mountain district learning centre

Newsletter March 2022

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The Centre has started the year off well. Congratulations to Janet our CEO who, for the past 3 years has worked industriously to obtain registration to become a college. The Mountain District Community College.

Welcome to Elise Hopkins our College Principal. Elise has settled in well and is coping with all the paperwork that seems to go with the start up. It's also a welcome to our new teachers who have started the year with us.

The renovations have been finished to an excellent standard, thanks to our local builder Ian Beggs.

At present investigations are underway to have solar panels installed, which will aid in keeping our energy costs down and help with climate change.

It was lovely to see our students at the Centre last week when I attended scheduled Committee meetings. It was interesting to observe the calmness and camaraderie between students while moving around the Centre.

May is our month to hold the MDLC Annual General Meeting. You will see that a nomination form has been included for anyone who would like to nominate for a Board position. The AGM will be held on Wednesday 18th May.

Our Members/Fundraising Committee has met and events are in the pipeline for members to attend. Tulip order forms will be available soon. This is a fundraiser for the Centre.

Another event to be organised is a visit to Edenvale Community farm in Eltham. This will be organised for April.

Robyn Burke
Director

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News from the Office



Hello fellow members,

2022 is underway and looking more “normal” than it has for a while!

It has been a busy time at MDLC getting our school Mountain District Community College up and running after a 3-year period of applying for registration.

We are delighted to welcome Elise Hopkins as Principal of the new school and we look forward to a strong and collaborative partnership developing between MDLC and MDCC.

There have been a number of changes recently to MDLC, which include:

- A renovation to install additional toilets (4), a sick bay and to upgrade the ramps to ensure the main building meets current disability standards, as required for school registration.
- A change to the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP). We have changed the English Language Program from an accredited program to a pre-accredited program. The pre-accredited program is more suited to our English Language Students who enjoy learning English but prefer not to have to do assessments. The program will have a greater social focus and will include outings and activities.
- As the English Language Program is now running on Wednesdays only, the classroom space at Boronia Library will be used for additional adult literacy programs.
- Mountain District Community College is operating from the main building with the Garden Room still holding art, craft and garden programs and the Annex still holding craft and group activities. Other activities including exercise and the Friendship Group are still running in the Church.

With the school registration complete, I am looking forward to returning to my role as CEO of MDLC and actively supporting our Coordinators in the many other activities and programs of MDLC. Our activities for the coming years include:

- Providing an additional class delivering the Certificate of General Education for Adults (CGEA) for young people (15-19) who have social anxiety or similar barriers to attending mainstream school. This program, known as The Cottage Program now has 4 groups totaling 42 students. (It is running in addition to the VCAL program run by the School.)
- Strengthening our delivery of Adult Education with a focus on Adult Literacy.
- We have commenced working on a project, in partnership with Eastern Regional Libraries (ERL) and the Knox Learning Alliance (the Knox Neighbourhood Houses) and Volunteer 4 Knox, to re-establish a one to one adult literacy program for our region. There is much work to do, regarding adult literacy development in Victoria and I am looking forward to helping to establish this essential program.
- Working closely with the local libraries to deliver a range of learning and engagement programs. We hope to expand our numbers in these programs now that we are returning to “Covid normal”.

News from the Office continued

- Collaborating with Orana Neighbourhood House and Michelle from Knox Council in providing support for people living in community housing in Ferntree Gully.
- Participating in the Festival of Food, an initiative of Orana Neighbourhood House.

MDLC will also be holding a number of activities for Members and Volunteers throughout the year and holding a second Garden Gate Artisan Market, likely in Spring!.

We will be continuing our work in supporting the Ferntree Gully News team and the Ferntree Gully Village Traders Association.

As you can see there is always so much to do and to look forward to at MDLC!

I hope to catch up with you at an event or activity soon.

Janet.

Commencement of Mountain District Community College

Mountain District
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

On January the 24th, 2022, Mountain District Community College was officially registered as a Senior Secondary, Not for Profit, Specialist School.

It was an exciting time as our 39 enrolled students commenced their first week at the start of February. The move to a school setting has opened up many doors for both our staff and students, as we work collaboratively to create a positive and supportive environment. We are able to expand our practice of giving young people an engaging and hands on learning experience to succeed in education.

As the newly appointed Principal, I have had 9 years in the education system teaching a range of areas but focusing on my love for student engagement.

As a teacher and a leader, understanding student engagement is pivotal in their growth and ability to feel empowered. Students who have positive associations with education are not only more likely to succeed but have the desire to continue life-long learning. Giving students the choice in how they learn and integrating their interests into the classroom, creates generates flourishing students.

With 3 new student support staff and more hiring of youth workers to come, we are confident our students needs will be supported and nurtured during their senior years of education. Students at Mountain District Community College take a real-life approach to their learning with practical workplace skills and personal development at the forefront. This methodology gets our students fast-tracked to being workplace ready and employable.

A huge thank-you to Janet Claringbold and Leshelle Walford for all their efforts in the development of the school.

We are so excited to see where the growth of the school will take us and to make the most of the opportunities that arise, having our student outcomes and development at the core.



Elise Hopkins

Principal

The Cottage Program Term 1, 2022

This year we are anticipating being able to get out and explore our local and wider communities now that restrictions have been lifted. We will be focusing on reengaging with our communities, building confidence in travelling and spending time amongst the wider public.

We have welcomed back some familiar faces in 2022 and also some new faces to the program. It has been lovely watching new friendships emerge within the groups as they get to know each other, our teachers, youth workers and other MDLC staff.

We continue to receive referrals for young people interested in the Cottage Program and it has been nice being able to meet and take them on a tour of our beautiful grounds to share information regarding the program and its benefits.

This year we have offered a fourth program to help support the growing need for alternative education, we recognise the critical gap in the education system and are trying to do something about this for young people.

Our purpose is to reengage students who have disconnected from mainstream schooling due to a range of physical, social or emotional reasons. Some of the important features of successful alternative education programs include a welcoming tone and ethos; respectful relationships; tailored curriculum and learning; and flexible structures and environment.

It is important that we build relationships with our young people based on an ethic of care, trust and respect. In order to reconnect and re-engage young people we need to provide them with an opportunity to achieve in a different setting using different learning methods.

The key feature of our programs is to provide strong youth worker presence. We are very fortunate to have the experience and skills of our youth workers to support our students, our youth workers do a vital job within our programs, they help young people to make informed choices around areas like education, wellbeing, health and relationships, overcome challenges like poor mental health and take up positive opportunities to build their skills, become independent, and contribute to their communities.

The Cottage Program is designed for young people who suffer from acute social anxiety or experience barriers to attending education within a mainstream School environment. The Cottage Program provides a quiet and supportive learning environment developed to support and encourage young people to complete their studies or to re-engage back into education.

As a team we are already planning a variety of additional external programs to offer to our young people. Including additional experiences and activities into the program provides opportunities which supports young people in their wellbeing and work ready skills.

Some of the additional programs we will offer include, YSAS SHERPA Program Graffiti Workshop, Careers Development MAS, Pathways & Resume Writing and the WILD Program EACH.

We are looking forward to a happy and productive year!

Alison Percy

RTO & VET Coordinator

If you can help ….Cottage students will be assisting with making up Hygiene Pack for the homeless in our community. Donations of the following items would be much appreciated. The items can be left with reception for Alison Percy.

Soap **Toothbrush's** **Tooth paste** **Deodorant** **Hair Brushes** **Shampoo** **Conditioner** **Woman's hygiene products**

MDLC's Reconnect Program

Juliet* came to Reconnect for support to engage back into the community following a stroke which had severely impacted her ability to be successful in mainstream environments. Juliet acknowledged that she requires a more supportive approach and would benefit from working closely with someone who understood her limitations but respected her as valuable individual. Through MDLC's Reconnect program, Juliet was able to meet regularly with her case manager who worked with Juliet to discover her strengths and passion of art, and how to build on them in a way which was meaningful.

The research began to find a suitable course which was within a reasonable distance, in a small group environment and facilitated by a gentle trainer who had an understanding of working with those with a disability. While several options were found, none of which ended up meeting all three of the criteria required for Juliet's success.

Juliet sought recommendations from friends and family and was introduced to a local woman who ran her own business training others to create art. Juliet was empowered to discuss further with this woman about opportunities to be taught the craft and how to also share this with those around her, so that one day, Juliet might be able to contribute to the community in a volunteer role whilst facilitating the same skill share with others. Reconnect assisted with brokerage to provide this opportunity, as being on a disability pension, Juliet would not otherwise be able to participate.

This was the start that Juliet needed. A chance to explore her creative side, once shadowed by her stroke. An opportunity to be heard and gently guided in a small group of likeminded individuals.

After completing 3 art lessons, Juliet's Reconnect case manager checked back in with her again. Juliet spoke of her success with the program and how it has given her a new sense of confidence she hadn't felt in years. She explained that if it weren't for Reconnect, she would never have had the opportunity to feel this way again in her life. She broke down to tears saying how she never thought she was going to be good at anything again since her stroke, but how this opportunity has really proven otherwise and she's just so grateful.

At MDLC's Reconnect program, we are proud to facilitate discussions and actions that are not inside the box, that result in meaningful outcomes specific to the needs of the individual and most importantly, to provide opportunities for personal growth and long lasting impacts on ones ability to recognise that they can achieve great things.

Racheal Edwards
Reconnect Case Manager

***Juliet's name has been changed to protect her identity at her request.**

Bake Sew Grow Calendar Tuesdays 9.30 – 12.30

MARCH	
15th	**Day in the garden**
22rd	**Lizard Wizard (incursion)**
29th	**Learn to make Toilet Fizzies toilet cleaners**
APRIL	
1st	**Easter Celebrations**
26th	**Winter in the garden**
MAY	
3th	**Easy Bake no cook slices**
10th	**Chalk board herb markers**
MAY continued	
17th	**Giant Felt Lamas**
24th	**Bunnings's incursion (mosaic terra cotta pots) to be confirmed)**
31st	**Bingo**
JUNE	
7th	**Edible Forest Yarra Valley?? TBA**
14th	
21st	**Polymer clay earrings**

Bake Sew Grow Term 4 report 2021

Term 4 brought a mix of delivered care packs, face to face groups and workshops.

When we got back to MDLC everyone brought all their creativity with them from golf ball bugs and creatures, Christmas pinecone gnomes, Christmas cards for loved ones.

Time to get our hands dirty with a Hypertufa Pot workshop making light weight concrete pots. And polymer clay play for Christmas decoration











Report from Senior Youth Worker

It has been an exciting start to the year at MDLC, with both our Cottage and VCAL students excited to be learning on site and having a more normal start to the school year. Probably the thing I'm most excited about is being able to cook with the young people again. We have already had an orientation BBQ, cheese toasties day and a taco day.

We have started our Friday Food Pickups from Aldi again through Second Bite Victoria as well as continuing our partnership with Foodbank Victoria. This helps provide our young people and their family's with often much needed food as well as an opportunity to learn some cooking skills why at school.

We also are working behind the scenes on getting some fun excursions and incursions planned for our young people this year.

Christian Don
Senior Youth Worker Mountain District Learning Centre



High Rise Community Garden

What a year 2021 has been, lockdowns, working from home, 5k travel limits and zoom groups. However, one thing continued as if in its own world, The MDLC Hi Rise Community Garden.

The seasons came and went, covid bubble marquees kept our groups and visitors safe in the main garden and in Victoria Garden.

Our garden volunteers, watered, weeded, dug, raked and laughed keeping the spaces beautiful for everyone to enjoy.

During the year I had asked our gardening community if they could help in any way to keep our gardening flowering and growing, and they didn't disappoint.

Bunnings in Scoresby donated several trays of seedlings, bags of soils and mulch and a genius planter worm farm.





We had some surprise postal deliveries which felt like Christmas.

Eden Seeds sent some amazing non – hybrid organic seeds pack with sweetcorn, mustard greens and salad greens.



David and Jay from Farmhouse Seeds sent us their awesome Community pack full of organic goodies to get the most out of seeds and seedlings.



Sue Wormz sent us the smallest workers in the garden. Her hard -working Wurundjeri Worms, who will be producing fertilising goodness with worm casting and worm wee.



Better Herbs and Natives have given the garden a small walk-in green house. This is being set up in Victoria Gardens, where we will be able to raise our own seedlings and cuttings. Donated Trays of tomato, leek, beetroot and been seedlings have planted throughout the high-rise garden beds.

And Melbourne Bush Foods for their incredible donation of edible native plants for our edible verge project. Native salt bush, Juniper berry, Geraldin wax plant, a finger lime and pig face plants are all growing beautifully near the main carpark.



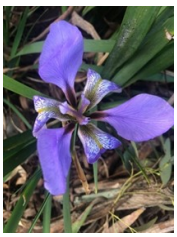
Bathtubs to elephant potholders, our gardening community have been incredibly generous. We thank you for all the support in such hard times.

Spring quietly came upon the garden this year.

The garden had pops of colour here and there with spring bulbs and native flowers







High Rise Community Garden

The we had visitors of all kinds to the garden space in and out of lockdown in term 4.



An incredible King Parrot came for morning tea, much to the delight of everyone who saw him



In the youth garden a very large dragon fly was warming up in the sun

Our incredible Garden volunteers continued their hard work around all of the garden space's tending, weeding, watering, planting and potting.

In our "Watch this space update" our Juniper berry tree in our edible verge has nearly tripled in size.

How exciting is it to watch a plant grow from a tiny tube stock to a beautiful tree?







From Big Red and Chookie Chook can't wait to see you all in 2022.



TERM 4 REPORT NATURE CRAFT

This Term was very different. We had some activities outdoors under our beautiful tree but when the weather was too hot or it was raining we worked indoors. This term we welcomed two new faces, Sharon and Denise. It's always great meeting new people.

We had a great term making owls, flower mobiles, card banners, sun dream catchers and paper mache tea light holders with pressed flowers. On the last day of term after activities we had a Christmas party.

Sharon

























Social Support Group Report Term 4 2021

Term 4 started online through our Facebook pages for the first five weeks, then we were able to return to face to face classes. However, Wednesday morning Papercraft was put on hold for this term. They will be ready to return at the start of 2022.

MONDAY MORNING ADVANCED CRAFT

This new group was created as a pilot 6 week program to give our super crafty clients the opportunity to extend their skills at an advanced level.

We had 5 very talented ladies join the group and they thoroughly enjoyed getting more involved in mixed media craft, learning new techniques and creating two beautiful projects.

The class was so successful that it will be offered again in Term 1 2022 which the clients are thrilled about. The ladies were very sad that we had to break for Christmas school holidays as they were all having so much fun.

During our short term, the clients made a CD wall hanging and a mixed media frame. They were all very happy with their final products and some were off home to make more for family and friends. They told me it has given them a new perspective on things they can use for craft that are just lying around the house.

Lynn












WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON MIXED MEDIA ART

Our online term covered charcoal, palette knife abstract work, pastels, Peter Cromer inspired collage painting and a week of painting outside in their garden.

The clients were very happy to return to class, with a couple of additional clients from the Friday morning Art group. These clients fitted in perfectly and enjoyed painting along with the regular class. We covered various acrylic paintings, including their own choice, trees in landscapes using different brushes for techniques, girl with balloons using positive space and the following week covering negative space. On our last week of term, we did some Christmas painting and had an afternoon tea to finish off the year.

Lynn



Social Support Group Report Term 4 2021

THURSDAY AFTERNOON CRAFTERIA

During our online part of the term, we made a couple of cards, namely a pyramid card, hat easel card and a window box card. We also did some mixed media on cardboard and made a scarecrow head.

The clients were all so happy to return to class that our first day back we made it a catch up in the garden, chatting and enjoying each other's company. This group of ladies are all very social and get along really well.

The following week we got straight back into craft making a CD wreath, a bead and button canvas and a Christmas House box.

On our last class for the year we all enjoyed a Christmas party.





























MOUNTAIN DISTRICT LEARNING CENTRE FUNDRAISING

TESSELAAR BULBS

MDLC is running a Mothers Day fundraising drive

Brochures and order forms are available in the office for those who wish to order.

All orders need to be in by 15th April 2022

Friendship Group 4th Term 2021

Due to recent times our friendship group was on again off again, via zoom, in the garden, in the studio, full groups and divided groups. But we still managed to stay connected and have good times.

Friendship group continued as best we could with our schedules sometimes modified to suit the circumstances. Via zoom we continued with our ever-so-popular trivia and music trivia. One of our members became very involved in our competitions and presented awards to our quiz masters. Halloween was also popular with several members dressing up. We shared stories and discussed horror movies.

We were also fortunate to have a student doing placement with us who introduced some new activities online including charades and truth and dare which proved to be lots of fun.

After concern of internet safety and email spam etc., we welcomed John, our IT guru, tospeak and guide us on what to look out for.

Returning to MDLC we celebrated Melbourne Cup day with some members wearing their finest hats. We honoured Italian day, talking about their culture including listening to music, playing games, sharing pizza and their dress and national dress including a model.

We experimented with some new activities including looking at types of clouds and the origins of superstitions.

The end of term was creeping up on us - we made lolly wreaths to take home and celebrated our breakup Christmas Party in the Studio, sharing lots of yummy treats and exchanging Christmas gifts. It was so much fun having every member come along -even a few extras who had joined us on zoom .









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MDLC Friendship Group – Every Wednesday

1.00pm –3.00pm

Friendship Group Activities Calendar – Term 2, 2022

May

Wed 4th May – Mother's Day Celebration - May the Forth Be with You!!
Wed 11th May – Tried & True Tips and Tricks
Wed 18th May – Living in the 70s – Trivia & Music Day
Wed 25th May – Biggest Morning Tea Fundraiser Cancer

June

Wed 1st June – First Day of Winter Homemade Soup
Wed 8th June – All About the Royals
Wed 15th June – Friendship Groups 7th Birthday Celebration!
Wed 22nd June – Movie Day in the Sanctuary
Wed 29th June – Games Day (Various)

July

Wed 6th July – Guest Speaker (Lorraine) Ferntree Gully Over the Years
Wed 13th July – Numerology Its All in the Numbers!!
Wed 20th July – Cooking Demo with Deb
Wed 27th July – Christmas in July at the Dorset Gardens

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