

Media Release

15 May 2020

Pen pals bridge 70-year age gap

Social isolation and teenage kindness have been the catalyst for some unlikely new friendships!

Year nine students from Aquinas College have been writing to 12 new 'pen pals' at our Corpus Christi Aged Care Residence in Clayton since early May in a bid to lift spirits and connect.

May 18-24 is National Volunteer Week. Each year VMCH celebrates the fantastic work our 600-plus volunteers of all ages across our aged and disability services.

Charlotte, aged 15, has been paired with Sr. Isla, aged 89. In her first letter, Charlotte wrote about her eight pets and love of sewing, singing, dancing and craft.

"I decided to join this program as I wanted to help the vulnerable people in our community at this time," she said. "It has brought me so much joy that I can help someone who is isolated like myself. I think volunteering is a great thing to do because the rewards it brings are so nice. It feels really good to know you are helping someone!"

Sr Isla said she was "happy to see that students like Charlotte are reaching out into the community".

Alistair, 14, was keen to give his pen pal Jim, 81, some advice for keeping entertained in iso.

"I hope you are okay and feeling well through these hard times of COVID-19 and that you are still seeing friends and family from afar," he wrote. "Shows like Brooklyn Nine-Nine will help you feel less bored in this time. You can watch it on Netflix."

Jim said: "I was very happy to receive the letter. I have never had a pen pal before. I wrote to Alistair that I've been spending my time doing things I enjoy, like watching news programs, Millionaire Hot Seat, playing bingo, trivia and word games."

Alistair said volunteering was "a great thing to do, especially in these hard times".

"I believe that volunteering is something really nice to do for anyone and it can change their day. Knowing you made someone's day better is such a good feeling."

And as restrictions begin to slowly lift across Victoria, the correspondence has likewise lifted the spirits of residents who have been missing physical contact with loved ones.

Thank you to Alistair, Charlotte and all VMCH volunteers – we appreciate your support!

If you are interested in volunteering with VMCH, call 1800 036 377 or visit: vmch.com.au/get-involved/volunteer-with-us/

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About VMCH

Here at VMCH, our services are as diverse as the people we support.

Our values underpin the work we do. As a Catholic not for profit organisation, compassion, respect and inclusion aren't just words to us, they guide us in everything we do.

While we've been around for over a century, we're always moving forward. Always staying true to who we are by supporting people and families to live their best lives; providing a place to call home and spaces to learn and grow.

Our professional and compassionate teams are with you on your life journey; helping you with a wide range of support from early learning and therapy, specialist education, disability services, affordable homes, residential aged care, retirement living and at-home aged care.

