

# Newsletter



Whose health is it anyway?

*Best wishes for the coming Christmas season and New Year.*

May you keep well and share this time with friends and loved ones. The Whose health is it anyway? Project and the University of Tasmania Department of Rural Health extend their thanks to all who have given their time, energy and shared something of themselves with the Project, throughout 2003. Your contribution is sincerely valued.

**Nicki Fletcher – Project Site Manager**

**Mersey-Leven Area: Spring/Summer, 2003**

## Peer leaders put up their hands

The Whose health is it anyway? Project has been significantly boosted in energy, capacity and numbers by four recently-trained peer leaders.

Tai Chi enthusiast Shirley Lee of Devonport has become an accredited Tai Chi for Arthritis leader after many years practicing the age-old art herself. Shirley joined with physiotherapist Barbara Foster, arthritis educator Julie Milnes and a group of Sheffield people in a two-day instructors workshop in Launceston in August. The workshop was run by Dr Paul Lam, who created the program.

Shirley is currently working with Barbara and leading more than 50 people through the gentle Tai Chi for arthritis program at the Devonport Community Health and Services Centre. To enrol in introductory Tai Chi classes in 2004 call Barbara at the centre on 6421 7728. Classes are free. The classes are suited to all ages, all conditions and all levels of fitness.



The project also has three newly-trained Get the Most Out of Life peer leaders, who will help out in the chronic disease self management programs which run throughout the year.

Di Yaxley of Latrobe, Kathleen Dewar of Port Sorell and Tony Brooker of Devonport spent four days training during August with a Sheffield 'contingent' and health workers from around the State, learning the ropes from Arthritis Tasmania instructors Maggi Koerbin and Rose Hethrington.

Di and Kathleen are currently running a Get the Most Out of Life course with Devonport physiotherapist, Deborah Bell at the Devonport Library.

Anyone interested in enrolling in a course next year should contact the Whose health is it anyway? Project on 6421 7795.



*(l-r) Kathleen Dewar, Tony Brooker and Di Yaxley at the Get the Most Out of Life leader training.*

## CHRONIC PAIN SUPPORT PROGRAM

People suffering chronic pain are being encouraged to join a support program being run by Community Health social worker, David Cameron. The program is designed for people of any age or condition and is being run from the Community and Health Services Centre in Devonport, every Friday from 1.30 to 3.30 pm. David said the program recognizes the value of people helping themselves and others in a group environment by sharing their experiences, knowledge of alternative therapies and understanding. "The experience of constant, unrelenting pain can make a person feel isolated," David said. "People are often convinced that no-one else can understand their suffering and this can easily lead to depression, frustration and loneliness regardless of how many people you have around you."

David said that the program was by no means a substitute for medical treatment, but was more like a beneficial supplement to the treatment of the physical condition. He said the group would endeavour to have regular guest speakers and will cover topics such as the effects of medication and less conventional approaches to dealing with pain.

David can be contacted at the centre on 6421 7780.

## Managing stress and building self esteem

David also coordinates a group for people coping with stress in their daily lives and struggling to feel positive about themselves, and their life. "If you're feeling under stress, anxious, depressed, lacking energy or the confidence to deal with people and stressful situations, then you might benefit from joining the group," David said. The sessions are confidential and free and are held at the Devonport Community House at 10 Morris Ave on Wednesdays from 10 am until noon. Give David a call if you'd like to register on 6421 7780 or call Leanne on 6424 7060.

## Leaders meet with program creator

Get the Most Out of Life leaders from around Tasmania had the rare opportunity to meet with one of the creators of the international chronic disease self management program, in Campbell Town in July.

Professor Kate Lorig, of Stanford University California, was in Australia for a national chronic disease conference and spent the day discussing the program with the local group. Stanford University is trialling an on-line version of the program in the US, and it is increasingly being offered around the world.

*North-West leaders in the Get the Most Out of Life program who attended the meeting with Prof Kate Lorig (second left) are (l-r) Dawn Parker, peer leader; Lynne Wickham, Asthma Tasmania; Julie Milnes, Arthritis Tasmania; Coralanne Hill and Angela Barrington, Kentish Regional Health Services; Nicki Fletcher, Whose health is it anyway? Project and John Cassidy, fitness instructor and peer educator.*



## Carelink support group register

The Commonwealth Carelink Centre has developed a central register of support groups along the North West Coast and is encouraging people with chronic conditions to link up with others in their local area. The list of support groups is extensive, from walking groups to stroke support, and staff can provide you with local contacts. If you are part of a support group and your group would like to be registered with Carelink (at no cost), it is worth giving them a call.

Carelink also provides free information about a range of services for people with disabilities and older Tasmanians, and is based in Burnie.

The Centre has information on:

- Support for carers
- Household help and home modifications and maintenance
- Personal, nursing and respite care
- Transport and meal services
- Disability services
- Day care and therapy centers
- Assessment for aged care
- Special services for dementia
- Continence assistance
- Aged care homes
- A range of allied health care

Carelink is also linked to other centers around Australia, and can connect you to a regional or metropolitan centre interstate via their freecall number: 1800 052 222. This is a particularly valuable services for Tasmanian who are supporting elderly relatives or friends interstate. Carelink staff are also making regular visits to Devonport to provide a face-to-face service to people in the Mersey-Leven area.

**Call them on 1800 052 222**

## Puffin Club for Easier Breathers

Devonport-based physiotherapist Babara Foster and asthma educator Lynne Wickham are starting a regular follow-up session next year for people who have completed the highly regarded Easier Breathing Course.

Lynne said there had been strong demand for an ongoing program for people with asthma and respiratory conditions, to build on the gains made through the 10-week Easier Breathing program which has been running for a number of years.

"We've had a so many people come to us after the program asking 'what next?'" Lynne said. "Its wonderful to be able to offer just a half hour per week follow-up that will keep people motivated to continue their breathing techniques and keep them in contact with the friends they have made through the program."

The Puffin Club will start on February 4th next year and will most likely be held on Wednesday afternoons at the Devonport Community and Health Services Centre between 2 and 2.30 pm. It will focus on exercise and breathing techniques in a relaxed, enjoyable atmosphere. Participants must have completed an Easier Breathing Program prior to starting.

The Easier Breathing Program will be underway again in 2004 starting in Devonport on Wednesday February 11 till April 14; April 28th till June 30th; July 21st till September 22nd and October 6th till December 8th. Classes are free and are jointly run by a physiotherapist, respiratory educator, occupational therapist, asthma educator, social worker, dietitian and representative of Lungs in Poor Shape (LIPS). The program includes individual pre-program and post-program assessments.

For further information on the Puffin Club, Easier Breathing Program or LIPS contact Lynne Wickham on 6421 7789.

## Exercise sessions for older people

### Strength Training

Introductory classes with Barbara Foster, physiotherapist  
Devonport Community Health Services Centre

An 'get started' class in an informal, friendly atmosphere with over 50s. Work at your own pace to increase your strength, flexibility and fitness. Classes are popular so you may have to go on a waiting list. **Phone Barbara on 6421 7728. For Port Sorell Classes call Tricia on 6427 0516**

### Tai Chi for Arthritis

Classes held every week with Barbara Foster, physiotherapist and Shirley Lee, peer leader  
Devonport Community Health Services Centre. Increases balance, flexibility and overall sense of well-being. Introductory classes suited to anyone with a chronic condition or without. Men and women encouraged to attend. **Phone Barbara on 6421 7728.**

### Living Longer Living Stronger Devonport.

Classes held in Stephen St, East Devonport and Devonport Recreation Centre, Forbes St  
Cost: \$30 for assessment and individual program (once-off cost) then \$5 per session.  
With Tricia Nancarrow, accredited instructor. A great follow-on from the Strength Training sessions so you don't lose your motivation, and build on the gains already made. Programs tailored to older people and endorsed by the Council of the Ageing. **Phone Tricia on 64270516 or 0409 502 120**

### Living Longer Living Stronger Ulverstone

Classes held on two days. Gym behind the basketball stadium, Leven St (West Ulverstone)  
With David Beard, accredited instructor. Progressive resistance training that starts at your level and gently and gradually increases weights. Doctor's clearance required.  
Cost: \$30 for assessment, then \$36 for 8 sessions for \$5 per session.  
**Phone David on 6425 6203 or 0419 504 511**

### Seniors training classes

Regular classes for beginners or those who have completed the introductory strength training:  
Cost: \$5 per session. Personal sessions by arrangement  
Cost: \$35 for assessment and individual program, then 10 visits for \$50 or \$7 per session  
With John Cassidy, personal instructor and accredited fitness trainer.  
**Phone John on 0417 143 056**

### Gym sessions for Seniors

Fitwitz, 169 Steele St, Devonport  
**Ph 6424 6546**

*Get your name down early for 2004!*

## Standing Steady

More than 50 people decided that 'staying on their feet' was important enough to set aside half a day of their time, when they attended the Standing Steady workshop at the Devonport Community and Health Services Centre, in August.

The workshop was held as part of healthy bones week and was jointly organized by the Whose health is it anyway? Project and Arthritis Tasmania. It focused on the risk factors associated with getting older, taking medications and living with a chronic condition such as arthritis or osteoporosis.

Seven health professionals including a pharmacist, podiatrist, optometrist, occupational therapist and arthritis educator gave 15-minute presentations about preventing falls. The session concluded with some basic strength training exercises lead by physiotherapist, Barbara Foster.

The University Department of Rural Health also ran a series of free falls prevention seminars around the state in September.



At the workshop (l-r)  
Ben West, pharmacist;  
Victor Slavin and  
Michael McLaren,  
Carelink.



(l-r) Mary Adams, Consumer  
Representative for the Whose health  
is it anyway? Project, Dianne Kelly,  
Meals on Wheels and Judith Martin.

## A Young Girl Still Dwells

This poem was written by a woman who died in the old folks' ward of Ashludie Hospital near Dundee, in Scotland. It was found among her possessions and so impressed the staff that copies were widely distributed throughout the hospital, and beyond ...

*What do you see, nurse, what do you see?  
Are you thinking when you look at me -  
A crabbid old woman, not very wise,  
Uncertain of habit with faraway eyes?  
Who dribbles her food and makes no reply  
When you say in a loud voice, "I do wish you'd try!"  
Who seems not to notice the things that you do,  
And forever is losing a stocking or shoe?  
Who resisting or not, lets you do as you will  
With bathing and feeding, the long day to fill?  
Is that what you're thinking, is that what you see?  
Then open your eyes, nurse, you're looking at me.  
I'll tell you who I am as I sit here so still.  
As I move at your bidding, eat at your will...  
I'm a small child of ten with a father and mother,  
Brothers and sisters who love one another;  
A young girl of sixteen with wings on her feet,  
Dreaming that soon a love she'll meet;  
A bride at twenty my heart gives a leap,  
Remembering the vows that I promised to keep;  
At twenty-five now I have young of my own  
Who need me to build a secure, happy home;  
A woman of thirty, my young now grow fast,  
Bound together with ties that should last;  
At forty, my young sons have grown up and gone,  
But my man's beside me to see I don't mourn;  
At fifty, once more babies play round my knee,  
Again we know children my loved ones and me.  
Dark days are upon me; my husband is dead,  
I look at the future, I shudder with dread.  
For my young are all rearing young of their own,  
And I think of the years and the love that I've known.  
I'm an old woman now and nature is cruel;  
'Tis her jest to make old age look like a fool.  
The body it crumbles, grace and vigor depart;  
There is a stone where I once had a heart.  
And now, again, my embittered heart swells.  
I remember the joys, I remember the pain,  
And I'm loving and living life over again,  
I think of the years, all too few, gone too fast,  
And accept the stark fact that nothing can last,  
So open your eyes nurse, open and see  
Not a crabbid old woman,  
Look closer - see me.*

# HAVE YOUR MEDICINES REVIEWED

A new scheme that enables people to have their medications reviewed in their own homes has been introduced by the Commonwealth Government.

One of the main benefits of the Home Medicines Review is that you, your pharmacist and your GP are all involved and informed.

A Home Medicines Review involves a pharmacist visiting you (or the person you are caring for) in your home and spending some time with you on a one-to-one basis discussing your medication:

- what it is for
- how it works
- why it's important

and ensuring that any medicine devices are being used correctly (eg inhalers, nebulisers, blood glucose machines etc). The pharmacist will also cover any other issues you have relating to medication management and talk about any over-the-counter medications or complementary therapies you may be taking. The interview may take anything from half an hour to an hour.

## What next ...

The pharmacist will then prepare a report which is sent to your GP. At your next appointment, you and your GP can discuss the report and agree on any changes that might need to be made to your medication plan over the next 12 months or so.

Both your GP and pharmacist are reimbursed (and encouraged by the Commonwealth Government to take part in this scheme) and GPs will bulk bill Medicare for the review, so there is no cost to you!

## How you can organise a Home Medicines Review

- you can ask your GP to contact the pharmacy you use regularly to organise a review
- your pharmacist or community nurse can suggest to your GP that you have your medications reviewed, however
- you do need a referral from your GP.

The North West Division of General Practice has employed a local pharmacist to assist GPs who wish to know more about this scheme.

# Eating with Friends

In 1999 studies of people receiving Meals on Wheels indicated that more than three quarters of them ate alone most of the time ... so Eating with Friends was born.

The Eating with Friends program began in West Moonah as a pilot project and is making its way around the state to communities where there is a need, a will and some enthusiastic volunteers. A community forum held in Burnie in October attracted more than 20 people interested in setting up Eating with Friends groups, from community houses to church groups and keen volunteers.

The benefits of a shared meal include:

- stimulation from talking and socialising with others
- improved nutrition and a greater variety of foods
- outings to places of interest
- enjoyment of entertainment and listening to speakers of interest, and
- low cost meals.

In a nutshell, Eating with Friends is simply a community idea that provides an opportunity for socially isolated people to come together to enjoy meals, make new friends and delight in new experiences.

As one lady put it "I don't want to have to play bingo every week just to be able sit down and have a chat with a few nice people."

Devonport Community Dietitian Kacey Rubie can assist people interested in starting or joining an Eating with Friends group, and there is a step-by-step action kit available as well. Call Kacey on 6421 7757 or the Whose health is it anyway? Project on 6421 7795 for further information.

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[www.ruralhealth.utas.edu.au/shc](http://www.ruralhealth.utas.edu.au/shc)

*Whose health is it anyway? Project is a Commonwealth Sharing Health Care initiative and is managed by the University of Tasmania Department of Rural Health*

## Understanding grief workshop draws 60

Understanding grief was the focus of a workshop attended by about 60 people in Devonport in August with respected psychologist and educator, Dr Colleen Jackson. Dr Jackson is with the Sisters of Charity Outreach Service in Devonport, providing grief counselling as well as community and professional training. The workshop covered:

- Why people experience grief
- Different phases of grief
- Different reactions to grief
- Helping others through grief

and challenged widely-held misconceptions about the personal impact and causes of grief.

Sisters of Charity Outreach offer grief companion training for people interested in supporting others, and can be contacted on 6424 9830 for further information. The workshop was organized by the Whose health is it anyway? Project as part of its community education program.