



St Vincent de Paul Society  
*good works*

## SPARK News

Dear supporter,

August has been full of change, development and positive community outcomes for the SPARK program. The team ran the City to Surf to raise funds for St Vincent de Paul, held the Teddy Bear Hospital for the third time, partnered with a new school, farewelled an inspirational manager and received some inspiring stories of impact from newly arrived parents. Find out more below!



## Thank you & Farewell Cyril O'Connor

This month SPARK bid farewell to Cyril O'Connor who leaves the SPARK team after two years as Program Manager. Cyril was instrumental in building countless partnerships, developing new programs and building the SPARK team and program into what it is today.



Cyril's passion, strategic and long-term thinking, emphasis on outcomes for the community and relationship building have ensured that SPARK now has a broader and stronger impact than ever. A message from Cyril:

*'SPARK is a fantastic program and a true reflection of welcome and community participation, made possible by the commitment, energy and passion of everyone who supports and shares its goals - staff, bilingual workers, volunteers, parents, teachers and community partners. I have had a lot of fun working with such passionate and energetic people. Good bye and the very best of wishes to everyone involved with SPARK!'*

The many programs, partnerships and projects Cyril has developed will continue on with the support of interim manager Deborah Petlueng and the dedicated SPARK team.

## Welcome Fairvale Public School



This term SPARK begins its partnership with Fairvale Public School, our fourth school in the Fairfield Local Government Area. Program Officer Katherine has been working closely with Fairvale Community Liaison Officers and staff to plan and deliver a range of programs.

**The Bilingual Book Club** started last week with over 26 books borrowed by 10 parents in 8 different languages. **Bright Sparks Tutor** has also started with the support of Bilingual worker Anne. This program supports select newly arrived children who need curriculum-focused support in the class room.

SPARK are excited about the many ways we can work with the Fairvale community to support newly arrived families and have already begun planning the very popular **Circus Program** in Term 4!

### Talking Partnership: SPARK speaks at Symposium



Last Friday SPARK Staff members Louise and Grace spoke on a panel at the first *Community Service Coordination Symposium* in Fairfield. Louise shared SPARK's approach to partnership that includes taking a long-term strategic approach, prioritising building relationships and thinking outside of the box. Grace spoke about how these principles are implemented on the ground through a case study of the Kids & Blokes event that involved 6 partners and resulted in a huge outcome for the community.

SPARK strongly believes in the value of partnering with and building relationships within the community and we are proud of the many ways in which these partnerships have positively influenced the communities we work with.

Thank you Communities for Children Fairfield for inviting us to speak and to all of our many partners who share our vision of Inspiring Inclusive Communities.

### SPARK Stories: Old Guildford parents focus on Early Years



For the first time ever SPARK ran Parent workshops at Old Guildford Public School early this term. The workshops focused on Early Years Learning and attracting 14 parents from non-english speaking backgrounds. The workshop was delivered by Program Officer Claire and focused on strategies for enriched child giving for children ages 0 - 5.

After attending the workshop one mother shared how she had now begun incorporating singing into her bed-time routine with her children. She spoke about how her children are more confident and happy, asking mum to sing the song when she forgets. Other parents shared how they had simply taken more time to spend with their children which resulted in less stress and a better and happier relationship with their children!

Thank you Old Guildford Public School for partnering with us on these workshops and volunteers Mariam and Ghada for supporting on the day.

## Mini Vinnies learn about the Refugee Journey

A Refugee Journey



In late July SPARK Volunteer Community and Engagement Officer Indu spoke to a group of excited primary school children about the journey Refugees often undertake. During this Mainstream Community Awareness workshop children were taken through interactive activities and brainstormed ways they could get involved in supporting Refugee families.

The children were gathered for a Mini-Vinnies conference in Strathfield where they listened to a range of organisations focused on social justice issues. A big Thank You to Vinnies Youth for the invitation.

## Teddy Bear Hospital a big hit!



For the third time this year we've partnered with the UNSW Paediatric Society to deliver the Teddy Bear Hospital at Yennora Public school. These dynamic stations are a fun and kid-friendly way to engage children in their own health, build their confidence in Doctors and their own aspirations.

The popular initiative has already been delivered at Old Guildford and Guildford public schools in Terms 1 & 2. Thank you to the dozens of volunteers from the UNSW Paediatric society, SPARK volunteers Gwenda, Jing and Nila as well as staff from Yennora Public School.

If you are interested in volunteering, partnering with or supporting SPARK please get in contact with us at [spark@vinnies.org.au](mailto:spark@vinnies.org.au)



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