

Media Release

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Café serves up intergenerational fun for residents, trainees and children

A unique social enterprise café on Victoria's surf coast has become a thriving community hub for aged care residents, trainees with disability, and young customers.

Star Café opened in December 2022 at Star of the Sea Aged Care Residence in Torquay. Run by for-purpose aged and disability services provider VMCH, the café aims to provide people with disability invaluable work experience, and some café culture and connections for older residents and families.

Café Coordinator Cathy Rundle says six months on, the café is delivering on both of these, and much more.

"We're so delighted the local community has embraced the café, which has become a meeting place for young families and visiting grandchildren and great-grandchildren of residents.

"We've set up a kids' corner with colouring books, puzzles, games and toys, and child-friendly dining options have become big drawcards."

Having witnessed beautiful connections between aged care residents, younger trainees, and visiting children, Cathy and aged care staff recently organised a special school holiday activity focused on inclusion for all ages.

Residents, trainees and children enjoyed a fun afternoon of bingo, balloon exercise, some delicious party food and face painting.

"Everyone had an absolute ball," Cathy says. "Our trainees are already forming friendships with residents and their families, and the residents' faces really light up when they're around the little ones, it's beautiful to witness."

Star of the Sea Aged Care Lifestyle Coordinator Jen Cotsopolous agreed.

"It was joyful and loud! The children really lifted their spirits. Residents reminisced about their childhoods and bonded with the children. The emotional, physical, recreational and mental benefits of the intergenerational activities were plain to see."

Resident June Clarke described the event as "wonderful". "I'm already looking forward to next time," she says.

Lindy-Joy is one of nine trainees with disability currently working at the café, building on food prep, money handling and customer service skills, on her pathway to potentially finding paid employment down the track.

She says the inclusion day was "lots of fun" and she loved winning bingo!

Cathy said the future of the café looks bright, with many exciting initiatives – including more intergenerational inclusion days – on the horizon.

"We have connected with several mums' groups and local charity Geelong Mums, for whom we've set up a donation collection point at the café where people can leave their pre-loved baby items. Hosting kids' parties is also on the cards, and we have the support of the local primary school who have used us for catering.

"Star Café really is a special place that means a lot to many people."

Star Café is located at Star of the Sea Aged Care Residence, 1290 Horseshoe Bend Road, Torquay.

Media enquiries

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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, 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.

