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From the Editors

Welcome to the Spring Edition of CVS Newsletter. It's such a pleasing sight to see flowers bloom, leaves bud, birds build nests and bumble bees, butterflies and other winged insects buzzing and fluttering in the air. Signs of spring are everywhere. The smells and sounds of spring stimulate our senses, signify the beginning of new life, and bring new hope.

Bringing hope & life to the elderly

Just like all of you, through visiting, the Maisogs are lifting the spirits of many aged care home residents. In the process of doing so, they have applied a variety of techniques and skills in achieving this. As mentioned in their story on Page 2 & 3, they know each resident is unique and provide companionship based on their individual preferences.

Reflecting on your own visiting experience

You may find their story familiar, and it might echo your experience. It is important to reflect on your wonderful skills in bringing happiness and companionship to your 'friend'. We appreciate the challenges and obstacles that you face along the way. There are never enough words to describe how much we appreciate your kindness, patience and commitment towards the elderly.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

We want you to be kind to yourself. Just like a car requires regular service from a mechanic to keep it running smoothly. Or an elite athlete requires coaching to keep them at peak performance. Likewise, everyone of us experiences ups and downs in life. SLHD's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to assist.

EAP is a free, professional, and confidential counselling service providing **24/7 support** and **counselling** to all Sydney Local Health District staff and their families (volunteers included). EAP staff are experienced psychologists, counsellors, and social workers with broad counselling experience

in the management of personal and work-related issues, such as personal grief, personal relationship problems, care for children, elders, and other dependents.

EAP staff can be contacted during office hours, Monday to Friday on 9515 9680.

Being SILENT can be magical

In recent years, scientists have been studying the effects that SILENCE can have on the human mind and body - its power to calm the bodies and attune our connection to the world.

Brain scans show that many people's brains are overactive and hardly at rest. It becomes harder for the brain to restore and regenerate. Relaxation is a primary mechanism for healing. When one cultivates silence, the whole body will relax, contributing to physical healing. Learn more about the amazing benefits of silence on page 4 & 5.

Message from our new SLHD CVS Service Manager – Jody-Lee LAW

"As the new SLHD CVS Service Manager, I would first like to say how excited I am to be part of this amazing program. I have worked in health and aged care for over 7 years now and whilst the pandemic years have been unique and hard, it's been heart-warming to see our volunteer's resilience and support. Thank you for your commitment and let us continue to never underestimate the difference volunteer's make to their friends in residential aged care facilities".

First Virtual Meeting

We launched the very first virtual meeting with our volunteer visitors on 20th September. For those who had missed the opportunity to attend, feel free to contact us for a copy of the presentation, and hopefully we can see you in the upcoming meetings.

All the very best,
Valerie CHU & Jeannie TAM

Our Journey towards True Happiness

By Renato & Corazon Maisog

It was in 2012, we were attracted by a tiny ad on a Filipino Community newspaper, wanting volunteers to visit fellow Filipinos in nursing homes. Visiting sick and elderly is not new to us as we were doing this before in the Philippines. Back then however, our focus was more on children in the orphanage. So we thought it was about time to give back to the community and that was how our 'cheerful ride' started with the Community Visitors Scheme (CVS) after responding to the ad.

Same as many migrants, our goal of moving to Australia in 2006 was to provide our children better education and opportunities in life. We were blessed with 3 children who are all adults already. Two of them have family of their own and one is still single. Our move to Australia was pretty smooth. Through the sponsorship of an Australian company, everything had been pre-arranged, including our home and schools for our children, when we first landed in Sydney.

To us, volunteering is a process of spiritual fulfilment. There is no hard and fast rule for visitation. Frankly speaking, we are still in the learning process. That's why we will not miss any training opportunity offered by the CVS which helps improve and enrich our skills. Visiting the elderly actually requires a collection of 'hybrid' know-how deriving from knowledge and experience.

Clues to a real friendship

Everyone is *different* and *unique*. Over the years, we have been visiting more than 10 'friends' in 3 different aged care facilities. From them, we appreciate how their differences in family background, education, personality, life experience, belief, interests, ... etc. shape our relationships.

Once, we were visiting a 93-year-old lady who was a bit aloof and reserved at the first meeting. We focused our conversation on her favourite topics, mainly her family, religion and her life during the war in the Philippines. Frankly, it took a while for her to *trust* us. It was after our 5th visit that we noticed that she started to open up her feelings, including disappointments and loneliness living in the nursing home. She was disappointed that

she could not finish her studies because of the war, and she really missed her family. Also, she had made a good friend with another Filipino lady in the facility. But as this friend's condition deteriorates, she felt like she was losing a friend. We comforted her and assured her that we would visit her regularly. There was a glow on her face when she heard that.

Another friend we are visiting is new to the facility. She is divorced with no family. Therefore, she is always longing for a visitor, hoping that a relative or a friend will come to visit her. However, she cannot remember our visits due to her cognitive conditions - memory loss, disorientation, and confusion. She cannot even remember where her room is. The feeling of loneliness and frustration exacerbate over time. Every time we visit, we remind her of our identity which are her 'visitors'. We assist her to remember things, persons, and events. Now, she is happy to see us.

Language is the key

Because of language barrier, many residents with a cultural background encounter loneliness and isolation in nursing homes. They all miss their family and friends. Speaking the same language is a very comforting means of communication. Once the conversation starts, we could share a lot of common topics like our home country, food, festivals, memories of good old days, ... etc. with them. It always works.

Religion has a role to play in our visits

We are happy to be matched with resident friends of the same religious belief and practice. Praying together and reading Bible are good ice breakers at our first meetings.

Witnessing the deterioration of our friends is something that we have to come to terms with. We have been visiting one friend for years. As time goes by, she has lost her mobility, her cognition and her speech. She tries very hard to mumble something that we cannot understand. To ease her frustration and to comfort her, we give her a 'non-specific' response. We offer to pray for her and encourage her to join in the prayer. Surprisingly, she is able to follow the prayers and the connection still works. We feel that our presence really makes a difference.

Essential to remember important dates and events

We try our best to remember all the dates or events which are special to our friends. Once, we gave a birthday card to our 'friend', the surprise on her face and the joyful smile is etched on our memory and validated what we are doing. This lady really appreciated all the greeting cards that we sent to her on Easter, Mother's Day, Christmas and New Year, and those we sent during the pandemic.

Acceptance and flexibility

Our experience tells us that we need to be flexible in our approach to help our friends enjoy our company. We accept them for who they are, even if the person is no longer like before. This can be very challenging. We visited one of our 'old' friends again when the aged care home reopened its door to visitors. We expected this lady to wave to us, as she would previously do. But instead, she was yelling at us. She has become so confused and disorientated. Naturally we were disheartened. Not because she could not recognize us, but to see such a deterioration in her health and wellbeing.

We did not give up on her. Every time we visit the nursing home, we will check in on her. One day we saw her lying on bed calmly and silently. With permission from a nursing staff, we went closer to her and introduced ourselves like a 'new' friend. Gratefully she listened to us. Knowing that she was a preacher, we started reciting what she preached to believers in the past. She responded to us in short phrases. We were really overjoyed with what we had transpired in this visit. But we understand it might not be the same at the next visit.

Talents and skills sharing

We always like music and we sing and play ukulele. Initially, we were reluctant to use our little talents in music. But after attending a Music Therapy Workshop organized by the CVS where we were encouraged to share our musical abilities by playing music in the nursing home, we accept the challenge of performing in front of a crowd.

For friends who are quiet and confused, music can

really brighten their spirit. Often to our surprise, many can sing along with the music, despite their conditions. We understand the importance of socialization for the elderly and realize that by sharing our talents such as singing, dancing, painting, we might achieve amazing outcomes.



What we have learnt so far

Every visit is a learning process for us, as every visit is different. Today may be good and tomorrow may not be good, depending on the mood of our friends. Experience educates us to adjust our approach and do the best we can, to make friends with them and to enjoy their company. Sometimes we have a chance of 'do-over' but sometimes not. We have learnt to be sensitive and adaptive to the constant change of the physical, psychological and emotional needs of our friends.

Being CVS volunteers since 2012, we continue to learn many things as to the real meaning of life. The CVS workshops have given us opportunities to better understand the needs of our 'friends'. While we endeavour to make our friends in the nursing homes happy, their smiles and laughter make us feel happier. Indeed, true happiness can only be achieved by making others happy.



THE AMAZING BENEFITS OF SILENCE

Our ever-noisy world full of background music, on-demand shows, podcasts, and airplanes flying overhead, mean many of us don't experience a great deal of quiet. According to scientific evidence, this is not such a great thing for our health. Neuroscientists are discovering silence can have a dramatic impact on our mental as well as physical health.



Why quiet time is healthy for body and mind?

1. Lowering your blood pressure & decreasing your heart rate

A study found that a 2-minute period of silence after listening to music significantly reduced a subjects' heart rate and blood pressure. Another research associated a chronically noisy environment with increase in heart rate and blood pressure.

2. Lowering heart disease & tinnitus

Research throughout the 20th century has linked noise pollution to an increase in heart disease and tinnitus (ringing in the ears). The World Health Organization likened it to a 'modern plague'.

3. Steadying your breathing

When you are in a quiet space, you will find your breath becomes smooth, even and quiet, which is the optimal breathing pattern for good health.

4. Stimulating brain growth

Silence lowers our blood pressure and increases blood flow to the brain. A 2013

study into brain structure and function found that a minimum of two hours of silence stimulated growth of new cells in the hippocampus, the region of the brain related to memory and emotion.

5. Improving concentration and focus

To most people, focus and concentration are increased in quiet and silent environments. This can have benefits for our work, education, relationships, and more.

6. Calming racing thoughts

Racing thoughts are a hallmark of anxiety. Learning to become quiet helps us refrain from expending unnecessary energy and endlessly participating in the hamster wheel of thoughts in our head. In silence, we can slow down, take time to observe the things around us, and just to be with the moment. Mental stillness can be a gateway to mindfulness, which has proven benefits for anxiety.

7. Reducing cortisol and stress

Noise elevates our levels of cortisol (stress hormone) and adrenaline, which lead to higher stress levels. An elevated level of cortisol can also lead to weight gain, feelings of being significantly overwhelmed, difficulties sleeping, and chronic diseases."

8. Encouraging mindfulness

Silence gives us space to meet ourselves. It gives us time to turn down the inner noise and increase awareness of what matters most, to see where you need to grow and develop. When you're silent, you have an invitation to sit with the present moment. This allows the thoughts to settle and the body to return to a parasympathetic state.

9. Improving insomnia

Silence enhances sleep quality and decreases insomnia by helping us to "wind down."

10. Stimulating creativity

Silence restores our cognitive resources.

This includes self-reflection, daydreaming, thinking about the future, letting our minds wander and meditation. When we allow ourselves to disengage and relax, we can tap into our inner thoughts, ideas, and memories. The brain's default mode lets us think deeply and creatively outside of the box.

*"All profound things and emotion of things are proceeded and attended by silence."
— Herman Melville*



How to find room for silence?

We can't necessarily escape into a [Cone of Silence](#), but with a bit of intention, we can bring more stillness into our everyday lives.

1. Make your vehicle a noise-free zone

When you find yourself traveling solo, try making your vehicle a sanctuary of silence.

2. Sacred pauses

Sacred pauses are mini-meditations you take during the day when you are involved in a goal-oriented task. Take a break from what you are doing and sit comfortably with your eyes closed. Take a few deep breaths and with each breath let go of any thoughts or worries and let your body relax. You can do this many times a day to give your mind

and body a break from noise and stressful thoughts.

3. Start your day before the rest of the house wakes up

When kids, a spouse, or roommates add perpetual sound to your space, moments of silence can be hard to find. If you can, try getting up before the rest of your household.

4. Reduce background noise

If your daily chores always seem to need a soundtrack, try taking a break here and there to tap into stillness.

5. Start with small, incremental changes

For some people, silence can feel threatening or uncomfortable and the thought of sitting in silence is enough to make their skin crawl. If this sounds familiar, start small.

Begin with practicing 2 minutes of silence at a time. Watch the goings-on of the mind without latching on to a thought. This is the beginning of mindfulness.

The Power of Silence

Silence may offer a host of health benefits, not to mention a greater sense of ease and peace. There's a reason for the old saying, "Silence is golden." With a little practice, silence can become a nourishing part of your life.

*"Muddy water. Let stand. Becomes clear."
— Lao Tzu, Chinese philosopher*

Reference: www.sebeyon.cc;

www.happiness.com; www.healthshots.com

* Please note research in this newsletter has not been verified by SLHD *

Reading Aloud Activities for the Elderly

Reading storybooks to children and grandchildren is a time for bonding, warmth, and love. For the elderly who loved to read all their lives, listening to someone read to them can bring profound comfort and joy.

Some elderly people have given up on reading due to poor vision, fatigue, tremors, dementia, and other medical reasons. Giving up reading does not mean that they have lost interest in books, magazines, and newspapers. In fact, losing the ability to read often leaves people feeling withdrawn, sad, and isolated.

Reading aloud to the elderly can improve their quality of life and wellbeing. It may reduce stress and anxiety, and improve mood and concentration.

Suggested Reading Material

Ask your friend the type of stories, news and poems they enjoy reading. If your friend has not been previously interested in reading, see if you can spark their interest with books about their interests. Please see suggestions below:

- Poems – Known and unknown poems
- Newspapers columns – e.g. Gossip & Gardening, sports columns
- Short stories – Covering a range to topics; Humour, Mysteries, Fables
- Historical tales
- Biographies – Presidents, scientists, and other famous people
- Religious passages
- Personal letters and celebratory cards
- Catalogues – Clothes, furniture, pets
- TV programs – Choose what to watch in the coming week
- Travel brochures – Find places that clients visited
- Magazines – Specialty magazines: boats, fishing, motor-houses
- Comics – Borrow old style comics from libraries
- Recipe books – Very popular with some clients

Types of Reading Activities

The goal of read-aloud activities is for your friend to enjoy themselves. It's important for them to have fun which may be a source of stimulation.

1. **Client participation Stories** – let your friend participate in the story telling. Get them to repeat a word or phrase throughout the story: sing, gesture or act.
2. **Reading and Reminiscing** – read story books that your friend read as a child, such as: Alice in Wonderland, the Hidden Staircase, Anne of Green Gables, etc.
3. **Open-Ended Stories** – Open-ended stories provide a creative way to engage your friend in the story. Read a short story where the ending is inconclusive or incomplete and encourage your friend to speculate how the story can continue, or how the problem can be solved.

Attributes of a Good Reader

1. **Prepare** – read the story several times beforehand, become familiar with it. Practise the rhythm you intend to use; pause and tone.
2. **Being present while reading** - your friend will lose interest if they perceive you are indifferent to the story or running on autopilot.
3. **Intonation** – read with your voice as well as your eyes – express emotion. Make the most of sentence structures, commas and question marks.
4. **Pauses** – adding pauses for emphasis is important to transport clients, momentarily, to the author's world portrayed in the book.
5. **Evaluation** – keep note of the stories that attract the most interest from your friend. Showing interest may mean a smile, a gesture, or a calm state of being attentive to listening to you, the storyteller.

(Source: www.goldencarers.com)



WHO ARE OUR VISITORS ? (September 2022 Statistics)

Language Groups	No. of Active Visitors	No. of Residents being visited	Language Groups	No. of Active Visitors	No. of Residents being visited
Arabic	5	7	Korean	2	2
Assyrian	1	1	Latvian	1	1
Chinese - Cantonese	58	91	Lithuanian	1	3
Chinese - Mandarin	23	28	Macedonian	1	3
Chinese - Shanghai	3	4	Polish	2	3
Chinese - Teo-Chow	4	4	Russian	2	2
Croatian	3	3	Spanish	2	2
Czech	1	1	Swedish	1	1
English	5	5	Tagalog	2	4
French	5	7	Tamil	9	13
German	4	4	Ukrainian	2	2
Hindi	2	2	Vietnamese	5	11
Japanese	2	3			



Do you have any friends who can visit some of these lonely residents?

Language	No	Locality	Language	No	Locality
Arabic	1	Kellyville	Japanese	1	Summer Hill
C-Cantonese	4	Canley Vale, Kellyville	Korean	2	Lindfield, Strathfield
C-Mandarin	3	Canley Vale, Linfield, Pennant Hills	Macedonian	2	Annandale, Summer Hill
C-Shanghainese	3	Harris Park	Romanian	1	Surry Hills
Croatian	1	Blacktown	Russian	2	Sans Souci
Czech	1	Westmead	Serbian	2	Ashfield, Gladesville
Finnish	1	Petersham	Spanish	3	Dural, Lewisham
French	1	Marsfield	Tamil	3	Pendle Hill
German	3	Chatswood, Marsfield	Turkish	2	Auburn, Berala
Hindi	1	Strathfield			

The Green Quiz



QUESTIONS

ANSWERS

- 1 The celebration of which saint is linked to the colour green? _____
- 2 According to folklore, what happens if you don't wear green on St. Patrick's Day? _____
- 3 Name a "green" children's book written by Dr. Seuss. _____
- 4 What two primary colours can be mixed together to make the colour green? _____
- 5 What is the title of the tales of a red-haired orphan written by L.M. Montgomery? _____
- 6 What famous comic book hero's powers were ineffective against the colour yellow? _____
- 7 Name an emotion associated with the colour green. _____
- 8 Name a popular Asian beverage. _____
- 9 Why is green used for military field uniforms? _____
- 10 What is a popular nickname for someone who works well with plants? _____
- 11 What kind of people are referred to as green around the gills? _____
- 12 Which country's currency is often referred to using the slang term "greenback"? _____
- 13 What is the name of the pigment in green plants that gives them their colour? _____
- 14 Which nuts are green inside their shells? _____
- 15 List the names of three green vegetables _____
- 16 What does it mean 'to give the green light'? _____
- 17 Name a green gemstone. _____
- 18 What does it mean when you say 'the grass is always green on the other side'? _____
- 19 Greenland is considered part of which continent? _____
- 20 What is a green room in show business? _____

1 St. Patrick. 2 Wearing green on St. Patrick's Day is supposed to make you invisible to leprechauns. They will pinch you if you don't wear green. 3 Green Eggs and Ham. 4 Blue and Yellow. 5 Anne of Green Gables. 6 The Green Lantern. 7 Jealousy or envy. 8 Green tea. 9 Because of its camouflage properties. 10 A green thumb. 11 People who are sick. 12 U.S.A. 13 Chlorophyll. 14 Pistachios. 15 Spinach, kale, cabbage, etc. 16 To give approval to proceed. 17 Emerald. 18 Somewhere else seems better than one's present situation. 19 North America. 20 A waiting room for performers.

ANSWERS