

Media Release

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Growing Together in aged care

"I think there can be things going on in your life, but when you are in the garden, there's so much peace."
Beryl, aged care resident.

Moving into aged care can be a challenging time for many, particularly for those who leave behind a garden cultivated through a lifetime of joy and love.

Beryl, aged 84, joined for-purpose organisation VMCH's Wantirna aged care home last year. And while she's enjoying her new life and friendships, what she does miss is her garden.

"I loved all my different coloured roses and my magnolia tree. My daughter, who's an avid gardener, would always say, 'Mum, I'm so proud of you having all these plants'."

With this in mind, VMCH is pleased to launch its latest fundraising appeal, Growing Together, set to help aged care residents like Beryl reconnect with their love of gardening, and connect with each other.

"We hope to raise \$90,000 for a sensory garden at our Wantirna residence, featuring fruit and veggie patches, potting and tool sheds, beautiful flower beds, and even chickens!" says CEO Sonya Smart.

"The benefits of sensory gardens are widely known, particularly for those living with dementia. They support cognitive function, boost emotional and physical wellbeing, and stimulate the five senses. However, one of the most important aspects of the garden will be the opportunity for residents to connect with a shared purpose, forming new friendships and helping to reduce social isolation."

As part of the program, aged care Lifestyle teams are excited at the prospect of starting individual and group workshops, for gardening, planting, maintenance, woodwork skills and harvesting.

Beryl says having a sensory garden would be a "blessing".

"When we (residents) are all together, we will make a beautiful garden."

Resident Graeme says he'd love the opportunity to grow vegetables in the garden.

"Before I came here, I had a nice garden in the backyard – vegetables mainly. I'd get the vegetables ready for mum, who cooked the most magnificent roast. I would absolutely love a sensory garden. It would bring the people who don't get out as much into the garden, and they can get involved in it."

Sonya says the Wantirna sensory garden will be a pilot program.

"While we do enjoy maintaining lovely gardens at our aged care residences, special projects like this require community support," Sonya says. "Once successfully established, we hope to roll this out at our other aged care homes, bringing joy to hundreds more residents across Victoria."

If you would like to make a donation to the Growing Together appeal, call 1300 698 624 or visit www.vmch.com.au/donate

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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, for-purpose organisation, love, joy, hospitality and courage 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.