

How lucky I have been...

After 10 years of being part of something special I am now moving on. That something special being, of course, the Portarlington Neighbourhood House.

Ten years ago I was given the opportunity of being the Coordinator a new Neighbourhood House in Portarlington. I was excited by the challenge of establishing a Neighbourhood House in Portarlington, and I continue to be excited about what lies ahead for PNH, and for myself.

Establishing a new service has been a lot of fun and I have enjoyed working with a creative and hard working Committee of Management. Looking back to my first weeks in 'the job' we had a membership of about 40 people, a program of approximately 8 hours a week and finances that could only be described as precarious.

In writing this 'goodbye' article I am reflecting on how the principles of PNH, while occasionally changing to suit circumstances, have remained constant over its years of operation, they continue to be... *Same, Same but Different*. While as an organisation PNH has grown to 650 members, close to 60 hours of programming a week and is financially very stable... the skill-sharing principle has remained the same, because this principle has served the organisation well.

Underpinning the skill sharing and volunteer model is, of course, the willingness of the community in Portarlington to want to volunteer their time, talents and skills. In fact when attending Neighbourhood House Conferences, when I outline the PNH Model, I am often greeted with the response, "That is amazing, I can't imagine the community in which I work being as generous with their time as those in your community". It has been an absolute privilege to work in Portarlington and be part of this inspiring community.

For years now I have been driving here from Geelong, and as I have driven over the hill into Portarlington, been greeted with the beautiful water and on clear days a view of the city. On many occasions, I have reminded myself of how lucky I have been. In fact, there have been days when I have walked into the hall and have seen people smiling, laughing and organising to go out to lunch after their activity and once again I have looked on and pondered on my good fortune.

So thank you, lovely Portarlington community people, for having me work in your community for 10 years... I know when I look back in years to come, I really will be thinking... "how lucky I have been".

Julie Hyslop



'Same, same, but different' ...

'Same, Same, But Different'

This 'Tinglish' (Thai-English) phrase is 'used a lot in Thailand, especially in an attempt to sell something, but can mean just about anything, depending on what the user is trying to achieve.' *Urban Directory*

The catchcry, 'Same, Same, but different' is also used in Vietnam. The earliest records of use can be traced back to American Soldiers, who first heard it during the Vietnam War. 'Xem, Xem' (which sounds like same, same) means similar. It can be easily understood that maybe, 'Same, Same, but different' was actually the 'Vietglish' expression 'Xem, Xem but different'.

Another version of the origin is the direct translation of 'Khlai', which means 'similar' in Thailand. It is common for the Thai language to emphasise something by saying the word twice, so, they would say 'Khlai Khlai'. With the word 'similar' difficult to learn, the word 'same' was used as the translation!

The catchcry 'Same, Same, but different' has been used for a title of a movie and as well as a song. In Thailand it hard to escape this phrase, as it is printed on T Shirts for tourists to buy and is now ingrained in their language.

If we translate this catchcry to our own PNH circumstances, we will find that going forward, PNH still has the same programs, same ethos, same members and volunteers ... just different premises and a different coordinator!!

Most importantly, we still have the same mission, which is to provide programs and opportunities for members of the community to interact, participate and develop in a welcoming, supportive environment. That environment, through necessity, now exists at Parks Hall - it is 'same, same, but different'.

SKILL-SHARING MODEL

From our 2019 Coordinator:

Keeping with the central theme of this edition of the House Proud Newsletter... **'Same, Same, but Different'**, it is worth looking at the core model in which the Portarlington Neighbourhood House operates.

Since opening its doors just on 10 years ago, the committee - despite some not knowing exactly what Neighbourhood Houses did - *did* know that a Skill-Sharing Model would serve the Neighbourhood House and the community of Portarlington best! This decision has proven an excellent decision and is one of the reasons why PNH has a membership of 650 people, approximately 50 volunteers, and is a financially sound organisation.

So... exactly what is a Skill-Sharing model? A Skill-Sharing model is simply a model where people in the community volunteer their time, talents and interests and teach and/or facilitate groups. The benefits of this are many and varied and include:

- * Low cost (\$2.50 or \$3.00) per activity
- * Activities that are ongoing - not an 8-week course that ends after a specific period of time

In programming continual ongoing activities and groups that meet weekly, this model allows for real friendships and connections to be made. Hence, the Neighbourhood House does not employ or pay tutors or facilitators, but relies on the generosity of community members to volunteer their time and talents for all programs offered.

So, while the Portarlington Neighbourhood House continues to grow, change venue and develop in different directions, our pivotal model remains the same!

'Same life, different process'

Meditation is a natural process which simplifies life, deepens happiness and helps us develop our potential. We can't change the world in which we live but we can change our reaction to it. Meditation allows the mind to rest for a time by gently letting go of thoughts, ideas and activity. The process of meditation may be achieved by practising simple and natural breathing techniques. With practice and patience, the outcomes can be very rewarding.

PNH is lucky to have two tutors in this field: Jennifer Merrett, who tutors *Meditation and Tibetan Healing Bowls*, and Nicole Dixon, who tutors *Meditation and Mindfulness*. PNH was privileged to have a visit from Buddhist Monk, Venerable Namgyel, in August, who taught the attendees how to meditate. He also stressed the importance of not worrying about problems because:

- a) if you can fix the problem there should be no worry, and
- b) if you can't fix the problem there should be no worry!

Our tutors Jennifer (JM) and Nicole (ND) were interviewed by a member of the House Proud team, to explain how meditation can be 'same, same, but different':

Question 1: When did you first become interested in Meditation and why?

JM: I became interested in meditation in the mid-80s after experiencing some stressful situations. I took to it 'like a duck to water'.

ND: I became interested in meditation as a first-time mum, as I really needed a way to keep myself sane and cope with the stress of a new baby. I even tried to meditate for 5 minutes when the baby was asleep, just for some 'me' time. I found I was calmer and able to cope better by allowing this simple act of kindness to myself. This practice impacted positively on my family as well.

Question 2: Do you believe people need to adopt a mantra to meditate effectively?

JM: It's helpful but not necessary. All we need to do is be silent and go within.

ND: No, I don't believe a mantra is a necessity. However,

I know they work for some people. My thoughts on this are to do what works or feels comfortable for you. I sometimes run and meditate or just walk on the beach. I say things like 'I am lovable' or 'I am free' as this stills my mind and prevents it from wondering off to my 'to do' list. There is no such thing as a correct way to meditate...the best way to meditate is the one you WILL do.

Question 3: Do you meditate every day?

JM: Yes!

ND: No, sometimes 'life' just gets in the way! I aim to though, even if it's just for 5 minutes whilst I'm waiting to pick up the kids from school, but if I don't, I don't beat myself up. I just know my day is better when I do.

Question 4: Where is the best place for you to meditate?

JM: At first, I meditated in the same place every day with a familiar object nearby. Exercising discipline, I like to meditate early each morning.

ND: Anywhere, really, on my bed, in the car, on the couch, along the beach. My belief is you don't have to sit on a mountain top contemplating your belly button for 3 weeks to meditate! I like to put on a guided meditation from YouTube, close my eyes and just create a little space for me.

Question 5: What do you believe are the benefits of meditation?

JM: There are so many!* positivity

- * a peaceful mind * easier decision making
- * increased confidence * relaxation
- * better focus * manage stress & pain
- * clarity * better health & wellness
- * better sleep * renewed understanding of self

ND: Try it and you will find out how much it positively impacts your life! I am personally calmer, less scattered in my thoughts and I sleep better. **Do what feels right for you. It's your meditation, your space, your time. We all need to make room for self-care and it's FREE! The world would be a kinder, more peaceful place if everyone did a little bit of meditation.**

'Happiness is a vine that takes root and grows within the heart, never outside it.'

Our Vine

A vine conserves its energy
 In reaching for the light
 By using methods of support
 To keep itself upright.
 Its wide-flung, open arms embrace
 The other plants around,
 It winds its way among them all
 And weaves a structure sound.
 Once anchored, it begins to spread
 Its tendrils far and wide,
 All branching off its central stem
 And flourishing with pride.
 The PNH is our own vine,
 Transplanted, it is true,
 But it is of the same root stock,
 And will prosper and renew.
 The vision that has brought us here,
 Remains the same for all -
 To interact, participate ...
 But now we're in Parks Hall!
 So now we will accept, adapt
 To new surrounds and faces,
 And keep this little town of ours
 The very best of places!

‘Same lessons, different outlook’

‘Back to School for Seniors’ is one of our most-loved classes at PNH.

Here are some ‘same, same but different’ reflections of Santa, from a ‘Back to School for Seniors’ student:

‘Loud the water soughs and gurgles mid the rocks below the wall,

As we sit and wait for the Bellarine Express Ferry to arrive at 6 ‘clock.

You can feel and hear the anticipation rise through the crowd as the

Ferry moves closer to the dock.

Today was sunny, and as expected, there were quite a few people still on the beach.

I can vaguely remember, as a child, in the summer holidays, a similar scene.

The Ferry has docked, there is movement on the deck and there he is ...

Splendidly dressed, moving to the gangway with helpers.

The pier fills with little people and applause,

Santa has arrived in Portarlington.’



2020

MEMBERSHIP

Thank you to all of you who have already updated their membership for 2020!

Don’t forget to call in at the office to renew if you have not already done so!



What is Tai Chi?

Tai Chi is the ancient practice of combining slow deliberate movements, meditation and breathing exercises. It is not fast-paced or a fat burning workout. But ... it can improve blood circulation, alignment and balance and also restores energy. Tai Chi consists of exercises that especially balance **yin** and **yang**, where opposite forces are seen as interconnected and counterbalancing), which is why it is so effective. There are five different styles of Tai Chi: **Chen - Yang - Wu - Sun – Hao**.

There have been some changes in Tai Chi classes at the Neighbourhood House since the early days, according to Des, tutor of Tai Chi for Arthritis. At first, members followed a DVD until Jennifer came along. Jennifer then led and taught Tai Chi according to the practices of Dr Paul Lam from the Tai Chi for Health Institute (TCHI). Under the guidance of Jennifer, Tai Chi has become very popular, with two classes held weekly at the PNH.

Des, who is ‘79 years young’, started practising Tai Chi when he retired; he was the curator of the Salvia collection at Geelong Botanical Gardens. He was introduced to Tai Chi by a collector who taught at the Tai Chi Institute, and who lived to 101 years old. Des had been practising Tai Chi for about 5 years, when he was approached by Jennifer to become a trainer. He has been tutoring Tai Chi for around 18 months now. Along with Peter, who is training to become a tutor, Des continues to teach the practices of Dr Lam, incorporating 3 principles of Outward Movement, Body Structure & Internal Martial Art. Des continues to attend instruction workshops, and is particularly interested in the Martial Art Aspect of Tai Chi. Des, who was a 3rd level Black belt, also taught Martial Art for 15 years, but stopped practising for 25 years ... until Tai Chi came into his life.

As well as the health aspect of Tai Chi, Des enjoys the social aspect, in which members are encouraged to feel comfortable to discuss medical issues. He declares he is much fitter, loves learning and continues to learn because of Tai Chi. While classes may be different now at PNH, **the benefits of Tai Chi remain ‘same, same’**.

‘Same celebration, different country’

Christmas Traditions Across the World

In **Australia**, many families enjoy Carols By Candlelight on Christmas Eve and hang up stockings or pillow cases for presents. We leave biscuits and a glass of milk (or beer) for Father Christmas and something to sustain the reindeer. Lots of Australians enjoy a barbecue or picnic at the beach, although many Aussies still have a traditional hot Christmas Day meal. We pull colourful bonbons, wear flimsy paper hats and tell the lame jokes enclosed. **However, if you were to be elsewhere in the world at Christmas time, things would be the same, same, but different!**

Christmas Day is a public holiday in **Ethiopia**, celebrated on January 7. Christmas is known as Ganna or Genna. Many people fast for forty days before Ganna then head to church at dawn dressed in white. On Christmas Day, there will be colourful musical celebrations which involve priests dressed in their best robes, dancing and playing drums. Later in the afternoon everyone gets involved in a traditional game, a kind of hockey.

The Giant Lantern Festival is held on the Saturday before Christmas Eve in San Fernando, **Philippines**. Eleven villages take part, and competition is fierce as everyone pitches in to build the most elaborate lantern. Originally the lanterns were about 50 cms in diameter and made from Japanese origami paper, lit by candles. Today the lanterns are made from a variety of materials, including silk, and have grown to up to 6 m in diameter. They are now lit by electric bulbs that sparkle in a kaleidoscope of colours.

Since 1966, a 13-metre tall Yule Goat has been built in the centre of Gavle's Castle Square in **Sweden**. This Christmas tradition has unwittingly led to another ‘tradition’-people trying to burn it down! Since 1966, the goat has unsuccessfully burned 29 times. Festivities begin on December 13, St Lucia's Day (the patron saint of light). The eldest daughter of each Swedish family rises before dawn and dresses as ‘the Queen of Light’ in a long white dress and a crown made from leaves. Singing ‘Santa Lucia’, she goes to every bedroom to serve

coffee and treats to her family.

In **Austria**, St Nicholas rewards nice boys and girls, but his accomplice, Krampus, roams the streets frightening children. Krampus is a demon-like creature who captures naughty children and whisks them away in his sack. During the first week of December, men dress up as Krampus, scaring children with clattering chains and bells.

In the 13 days leading up to Christmas in **Iceland**, 13 troll-like characters (the Yule Lads) come out to play. Each night children place their best shoes by the window and a Yule Lad visits, leaving gifts for good boys and girls, and rotting potatoes for naughty ones!

In **Germany**, St Nicholas travels by donkey during the night of December 6 and leaves treats like coins, chocolate, oranges and toys in the shoes of good children. He also visits children at school and in hospital. In exchange for a gift each child must recite a poem, sing a song or draw a picture. St Nicholas often brings along Knecht Ruprecht (Farmhand Rupert), a devil-like character with a dirty beard, dressed in dark clothes covered with bells. He carries a stick or a small whip to punish any naughty children.

In Caracas, **Venezuela**, the city's residents head to church early on Christmas Day....on roller blades! Roads are closed so that people can skate safely before heading home to a Christmas lunch of tamales- a wrap made of cornmeal stuffed with meat then steamed.

In **Czech Republic** on Christmas Eve, single women stand with their backs to the front door and throw a shoe over their shoulder. If the shoe lands with the heel towards the door, she will remain single. If the toe of the shoe faces the door, she can start planning a wedding.

In the **Ukraine** trees are covered in artificial spider webs. According to legend, a poor widow had no money to decorate the family's tree. Some friendly spiders were grief-stricken when they heard the woman and her children crying, so that night the spiders decorated the tree with silver and gold webs. After that the family became prosperous and lucky.

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Canada has an actual postcode to send letters to Santa at the North Pole. It is: HOH OHO. Thousands of volunteers help Canada Post respond to the thousands of letters received, even those written in Braille.

In **Holland** children eagerly await the arrival of Sinterklaas on December 6. He is a kindly bishop wearing red robes and a very tall, pointed mitre. Sinterklaas travels by ship from Spain to Amsterdam, bringing his white horse and a huge sack of gifts. Families celebrate St Nicholas Eve at home with lots of food, hot chocolate and a 'letter blanket' - a cake made in the shape of the first letter of the family's surname.

People of the **Marshall Islands in Micronesia**, prepare for Christmas months in advance, stockpiling gifts and organising groups, called jeptas, who will compete in singing and dancing competitions on Christmas Day. They build a pinata-like wojke containing little presents like matches, coins or soap.

Greenland's traditional Christmas dish, kiviak, takes seven months to prepare! It begins with hollowing out a seal skin then stuffing it with 500 auks - a seabird, feathers and all - and leaving it to ferment.

South Africa is home to some of the world's most unusual Christmas food. Every December locals feast on the seasonal delicacy...deep fried caterpillars of Emperor Moths.

In Catalonia, **Spain**, they have a uniquely bizarre Christmas tradition called Caga Tio, or pooping log. Children decorate a small log with legs, a face, a hat and clothes. They feed it small pieces of bread or fruit every day at home or school. On Christmas Eve they hit Caga Tio with a stick while singing a special song, encouraging him to poop out plenty of sweets, especially turrón, a kind of nougat.

"The Night of the Radishes" is an annual Christmas custom in Oaxaca, **Mexico**. On December 23, competitors carve nativity scenes from radishes, which are proudly displayed at the Christmas market.

According to **Italian** legend, a kind witch called La

Befana flies around on her broomstick on the night of January 5, bringing gifts to worthy children and lumps of coal for naughty ones.

According to **Greek** legend, malicious goblins called Kallikantzari would come up from their underground homes on December 25 to play tricks on humans until January 6. Greek people believed they could rid their homes of these goblins by burning logs or old shoes, or hanging sausages in the chimney.



'The Night of the Radishes' ~ Oaxaca, Mexico



'Festive Poop Log' ~ Catalonia, Spain

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REPAIR CAFÉ ... 'same, same but different'
... turning old objects into new, usable objects ...
just by repairing them.

Repair Café

The concept of 'Repair Café' was devised by Martine Postma in 2009, and the first one was held in Fijnhout Theater, Amsterdam West, on 18th October 2009. Then, on 2nd March 2010, the Repair Café Foundation was set up. The Foundation was formed to support local groups around the world to set up their own Repair Cafes.

A Repair Café is a place where people take items that need to be repaired, such as household electrical and mechanical devices, computers, bicycles, clothing etc. Cafes are organised by locals for local residents. They are held at fixed locations where there are tools and volunteers to fix their broken goods.

The objectives are to reduce waste and things going to landfill, to maintain and teach repair skills, and to strengthen social cohesion. Currently there are over 1,500 Repair Cafes in 33 countries across the world. **We have over 20 Repair Cafes in Australia, and our own at Portarlington is one of these.**

Tim Sheed started the Repair Café in Portarlington on 11th May this year. Tim lives on the Bellarine and is an Australian Bush Poet. He got the idea from an advertising flyer he picked up in a supermarket in a small country town. Tim then roped in Peter, Roy and Jim as his helpers.

Peter Drew, from a very early age, has always been inquisitive and interested in finding out how things work. **Roy Johnson**, when interviewed, said, 'I enjoy repairing/fixing items which can be reused or recycled. This has always been in my blood! Keeping things working helps the environment and people.'

Jim Edmonston has always been interested in working with wood, and has liked being the handyman at home. Now he is using his expertise to assist a wider group. He joined the Repair Cafe for community involvement and to help others,

which he really enjoys. He is also trying to keep as many items as possible from going into landfill. Another reason was to help women who are on their own and can't afford to pay someone to fix things.

Together, these four men can fix just about anything. So, bring along your broken items and you will find tools, materials and volunteers with repair skills to help you mend them!

We are lucky to have so many people on the Bellarine who are really making a difference to our community, so well done everyone!

The Repair Café and the Portarlington Produce Tree Swap group run fortnightly on the **second Saturday of the month, between 10 and 11am, at the old Neighbourhood House premises in Brown Street.**

Cost is just \$2.



PNH Committee of Management 2020

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