

The Seniors Newsletter of South Eastern Community Connect



South Eastern *Seniors* Connect

May 19



Welcome to
our new
Community
Hub in Mascot

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Connect Newsletter
by email
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Independence, wellbeing and quality of life.

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Shop 84, Eastlakes Shopping Centre, Eastlakes

and

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www.facebook.com/SECC.Seniors

www.facebook.com/SECC.Community

Welcome!

What an exciting couple of months it's been with the Grand Opening of our new Community Hub at Coronation Hall in Mascot. Did you get a chance to come to our big event? If not, make sure you drop in soon! It was definitely a case of 'renovation rescue', and on page 4 we share the transformation story with you.

The new hub has a lovely outdoor space for you to enjoy. But even though the weather is cooler, it's easy to forget sun protection isn't it? I've managed to forget it way too many times, so have recently had to endure my fifth skin cancer surgery. It's not been pleasant... So, in order to avoid this experience, don't forget to slip, slop and slap—even in winter.

In this special May edition of *South Eastern Seniors Connect* you can enjoy some great reads as the days and nights cool down. On page 8 I report on my latest obsession: The Konmari Method. It's a

decluttering approach that really does work. And on page 11 we help you find the companion pup of your dreams!

As always, we keep you up to date with stories from our community along with all the details of upcoming activities run by South Eastern Community Connect.

Enjoy our latest issue, and stay warm as the weather cools down...

Catherine Schulte, Editor.



NEW STAFF: Alison Leader

Alison Leader started as our new Communications Manager late last year. She helps spread the word about South Eastern Community Connect by building relationships with the media, the community, and other key stakeholders. Her personal mission is to find Sydney's best hot chocolate. Any tips?

How vascular dementia changed my life completely

Carers face a challenging task, and outside support is crucial. Ralph Skinner, 65, looks after his wife Kath full-time in their Botany home, and today he shares his story how they've been impacted first-hand by vascular dementia. **Alison Leader** reports.

My wife Kath has had vascular dementia for 11 years – but for three of those years we didn't realise she had it. She was speaking normally and everything.

But it was on the way back from a holiday to the UK that we realised something wasn't right.

Kath, who's 72 now, was getting fidgety and wanted to get off the plane. It seemed like she had no comprehension of where she was.

When we got home I spoke about it with my son Matthew (who's now 33), and we decided to see a doctor. After being dismissed by one GP we went to see another doctor in Maroubra Junction, who was wonderful.

Seeing her got the ball rolling. She ran some tests, ordered an MRI scan, and put us in touch with a professor of ageing. She explained what our goals were.

In many ways Kath seemed OK, but there were underlying factors. She didn't know what a telephone was for, for example.

Changes afoot

The doctor gave her medication to help her, and as she started to deteriorate I applied for voluntary redundancy (VR) from my job at the airport, where I worked as a supervisor and coordinator in customer service.

Kath and Ralph Skinner in their Botany home.



Community Stories

Soon, I was granted VR and became Kath's full-time carer.

Vascular dementia is the broad term for dementia associated with problems of circulation of blood to the brain. We could see on the scans that there were little black pin-pricks on the left hemisphere of her brain.

These pinheads were the places where her brain was already dead. And because the blood supply was not there anymore, her brain would die slowly.

It became increasingly tough.

Kath started to become verbally abusive and would yell "Who are you?!" at me.

She then entered what they call the sundowning stage, which is a symptom of the disease where people get restless and start going walkabout later in the day.

So we ordered a metal identification bracelet.

I had the support of Matthew and neighbours who helped look for her on those days she went missing.

After about six months of this, she got to the stage where she didn't walk long distances anymore, and became more introverted.

Not the person she used to be

Now she doesn't talk much at all – she's at about the intellectual level of a four or five year old. She used to register the TV, but not anymore – although she does seem to like the music being left on.

She's incontinent now and has to be dressed, fed, and showered. But she does understand kindness and responds when we tickle her and so on.



She sits in her chair a lot – and we now have a 'water chair' which helps her avoid pressure sores, as well as an inflatable mattress bed.

I take her over to the doctor and down to the park, and make sure she enjoys some sunshine.

I found it alright at first, but it started to wear me down because I'd given up work and that was hard.

But Kath doesn't choose to be the way she is. It's not her fault.

"These pinheads were the places her brain was already dead. And because the blood supply was not there anymore, her brain would die slowly..."

Respite support needed

After a while I was getting a bit run-down and tired, so I looked into respite options. I contacted a day centre for people with dementia which was attached to a hospital. It was helpful for a while – until a new manager came on board and didn't seem to understand Kath's needs. She kept advising me to put Kath in a nursing home. None of the GPs or other health professionals I asked agreed at all.

It was very stressful, and I ended up pulling Kath out of there.

So it was back to the drawing board.

Soon, after some online searching, I stumbled across South Eastern Community Connect (SECC), and called the number.

I spoke to Irene, one of the workers, who booked me in for an assessment.

After some bad experiences in the past, I was impressed by Irene's gentle nature and lovely calm voice. She came across as so nice and honest that I didn't bother to ring anyone else.

So in January she came over to our home with another lady and they filled out all the necessary forms for flexible respite care.

She lined me up with Angela Castillo from SECC's

Community Stories

respite services team, and she started coming to spend time with Kath on Tuesdays and Fridays.

Meeting Angela

Angela is from Ecuador and we get on really well. Irene tries to match carers' personalities up with the families, and it's been a really good fit.

Every Tuesday and Friday I feed Kath breakfast then disappear for a few hours to go to my appointments and get things done that I normally can't do very easily.

I might go to Eastgardens or the rock pools.

I couldn't be happier with the service, and the things it's enabled me to do.

It's saved my sanity.

I can go out twice a week knowing someone trustworthy is here with Kath, and it gives me a sense of routine and structure.

My aim is to keep Kath at home as long as I possibly can, and help prevent her from catching pneumonia, which can happen easily to dementia sufferers.

Luckily she's still eating alright.

But this experience has meant my life has completely changed.

Tough times

I've bordered on depression at times because my lifestyle has changed completely, as has my relationship with Kath.

Sometimes when I'd see other couples holding hands it was hard.



Have you thought about volunteering?

Our volunteer team includes people from every walk of life, fulfilling a wide variety of roles.

Some work directly with clients while others work behind the scenes. Some help only occasionally, while others are involved in our weekly programs.

If you think volunteering at The Cottage (our Dementia Day Centre), in food services, or anywhere else within SECC might be for you, contact our volunteer coordinator Sue now on:

02 8338 8506

volunteering@secc.sydney

I knew that couldn't be us anymore.

But I've gotten over it with time. Time healed me, and I came to accept our situation.

I don't want Kath to go into a nursing home. There's no better care than the care that comes from a loving spouse or family member, and I want to look after her here as long as possible."

*If you think you or someone you know might benefit from flexible respite care, give Irene a call today on **8338 8506** or email us at **secc@secc.sydney**.*

From concept to launch: the opening of a new hub

How was it humanly possible to completely renovate, design and launch a brand new community centre in one fortnight? **Alison Leader** writes.

Call us crazy, but we completely renovated and launched our brand new Community Hub in the space of only two weeks with a team of less than 10.

We had our eyes on the Coronation Hall space in Mascot for some time, believing it to be the perfect environment for the community services we offer. So when we were officially handed the keys on 1st April, it was all systems go to prepare for our launch on Saturday 13th. Staff members such as CEO Kate Melhopt, Deputy CEO Ashleigh Daines, Centre Coordinator Julie Gray and our entire Families and Children's team pitched in and got their hands dirty to prepare this neglected old Bayside Council building for use as a new Community Hub.

Coronation Hall was opened in 1911 but now it has a new lease on life. Locals are now able to access a brand new community space with services run by South Eastern Community Connect, which has been operating out of Eastlakes Shopping Centre for over 15 years. The time simply came to expand our offering in a second location.

"As SECC has grown and evolved, we've observed a real need for a second, larger space in which to holistically support the local community," CEO Kate Melhopt says.

SECC now shares the space with The Deli Women & Children's Centre, offering a range of intergenerational community services and specialist assistance, family case management, aged care services, children and family services, and

community programs. The site offers a large toy library, counselling rooms, adolescent services, seniors' groups, drumming workshops, art therapy, and much more.

The SECC Community Hub is located at 1007 Botany Road, Mascot. For more information, call the Mascot team on (02) 7903 0607 or visit www.secc.sydney.



Renovation rescue



How Marie Kondo has helped millions spark their joy

Catherine Schulte unpacks the cult tidying-up sensation that's seen people declutter their homes and turn their home – and their lives – around.

The show that's taken the world by storm, believe it or not, is about clearing out our junk. Called *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo*, it tells the story of a 19-year-old student's adventures starting an organising business in Japan. Marie Kondo's book, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organising*, has only added to her credibility.

The TV show has attained cult status, with many viewers adopting what they call The Konmari Method – and from what we can see, it's working.

The method can be sustained long-term by those who decide to practice it. It certainly worked on this writer. After watching one episode I came out with four large bags of things for the tip.

Marie Kondo has inspired millions to de-clutter their living spaces.

The show's central message is to hold onto things that 'spark joy' and dispose of those which don't (apart from important must-keep items).

The Konmari Method involves grouping your possessions into five categories as follows:

- Clothes
- Books
- Papers
- Komono (Miscellaneous stuff)
- Sentimental

The idea is to lay everything out that you have in

that order, one by one.

You start with clothes, then move onto books, and so forth.

In the series, you first see the participants bringing out huge amounts of clothes and placing it on their beds, aghast that they had collected so much, with many items unworn.



No place like home

They must organise each item, deciding whether they want to keep it, donate it, or put it in the bin.

They must be mindful just how much storage space they do have, to be able to keep what they want. Often a big issue for people is lack of space and too many things.

Book in a culling session

Books often form a great source of anxiety for participants. Dealing with clothes is one thing, but books are another.

In some homes, they have hundreds upon hundreds stacked up around the place. This is not healthy for anyone because of the vermin they attract. Not only that, the information can get old and out-of-date.

Follow the paper trail

Papers are also a great source of stress, with some desks piled high with hundreds of unsorted, unorganised documents.

Many have never been read but exist in the vacuum of 'just in case'. We're certainly all guilty of this, and need to find a way to manage our papers effectively.

Tackle the junk drawer

The word Komono means 'miscellaneous' in Japanese and refers to accessories or small items.

Kondo suggests the following order for tackling them:

- CDs, DVDs
- Skincare products
- Make-up
- Accessories
- Valuables
- Electrical items
- Household equipment
- Household supplies
- Kitchen goods/ food supplies

Kondo also recommends discarding gifts that don't spark joy, remembering that these presents have already fulfilled their role in the moment you received them.

Tap into that mushy feeling

'Sentimental' rounds out the five themes nicely, leaving room for those items which have touched our heart and hold deep meaning.

In general, her motto is that the memories you have in your mind and heart are more important than the physical items you keep. Letting go of things doesn't mean you let go of your happy memories and past experiences.

When reading reviews of Kondo's work, it comes through that participants are often quite at ease because Kondo doesn't pass judgement on them and what they want to keep. If we feel happy doing something, we will often keep it up. The factor of outside judgement does not exist, so participants often feel at peace about maintaining the changes.

While this method may not be for everyone, the message is valid for a large number of people. It's healthier for our minds and bodies to live without clutter or mess, in environments that are clean, tidy and well-organised.

Would you try The Konmari Method? Head to konmari.com for more info.



Boxes that build people up



Every week, about 70 boxes packed full of fruit and vegetables from our local supplier roll out of our premises and into homes throughout south-east Sydney.

Many seniors find it difficult to get to the shops on a regular basis due to physical challenges, so they're a welcome reprieve.

"They've been incredibly valuable to me because my ability to go to the shops and carry large amounts of food is limited," one recipient, Hillary Cartwright, says.

"The boxes also give variety to my diet that I might not get myself – plus, there's amazing power in plants as they aid in health and recovery."

"The boxes make an incredible difference to me – they keep me going," he says.

If you'd like to find out more about our fresh fruit and vegetable delivery service, call us on 8338 8506.

88 years and going strong



As a former counsellor, Patricia Maclaren-Smith knows the importance of helping people build better lives. And now she's on the receiving end of help that gives her own life richness and meaning. The effervescent 88-year-old is an enthusiastic participant in South Eastern Community Connect's Community Transport Program and One-to-One Assisted Shopping Service, and says these make a big difference in her life.

"The team helping me are absolutely invaluable – Lili, Irene and Nick are wonderful," Patricia says.

"I love the transport service too, which helps keep me social. It's sad people don't realise how important it is to keep interacting with your community."

Choosing the perfect companion dog for your needs

Been thinking about buying a dog but aren't sure where to start? We've compiled a practical guide to selecting the right pup for your golden years.

Choosing good dogs, for seniors or anyone else, can be a fun and enriching process. And it starts with assessing the needs and wants of the prospective owner.

Some people gravitate toward smaller dogs that they can cuddle in a lap, while others prefer larger dogs that can romp around and play fetch. Ultimately, any breed of dog is a good choice if it meshes with your abilities, likes, and lifestyles.

Dog ownership can lower stress and blood pressure levels, and dogs offer a great way to get some exercise, socialise with others, and

enjoy the benefits of companionship. Many seniors also thrive on the experience of nurturing and caring for another living being.

How to make the best choice of pup

So you've decided you'd like a dog, but you don't know where to start? Here are some important factors to weigh up when selecting a dog:

Energy level—Some breeds simply require more exercise than others. If you're fairly active, you may be able to handle a dog that needs lots of play time and opportunities to run. But if you have mobility or



Life smarts

stamina issues, you might want to choose a dog that's content with a few short walks. Some very small dogs may even be able to get all the exercise they need just by running around inside your home.

Size—Smaller dogs are easier to keep under control and are more suitable for seniors living in



Match your needs with your dog's needs for the best possible outcome.

Older dogs are better dogs for seniors to adopt than puppies that are super-active and tend to chew and nip.

condos, apartments, or care facilities. Small dogs can fit in your lap, are more portable than larger breeds, won't physically overwhelm you, and can be easily washed in a sink. However, some small dogs have lots of nervous energy and try to make up for their diminutive stature with plenty of barking. (This doesn't always hold true, though: Among dogs that bark the least are smaller breeds like the pug and the Boston terrier). Alternatively, docile larger dogs that don't require a lot of maintenance may be a good choice.

Age—Older dogs are better dogs for seniors to adopt than puppies that are super-active and tend to chew and nip. (Most dogs are considered to be "seniors" when they reach about age seven.) Adult dogs are typically already housetrained and well-socialised with people. Mature dogs also tend to be the calmest dogs, with more predictable behaviour patterns. In addition, it's wise to think about the life expectancy of different dogs and how likely it is that your pet will outlive you. Who will take care of your dog if you aren't around to do so?

Temperament—Dogs' temperaments are influenced by the genes they're born with as well as the way they're brought up. While any dog can be raised to be friendly, some breeds are more naturally conditioned to be gentle and welcoming. Beagles, retrievers, poodles, and bulldogs are among the dogs that have the best temperament. But keep in mind that every animal has a unique personality. Try to interact with any potential pet you're considering in order to get a feel for how well-suited you are to each other.

Grooming requirements—Some breeds need to be bathed, trimmed, and clipped regularly, while others just need a quick brush every so often. Be sure to choose a dog whose needs you can manage, either by yourself or with the help of a family member or professional groomer. Take the time to think it through, and the benefits will pay off.



Choose the right dog, and you'll have a cherished friend.

What are the best companion dogs?



Thanks to their intelligence and trainable nature, **poodles** are good companion dogs. **Cavalier King Charles Spaniels** make great lap dogs, while **Boston Terriers** are adaptable, friendly and mild-tempered dogs. The tiny **Maltese** is bright, gentle, and playful, and attentive to their owners' moods. **Pembroke Welsh Corgis** live for human attention, while **beagles** are energetic, sociable, and love to play. **Pomeranians** are smart, lively, and affectionate, while **Chihuahuas** are quirky and entertaining, lively and spunky. Why not take your pick and enjoy the loyal companionship of your very own furry friend?

New Tricks for May/June

Beginners' computer skills classes

We offer free beginner-level computer training with only four students per class so you get more personalised help. Learn how to use a computer and the internet from our qualified teacher.

When? 2.30pm to 3.30pm every Thursday at SECC Eastlakes



FREE CADRE Mental Health Training

Do you care for someone with mental health concerns? We're running an information day which educates, supports and empowers individuals to promote and foster wellness in their communities.

Saturday 4th May, 1007 Botany Rd, Mascot



English classes for every learning stage

Learn English or improve your skills with classes for all levels.

Conversation Classes: Tuesdays 10am to 12pm

Elementary Classes (Beginners): Thursday 9am to 10am

Lower Intermediate & Speaking Classes: Thursday 10am to 12pm

Cost: \$15 per term (\$25 for 2 classes). 1007 Botany Rd, Mascot



Culturally diverse carer support groups

Do you have a family member under 65 with additional needs? Do you speak a language other than English and would like the support of other families from your own culture? We support carers from all backgrounds.

Contact Bronwynn on 7903 0607 for more info.



For more information on Eastlakes classes call us on 02 8338 8506

Stepping On falls prevention program

Stepping On is a free, exciting and friendly community-based falls prevention program designed to build knowledge, strength, and confidence. It is designed for people over 65 who are living at home.

Call us on 8338 8506 to find out more.



Sewing classes stimulate creativity

Learn to make or repair clothes, sew crafts and other projects.

Beginner's Classes: Wednesdays 12:30pm to 3:30pm

Shop 84, Eastlakes Shopping Centre



Exercise classes boost community fitness

Stay active and independent, and improve your strength, balance and overall health. Join us for a free exercise class run by a qualified fitness trainer twice-weekly. *Call 8338 8506 for more info.*

Mondays (4pm) and Wednesdays (6pm), Eastlakes Reserve



Green thumbs welcome in our latest project

Our community garden provides fresh produce and plants to share, and connects us with the environment and other people in our community. Join in the fun by bringing your green thumb to the project.

Contact us on 8338 8506



Tai Chi classes offer a terrific time out

Experience the many health benefits of Tai Chi with our experienced instructors. * *Call Hector on 9052 5772 or 0412 865 063 for more info.*

Beginner's Classes: Wednesdays, 12:30 - 2:00pm

Advanced Classes: Mondays, 10:00 - 11:00am

SECC Community Hub, 1007 Botany Road, Mascot



For more information on Mascot classes call us on 02 7903 0607

Support for you - without waitlists



Social bus outings for you

There's a seat on the bus waiting for you! Head out for lunch, enjoy great company, and get out and about with our transport service.

Our outings are always interesting, with a lot of different destinations and a great crew on the bus for every trip. Day trips are \$12. Call **Stuart** to see if this is right for you, on **8338 8506**.

Home Care Package help

Did you know South Eastern Community Connect is an approved Home Care provider?

We provide personal care, social support, domestic cleaning, nursing, Allied Health services and massage therapy, exercise classes, access to our Seniors' Day Centre, and food and transport services. Call **Tina** on **8338 8506** for more info now.



Fruit & vegetable deliveries

We always have room on the truck for an extra box of fruit and vegetables to travel fresh from the markets to your doorstep. Fruit, vegetables or mixed boxes are \$12 and are delivered weekly or fortnightly. We also offer volunteers to help you with your shopping, as well as the transport to get you there. Meal prep services are also on offer.

Call **us** on **8338 8506** to find out more.



Support for you - without waitlists

Flexible transport service

With this service you can book door-to-door transport in a car, with one of our drivers attending your appointments.

We give priority to your medical appointments, but if we have vacancies we can take you to the hairdresser as well.

Call **Stuart** to find out more and make a booking.
Tel: **8338 8506**.



Beaconsfield Lunch Group

Eating alone can get monotonous. Why not join the table at our lunch group, where locals meet every Tuesday? We offer a door-to-door bus service, delicious cooked meals, games and laughter, with the occasional light exercise session to work off those delicious desserts. Sound good? Call **Stuart** and don't miss out. Tel: **8338 8506**.

Flexible respite on offer

Caring for someone can be both rewarding and challenging at the same time. Our flexible in-home respite service gives both the carer and the person receiving the care a break from their daily routine. The cost for this service is \$20 for up to five hours, once a week. Call **Irene** to learn more on **8338 8506**.



Please contact South Eastern Community Connect's friendly team to discuss your needs on 02 8338 8506.



FREE!

SOUTH EASTERN
COMMUNITY CONNECT IS
HOSTING

FREE DRUMMING WORKSHOP!

10 sessions of drumming for people
of all ages and levels.

Register to experience the
therapeutic effects of drumming,
meet some great people and have
a whole lot of fun!

BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

To register your interest, leave your
name, and contact or check out the SECC

Eventbrite homepage at
www.bit.ly/secchomeeb or

call us on **7903 0607**



**WEDNESDAYS FROM 1ST
MAY 2019 AT
CORONATION HALL
1007 BOTANY ROAD
MASCOT**



'Like' our page on Facebook to follow what we do in the local community.



Go to:
www.facebook.com/SECC.Community
(our main page)
www.facebook.com/SECC.Seniors
(our page for seniors)



**South Eastern
Community
Connect**



To have our newsletters sent directly to you via email, send a note to **secc@secc.sydney**

ART THERAPY

JOIN US TO EXPLORE
THE BENEFITS OF ART
THERAPY

South Eastern Community
Connect is hosting a 10 week Art
Therapy Group starting in May
with qualified Art Therapist Maria
Rosa Casanova

**THURSDAYS FROM 2ND
MAY 2019 AT
CORONATION HALL
1007 BOTANY ROAD
MASCOT**

BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

To register your interest, leave your
name, and contact or check out the

SECC Eventbrite homepage to
register at www.bit.ly/secchomeeb

or call us on **7903 0607**



**South Eastern
Community
Connect**



FREE!