of health benefits for both mind and body, especially important at this time. Let us know if you would like to give it a try!

Volunteers from the **Princes Hill Extended Family** support group have been busy walking dogs and picking up groceries for local residents who are unable to leave their homes. Please contact the office if you are in need of assistance with shopping or any other errands.

Take care and we look forward to hearing from you.

Alison, Lisa C, Lisa G and Jeff



YOUR NEWS: WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO?

This week we heard from **Shreyash Wilkinson**, one of the Princes Hill Secondary College VCAL students who spends time at Railway House. Great to get a teenager's perspective on time spent in isolation. We hope to see you soon, Shreyash!

"During isolation time I have been doing School work. I did some Photography writing about artists photos. I practiced my Acting assessment for my VET class. It was hard to learn my long lines but I did really good during filming the scene. At the moment I'm a bit sad because not being able to see them so it's a bit sad for everyone at the moment but we will get through this together. A few times I've had zoom calls with friends and they are very fun.



My dad was doing a jigsaw puzzle but the cat has been destroying it by jumping on the table. So mum and I have fixed it up. So during the holiday I decided to re do my room by buying a new cupboard and we got the cupboard from Ikea, I actually built it myself except the doors they were hard to put in.

I've been looking up DIY YouTube videos on art paint pouring and printing a design on a t – shirt. I used some baking paper and gladwrap and the photo it was very easy to do.

So because of everything shutting down my musical theatre group is not having their mid year performance its upsetting to hear that I really like dancing and singing, so now I'm still singing at home and a bit of exercise too."

Send in photos and news about how you have been keeping busy during lockdown. We love hearing from you!



LET'S TALK FOOD

As promised, this week we are sharing a recipe from **Lisa Giufre**, our Community Engagement Worker. Lisa (known as 'Lisa G' or 'other Lisa' at Railway House), says that this is one of those fail-safe "throw together" meals that she devised off the top of her head, but it has been tried by a couple of people in our cooking class and gets a big thumbs up. Quantities aren't given as everything is to taste!

Lisa's cooking is influenced by south-east Asian and Indian/Nepali flavours. She spent 7 years living and working in Eastern Indonesia straight out of Uni, as well as some travel in the region - including to Nepal at a young age - so her life is strongly imbued with these influences, experiences and tastes.

~ MALAYSIAN SATE SPICED & OVEN-BAKED CHICKEN & VEGETABLES ~

Ingredients

- Chicken pieces – whatever size or type you like
- Sate spices (or whatever curry spices you have on hand – Lisa used a pre-made mix from Gewurzhaus containing coriander, cumin, fennel, garlic, turmeric, lemongrass and chilli)
- Sesame oil
- Minced garlic
- Kecap manis (a sweet Indonesian soy sauce)
- Root vegetables – e.g. sweet potato, potato, pumpkin, carrot, onion - roughly chopped
- Basmati rice and plain yoghurt to serve



Method

1. Rub sate spices* (or whatever curry spices you have) onto chopped chicken pieces.
2. Add sesame oil, minced garlic and kecap manis, and marinate chicken for a while.
3. To cook, brown chicken pieces in a pan on the stove for a few minutes, then place in large baking tray on top of chopped vegetables.
4. Place into preheated 150° oven to bake slowly at low temperature over several hours.
5. Serve with basmati rice (Lisa likes to pre-soak the rice when she has time, so it gets extra fluffy), yoghurt and some raw (or cooked) greens.
6. Note: You could also add green vegetables e.g. green beans, broccoli etc. to the pan - toss with the liquid to moisten - for the last 20 minutes of cooking.

Got a great easy recipe to share? Send it in!



GETTING TO KNOW YOU

This week we hear from **Esther Stewart**, who has been a volunteer at Railway House for just over a year.

"I run an after-school art class for primary aged students. We started out making miniatures as our first three projects together, each project taking a term. In Term 1 of 2020, we began making mosaic bird baths, which we will finish when class resumes again. We are making our bird baths to put in the little park over the road and around Railway House for all the lovely birds to use during those hot summer days. Along the way we have also learned about the different birds that live near the House and have learned a little bit about which birds are native to the area and what they sound like. We have been lucky enough to have the wonderful help of Jocelyn to teach us about mosaics and how to make them so that they are durable and resilient to water and the outdoor environment.



I am also on the new community garden sub-committee; the garden will be built in May on the bocce courts next to Railway House. This is a very exciting project and I cannot wait to meet all of the community members who are interested in gardening.

Away from Railway House, I am a visual artist and an architecture student. Lots of my art projects have been placed on hold due to Covid-19, so I am using this time to study full time for the semester. All of my classes are now being conducted online and I am really enjoying this.

I am looking forward to a time when my class can resume and Railway House is again a wonderful vibrant spot to connect with new people.

Please say hello if you see me around.

All the best,

Esther



TOP PICKS



Jeff Coley, our wonderful Financial Administrator, is an avid podcast listener. This week, he highly recommends This American Life episode #699, "Fiasco" which is a short series stories about when things go wrong. Jeff reckons they are pretty hilarious, especially "Squirrel Cop" by Ira Glass.

Jeff's rating: 4 1/2 stars



Did you read a great book, watch an awesome movie or listen to an inspiring podcast this week? Send us your recommendations!

LOCKDOWN LAUGHS

The following test was developed as a mental age assesment by the School of Psychiatry at Harvard University

Take your time and see if you can read each line aloud without a mistake. The average person over 50 years of age cannot do it.

1. This is this cat.
2. This is is cat.
3. This is how cat.
4. This is to cat.
5. This is keep cat.
6. This is an cat.
7. This is old cat.
8. This is person cat.
9. This is busy Cat.
10. This is for cat.
11. This is fourty cat.
12. This is seconds cat.

Now go back and read the third word in each line from the top down. I bet you can't resist passing this on.



NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE WEEK: MAY 8th - 15th

Our doors may be closed but that's not going to stop us from celebrating Neighbourhood House Week!

We would love for you to help us. What do you do at Railway House? What do you value about it? These questions are especially relevant in this time of enforced isolation.

Please send us a few sentences or bring in an artwork which shows what Railway House means to you.

We would also love to conduct some short interviews with you so please consider dropping by next week so that we can do this (we will of course do this whilst maintaining the required distancing).

During Neighbourhood House Week we will be displaying your responses both at the House and on social media. We look forward to hearing from you!



DID YOU KNOW?

There are 1,000 Neighbourhood Houses and Centres spread across Australia – that's more than the number of McDonalds restaurants – and they provide safe, welcoming and inclusive spaces for people of all ages and backgrounds to connect with community, form friendships, and become involved in community projects, programs and groups.

To learn more, visit: <https://www.neighbourhoodhouseweek.com/>





WRITERS' CORNER

*This is a short essay by **Barry Dickins** about his days at Keon Park State School, where he says "I was never more joyous or protected from sadness".*

I was an overexcited seven when my friendly father gave me a hoist upon his shoulders in order to gawk at the brand new school called Keon Park State about four and a half back lanes away from our home in Reservoir and I still see that classroom from the safe perch I was on. It was a brand newness that always fascinated me such as the pong of a new rain hat or just-bought Tee Shirts that seemed to contain mothballs. I looked intently from my eyrie and beheld the big blackboard with a clock poised over it that appeared to say 1956.

My father said it was great to have a school on our side of the line, meaning the reservoir railway line because there had been a few accidents one way or another and this way the kids could run to school without the bother of getting run over.

My first morning in Grade 3E was the pride of my heart my mint-new plastic lunch box that contained two fresh Vegemite and raisin sandwiches and a small cordial flask with severely diluted orange cordial because Mum was running out of it. I went to that first day with my older brother John and he vigorously spat the prunes out of his sandwiches and said 'No offence' to our invisible mother who wouldn't have minded anyway.



You had to line up to get into the classroom that smelled of chalk and ink and new teachers all mixed together; some of the young teachers turned up on Vespa motor scooters and others walked there or shared a ride somehow or other. We were shown our wooden desks and how to place your mapping pen on the blacked groove that ran along the top of that desk and then we incredibly abruptly stood up nice and straight and sang 'God Save The Queen'.

Our first lesson was trying to handle the red or blue ink in our vitreous china ink wells and we were handed out small sheets of blotting paper that I assumed possessed mythical properties because you could neatly blot your lettering and observe it reproduced in reverse. It made my young heart pound!

I remember recess where the kids played basketball on an asphalt court without a proper basket ball and we improvised with a 'skun' tennis ball that meant there was no fur on it. We ran around to have great fun and burn off energy then the school bell rang very loudly and we wandered back into our various classrooms to become brilliant.



The male teachers wore extreme short hair and were sort of self-conscious-looking and were probably only in their young twenties but they had to wear a suit and tie with Ezywalkin' shoes which were dreadfully expensive I'm certain; and the young women teachers looked like Doris Day.



In Grade 3E we were given instruction to practice our hand-lettering which I adored because of the magic of blotting paper and we were read to by Miss Dunlea who was a gifted interpreter of stories that were published in The Victorian School Reader, which was free. Miss Dunlea read us the Highway Man breathlessly and even improvised hoof effects to add to the drama of her beautifully judged live reading; we kids had to sit on the floor to hear 'The Highway Man but it was well worth it I have to say!

We had Geography and there was a canvas multi-coloured map on the walls that showed in pink ink how many countries were owned by Great Britain and I in my cups wondered whether the English owned Keon Park.

Lunch time contained a decent swing on The Monkey Bars and long jump in the great paddock at the rear of the school that was full of purple prickles and it ran all the way down to the bottom of the school where my Uncle Len ran a milk bar.

As I came home that first day with my dear brother John he confessed he wanted to be a pilot for his living and I said I had no idea what I wanted to be but was glad to be a boy; that was all I've ever really wanted to be. Now I'm seven. A seventy year old boy!

I sat with my happy brothers at the family tea table where mum had invented spaghetti that she just made up. It was a bit thick that was all that was wrong with it but she had tipped a can of tap water in it on the stove to thin it a bit and the mince tasted a bit suss; but we said it was great and so it was great in its way!

Mum sang to us that night and my young brother Chris tipped his stewed apple upside down on his own head in his baby's chair and he laughed for doing that and Dad said he was hilarious and of course he was hilarious.





DO YOU HAVE FUNDRAISING OR FINANCE EXPERTISE?

As mentioned in last week's newsletter, the Railway House Committee of Management is looking to establish a Fundraising Subcommittee and a Finance Subcommittee, and we are looking for people to join these subcommittees, both of which will meet approximately four times a year.



The Fundraising Subcommittee will support staff in undertaking fundraising and sustainability initiatives and provide recommendations and advice to the Committee of Management, and the Finance Subcommittee will advise the Committee of Management on financial matters and risk management.

If you have fundraising or finance experience and are interested, please contact the office.

CLASSIFIEDS

Jane Miller has five Greek Basil seedlings to give away; please stop by Railway House next week Monday to Thursday between 10:00 and 1:00 if you're interested!

Greek Basil is a hardy shrub. The leaves are great in meaty casseroles. It is much stronger than regular basil. It has a pungent scent, flowers almost all year around and bees absolutely love it. As long as it is kept watered it will live in a pot in a sunny spot for years making it an ideal courtyard or verandah plant.



Have something you'd like to find a home for? Send it through to us and we can include it in the next newsletter.



FROM THE GARDEN SUBCOMMITTEE

Exciting news !!!

As the **New Community Garden** is getting closer to build day we are now asking our local community for donations of **tools and gardening supplies**.

We are looking for good quality equipment that can help build our **tool library**..

Shovels, gloves, buckets, wheel barrows, hose fittings etc!!

If you have anything to donate please contact:
Leilani from the garden committee. Her email is leilaniht@gmail.com

We are also creating a **seed bank**. Any extra seeds or saved seeds from your own garden would be incredibly helpful.

In an envelope seeds can be dropped directly at
The Railway Community house between 10-1pm Mondays - Thursday.

Please make sure to label you seeds.

If they come with a story, we would love to know it !!





AND FINALLY...

Railway House has long advocated for the rights of public housing residents. Many of our regular visitors live across the road in the public housing, and we hear firsthand of the difficulties they often face around maintenance and security.

Atherton Gardens resident Ranko Cosic is spearheading a petition — now circulating— calling for a public housing ombudsman to whom tenants can address their concerns. The idea is supported by veteran Yarra councillor Stephen Jolly and the Victorian Greens.



Mr Cosic says many public housing residents — who are among the most vulnerable in society and often don't speak fluent English — don't know where to complain or are reluctant to do so because of a lack of trust in authority figures. He says when they do complain, it often falls on deaf ears, or the Department of Health and Human Services is slow to act.

If you'd like to add your voice to this call for a Public Housing Ombudsman, please sign the petition: <https://www.change.org/p/department-of-health-and-human-services-victoria-we-need-a-public-housing-ombudsman>

For further reading, The Age ran an article on Mr. Cosic's campaign a few days ago: <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/issues-not-addressed-push-for-public-housing-ombudsman-20200427-p54nfl.html> and if you have any questions, please contact publichousingombudsmanpetition@gmail.com

