

## Youth Accommodation with a Difference

One of the important branches of Drug ARM WA is the Youth Residential Program. It has two components, (1) Accommodation (2) Youth Options.

Part of the program consists of a Accommodation Service which provides a nurturing and safe home environment for troubled boys between the ages of 14 and 18 years. Residents enter this part towards the end of each day when they come to Moordtij House. ("Moordtij" is a Noongar word meaning "strong" or "excellent".) We endeavour to create a refuge where clients feel safe enough to become stronger. The other part consists of the Youth Options Program, which essentially is the day-time component. This segment provides opportunities for our clients to rehabilitate themselves. It includes skill-base mentoring, life skills education, recreational activities, literacy and numeracy, counselling, job opportunities, as well as case management. The setting is an industrial workshop using resources such as wood, metal, art mediums, kitchen facilities, computers, machinery, work-place tools, gym and other recreational equipment.

This year, Drug ARM WA is celebrating its tenth year of our Youth Options Program. Below is a report prepared by the dedicated staff supervising this part of the Program:

Recently the Youth Options Program was fortunate to attract a new staff member by the name of Bella Ricardo. Bella previously worked as a Residential Support Worker at Moordtij House. In the past, she has worked as an art teacher in prisons, and at TAFE. We have capitalised on her experience in the arts and are in the process of setting up an Art Program at the workshop.



An important focus of the Art Program is that the clients are required to think about the feeling, values and attitudes that they portray in their art projects. We feel the Art Program will enhance the other programs that we currently offer. The program promotes a holistic approach to mentoring during the acquisition of skills, while simultaneously addressing clients' attitudes, feeling and values.



The workshop has been a hive of activity with the boys taking part in wood sculpture, carving birds and bowls and making jewellery boxes, decorated with designs using wood burning techniques.

One client has made a bathroom cabinet for his mother, to give to her on mother's day while another is making a metal wind chime using metal and wood as the medium. In a group project the boys have been working together by restoring an old car. It has been wonderful to witness their co-operation with each other and their enthusiasm in completing the project.

We have been blessed to witness our clients develop and learn new life and practical skills. They have gained confidence in their own abilities and begun to empower their lives. Three boys have taken part in a paid work experience program with Custom Electrics, and we are very grateful to the Manager of Custom Electrics, Jim Moles, for this opportunity. One of the first of our boys to take part in the program was an indigenous boy, who was from Mullewa, a community near Geraldton. This was his first experience of paid employment. Everyone at Custom Electrics spoke very highly of him, and it seemed that he grew two feet taller every time he finished work. He was very proud of his achievements. Currently another of our clients is working at Customs Electrics and also doing very well. We hope to expand this program to other businesses in the local area. It's not all work and no play at the workshop! We have had lots of fun by taking the boys out on a recreational outing. Last month we all headed off to Hillary's Boat Harbour, where we played mini golf, had a delicious picnic lunch, played footy, and then went for a swim. We finished off the day by shooting some pool at Pot Black. It was a great day, and the boys thoroughly enjoyed themselves."

Leigh Smithers and Bella Ricardo (Skills Workshop Staff)

At Drug ARM WA, we're excited about what's happening in the Youth Options Program. It is an area which is constantly improving and growing. Ultimately, our clients are being served better.

We're grateful for dedicated, loving and strong staff members. We ask that you share our vision of making the Residential and Youth Options Program a better place for all; where troubled adolescent boys can truly grow to become the people they were created to be; secure in the knowledge that they really do matter ... and that someone does care ....

*Ron Bergsma (Program Coordinator)*

## Drug ARM WA School Leavers Award

On the 7<sup>th</sup> April Drug ARM WA was presented with an Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Award by the Australian Heads of Government and the Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency management. This award was for Drug ARM WA's work with School Leavers in Dunsborough last year. Drug ARM WA has been part of Leavers celebrations in Dunsborough for the past nine years. During this time we have seen Leavers grow from a relatively small gathering into a gathering of over 2000 people which is managed by the police, government, and collection of other non government agencies like ourselves.

Whilst the environment that Drug ARM WA volunteers have been involved in has changed over time, the work that they have done has remained relatively consistent, only growing in scale. We are still handing out water, still patrolling around and being a listening ear and still running our sobering up facility. Our volunteers work extremely hard. The astonishment that leavers and other services show at our volunteers dedication is only matched by the thankfulness that the police and St Johns express each year when they acknowledge the load that we are taking from them.

In receiving this award Drug ARM WA would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of our volunteers.



*Chris been presented with the award on behalf of Schoolies Week*

## Perth Wildcats on Street Van

On the 11th April, Andrew Vlahov managing Director of Perth Wildcats and Ambassador for Drug ARM WA along with two of the Wildcats players, Peter Crawford & Alex Loughton went out on the street van with our volunteers and staff to experience the outreach services in the city. They served coffee, talked and also played basketball with the young people who approached the van. Andrew talked with the homeless youth regarding the difficulties they are facing and 'Home' they come from. Network Ten did a story on the Street Van services and aired it on the 15th April. They interviewed Andrew Vlahov, the players and Chris Summerfield of Drug ARM WA. Andrew Vlahov gave a short statement about the kids that he had talked to and the situations they had found themselves in. Chris also informed the viewers what sort of issues the van faces on a typical night out.



## Street Van in Kalgoorlie

Our Street Outreach service has expanded to Kalgoorlie. Chris Summerfield has been busy organising volunteers, street van training, jumpers and a newly signed street van to see that everything was ready for their first night out (18th April). Ten volunteers completed the training and went out on the van on the 18th & 19th April. We will officially launch the Street Van on the 9th June 2008.

## Rosella House - Gerard's Story...

My name is Gerard, I am the caretaker of a men's transitional home (Denis House). I have two reasons for writing this (my) story. Firstly, to thank Susy Thomas and her dedicated staff of Drug ARM WA for rescuing me from a life dominated by alcohol. Secondly, my story might help someone in a similar situation.

I have always been a drinker, but thought I knew when I had enough. When my first wife died of cancer after 3½ years of suffering I did not increase my drinking because I was to take care of my 4 children. I soon got married again mainly because my young child needed a mother and of course I needed a partner. I should have taken more time to make this major decision. The marriage ended in disaster and divorce. I lost everything—my successful business, my family and most important, my self respect.

I drowned myself in alcohol. My excuse was that I was over 60 and thought too old to fight back. I was a mess. In early 2001 I was accepted into the Rosella House program. I was a resident in the program for 3 months. I gained weight and I could even smile in a mirror again. So I thought I had recovered from my addiction. The co-ordinator at the time helped me get a job we both thought was well suited for me. I was a caretaker for a small museum in a small town which was also very closed up socially. Although I was very unhappy and lonely, I lasted seven months.

One day the same co-ordinator who helped me to find the job visited me and realising the state I was in, invited me back into the Rosella Home to do another course, same as before. This time I lasted 2 years. Because of loneliness and boredom I started drinking again. I went to see my doctor and asked for something to help me to beat my habit. He rang Rosella House and referred me there. I was accepted at Rosella House again—the third time. This time it was different. I came to accept that I cannot drink socially again. I am an addict. If I start now on one or two drinks, 16 would never be enough for me.

When I finished Rosella House I moved into the transitional house (Denis House). Now I am looking after Denis House as the caretaker. I have been here for the last 4 years. During this time I have been seen so many success stories much like mine. We thank the commitment and dedication of staff of Drug ARM WA, Rosella House.

## Capacity Building

Drug ARM WA has been successful in gaining 3 year funding from the Department of Health and Ageing to provide alcohol and other drug (AOD) agencies in the Mid West training and support in developing skills to address 'co-morbidity' (the co-occurrence of addiction and mental health issues). The newly appointed project manager John Hopkins will work with agencies and develop pathways of support between AOD agencies and mental health services in the region.

### THANK YOU

Drug ARM WA would like to thank Armadale Redevelopment Authority (ARA) for their donation. ARA conducted a staff auction of Christmas corporate gifts and some of the proceeds they raised they have kindly donated to us. We really appreciate it, thanks again.

Thank you to Ben & Kimberly from Shapes Health Club for the Quiz Night that was organised to raise money for the Drug ARM Street Outreach Program. They raised \$1500, thank you very much.

Also, Thank you to Ansvr Insurance for their generosity to purchase our new jumpers for the street vans.

## Op Shop News

Our oldest & most regular customer, Marea Fern of Queens Park will be 100 years old in June. She visits our Op Shop every week. Her secret for long life is ballroom dancing three times a week. Congratulations Marea.



## Entertainment Books

The Entertainment books are available again to purchase. They cost \$65 each and are great value. Get yours today! Ring 9497 9498 or e-mail admin@drugarmwa.org.au

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To donate by telephone, please contact **(08) 9497 9498**

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