



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

SPARK News

Dear supporter,



While School holidays are in full swing we're busy here at SPARK training new volunteers, running holiday programs and planning activities for the term ahead.

As we look back on Term 1 we say welcome and thank you to the 29 new volunteers, 2 new bilingual Arabic facilitators and 1 new Partner school Yennora PS who have all joined SPARK for the first time. With a small team and a lot of support from volunteers, schools and community partners we have been able to reach over 2500 people so far this year!

Read on to see some of the ways we are building strong and connected communities.

A Very Welcome Dinner

Last term SPARK was happy to partner with Joining The Dots and Fairfield PS for the first ever [Welcome Dinner](#) hosted at any primary school nation-wide! Dozens of newly arrived families and established Australians came together to get to know each other, share food, stories, conversations and a sense of community.



'I am honoured to be part of this welcome dinner. This dinner is making me feel like part of a big happy family,' said one mother who had been in Australia less than 2 years.

Thank you to all the teachers, volunteers and participants involved whose enthusiasm and time ensured it was a great success!

SPARK's first Teddy Bear Hospital

For the first time ever SPARK partnered with the UNSW Paediatric Society to deliver the Teddy Bear



Hospital to Bright Sparks kids at Old Guildford PS at the end of last term. Volunteers studying medicine at UNSW ran five different stations: *Teddy Operation*, *Dr's Bag*, *Healthy Eating*, *What to do in an Emergency* and *Your Bones*.

These fun activities helped children better understand health, the role of doctors and what to do in an emergency. Many listened to their hearts with a stethoscope for the first time, others said they wanted to be doctors when they grew up! The next Teddy Bear Hospital will be run in Term 2 at Guildford Public School.

Refugee Kids get Active

SPARK has continued its partnership with PHOR (Promoting Healthy Outcomes for Refugees) to deliver Active Kids sessions this school holidays. Last Wednesday over 25 children from different schools in Fairfield spent the day cooking pizza and pikelets before burning off the calories through stations run by SPARK staff and volunteers.



These fun activities help newly arrived refugee children understand the key benefits of a healthy lifestyle. Active Kids will run again this Friday 22nd April at Auburn Centre for Community.

From the Suburbs to the Bush

The second ever SPARK Bush Walking Excursion saw 7 parents and 11 children venture from the suburbs of Fairfield to the Bush and Water views of Berry Island.



For two families who had only been in Australia a matter of months, it was their first ever Bush Walk in Australia. Families were able to learn about Australian plants and animals as well as being able to view Aboriginal rock carvings.

Thank you to volunteers Zhi, Mark and Johansen for giving your time on a Saturday to connect newly arrived families with beautiful places in Sydney that are only a train ride away!

Bright Sparks Volunteers have their say

Term 1 saw Bright Sparks run across 9 partner schools, reach over 170 children and engage over 100 volunteers every week. In our bi-annual Bright Sparks volunteer survey we asked our volunteers for ideas, feedback and to reflect on what SPARK can do better.



The results are in and 100% of our volunteers agreed

that SPARK supports children gain skills for learning in the classroom and develops their english language and conversation skills. Volunteers also helped us identify areas where we can improve including building aspirational thinking and developing their social skills.

Thank you to all the volunteers who gave feedback and shared their stories! Your suggestions help us to find the best ways SPARK can help newly arrived children settle into and thrive in the community.

More Opportunities with Volunteer Plus!

From Bush Walking Excursions, Welcome Dinners to Active Kids, SPARK are looking for volunteers passionate about supporting these community events. If you are interested in volunteering at any of the above events or programs please email spark@vinnies.org.au with 'Volunteering Opportunities' in the headline.



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