

mini MICAH

September 2007

Hello, and welcome to *mini MICAH*.

What's been happening

- Γ MacKillop Family Services' **Soul Art** visited Federation Square from 13 - 30 August. Soul Art is artwork from the souls of kids who have been victims of child abuse, children with significant disabilities and kids who have not experienced the love of family.
- Γ CSSV held its Annual Dinner on Thursday 30th August at Moonee Valley Racing Club and an enjoyable evening was had by all who attended. We were suitably entertained by **Sir Murray Rivers QC (Retired)**, who is of course the stage persona of celebrated satirist **Bryan Dawe**. After his presentation, Bryan mixed with guests, much to their delight.

What's coming up

- Γ The St Francis Conference of St Vincent de Paul Society is conducting "Social Justice in the City" - the first of which is **Mental Health Issues** to be held on Wednesday 26 September at 12.10pm at the St Francis Pastoral Centre, cnr Lonsdale & Elizabeth Streets.

Who am I?

Each issue, we profile someone in the CSSV community. In this issue, we hear from Patrick Wright from Catholic Prison Ministry.

Q: Patrick please tell us about where you work and what you do.

I am part of the prison ministry team headed by Sr Mary O'Shannassy, and that comprises a very special group of people. I talk with men in prison.

Q: Has something interesting or funny happened at your work recently?

This week, after the official dedication of the chapel at the Metropolitan Remand Prison, an innocent empty suit case observed in the prison car park lead to an unexpectedly long stay in that prison. There was a sense of special bonding with many of the 'stayers' - including Margaret Casey. We observed the drama of the robot inspecting the suit case, opening it, and then a very well Kevlared police person making a final inspection. The police person was very impressive, but I must admit to being a little disappointed in the robot. I am sure it was happy in itself, in its roboticity, and that it felt quite fulfilled and had a basic confidence in its doing, being and in its role. It seemed quite introverted - probably an ISTJ I would think, and seemed quite anxious to help. But then it is not fair to assume these things. But the major let-down and disappointment was the absence of Dalek or R2D2-type flashing lights or any of your well known robot noises. I must write to Christine Nixon about this, perhaps the Office for Robot Integrity....

Q: Have you a piece of advice or words of encouragement that has helped you in life or work?

I have received many pieces of wisdom from men I talk to, but two pieces especially hold much power for me.

One man told me as we shared coffee “Patrick, you know the problem is - that we all get caught up in our own bullshit”. The hairs on the back of my neck rose; I am hearing a universal truth here, yes! I/we do get caught up in our own bullshit. He continued, “and the other problem is - that we get caught up in other peoples’ bullshit”. Yes, yes I do....

Another man taught me about Psalm 23.4. He was an alcoholic, had been rock-bottom socially, health wise, spiritually, self esteem, confidence, depression, grieving - all of it. He said with a quiet assurance and with eyes with some pain, alive with a gentle wonder “you know Patrick, it is important to remember three things - there is a valley of darkness. God is there with us, and we do pass through it”. The neck hairs arose again.

I am sure God calls me to ministry to put me in touch with my humanity, my brokenness, and my need for God to grace me towards wholeness. It really is a sacred place for me and for God

Q: How do you wind down or relax?

Aerobics, especially step aerobics. The instructors sometimes have trouble in coming to terms with this older fellow who was doing aerobics before they were born, and who remembers well the era before Les Mills, of leg warmers, scrunchies and leotards!

I also like to clean the house, do the shopping, make sure the garden is tidy, cook meals, put out the rubbish, and do all the domestic activities I love.

Also in my spare time I like to write - fantasy.

Q: Have you a particular role model?

None in particular. Bill Clinton, what a man, what a survivor. Also Martin Luther King, his speech the day before he was killed (---I have seen the promised land ...) still draws tears. Nelson Mandela an example of truth and forgiveness, of wisdom, of lightness and of play. Oscar Romero an example growing insight, struggle, fear and courage. The themes of brokenness and redemption and grace and the delight of God move me powerfully.

Q: Which footy team do you support and why?

Good veterinary friends from years ago, Kevin and Josephine Bell, worked with the Columban priests in Korea. They had some 4 children (all boys) of their own and decided to adopt a Korean girl. Alas, there were no girls available so they were persuaded to adopt a boy, whom they called Peter. Over the years I lost contact with them, but occasionally wondered what became of Peter? Then one Saturday in September a few years ago I saw him. He was playing in the grand final for North Melbourne! The rejected Korean baby had reached the ultimate that Australia can offer. I wept. Since then Peter Bell has gained a law degree, was captain of the Dockers, and still plays for them. Soooo..... I have a special interest in the Dockers.

Send us your news – any information on what your agency is doing will be greatly appreciated.

mini MICAH thrives on news! Send your news, updates, and any items of interest to miniMICAH@css.org.au.

Catholic Social Services Victoria

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