

A WORD FROM OUR CEO/PRINCIPAL

Two of the Benedictine values that are close to the heart of our community at Mater Dei are justice and peace. The pursuit of peace is fundamental to a Benedictine way of life.

The Good Samaritan Teaching and Learning Framework notes that “peace is not another word for passive or disengaged or removed from the world. It is an active ordering of life so that peace is the outcome”. It follows therefore that in order for there to be peace, there must be justice and inclusion is fundamental to justice.

Our students lead us by their example of nurturing inclusive communities by their non judgmental attitudes and their all embracing welcome. The best example I have seen of this kind of humility recently was the spirit of one of our students who returned to us following major surgery in Adelaide and the subsequent response of her peers. The courage, optimism and humility of Adrianna and the students’ unconditional and non judgmental welcoming of Adrianna back to school, was an inspiring example of those Benedictine values of justice, peace and humility.

As is always the case, it has been an especially busy period in the life of the Mater Dei Community. The building of our new school and hall has continued, at times in spite of the weather. When completed, both buildings will be wonderful facilities that will enhance the learning opportunities for our students.

A number of significant events have taken place since the last edition of *Matters*. Perhaps most prominently was the inaugural celebration of the Feast of St Benedict on Friday July 30. This was a great day for all of our immediate and extended community. The day commenced with Mass followed by morning tea, a presentation of two inaugural

Benedictine awards, lunch and then an afternoon of activities for the children. It was a wonderful celebration of community. We were joined by Sr Clare Condon, Superior of the Congregation, and other sisters, many of our stakeholders from the wider Macarthur community and colleagues and students from local Catholic schools as well as schools from the Good Samaritan community at Wollongong (St Mary’s), Manly (Stella Maris), Campbelltown (St Patrick’s), Pennant Hills (Mt St Benedict’s) and Fivedock (Rosebank).



The highlight of the day was the presentation Benedictine awards. Fittingly, the *Community* award was presented to **Kevin Lawler** and the student award for *Hospitality* was presented to **Kate Feeney** (pictured). Congratulations to Kate and in particular, to Kevin for his many, many years of selfless, generous and unparalleled commitment to Mater Dei.

In addition to the Feast of St Benedict, we have also hosted G-Day, celebrated one hundred years of ministry on the property by the Sisters of the Good Samaritan and facilitated the important Senior Retreat for Years 11 & 12. All of this possible of course only because of the dedication and generosity of the Mater Dei staff who continue to go the extra mile for the benefit of our students.

The annual Race Day at Kembla Grange and Pigeon Race from Cootamundra were once again very well supported and thankfully, great successes financially. We are still on a high from our very recent Foundation Dinner and thank not only the Organising Committee of Phil McCarroll, Jim Marsden, John Adam, Angus Cox, Martin Cascarino, Kevin O’Keefe and Debbie Gates but so too the many generous sponsors and supporters and the staff of Mater Dei who contribute significantly to the success of the Dinner.

The Mater Dei Living Skills Program (formerly FRP) has been enhanced by the appointment of Karen Barnes to lead the pilot project focusing on specific skill development with the students of Richardson House and the transfer of those skills to the student’s home environment. Karen has made a positive start to this important work and we look forward to watching this initiative unfold throughout the remainder of 2010.

Finally, our dedicated Parents and Friends continue to prepare for the annual Country Fair to be held on Sunday October 17 and the Car Raffle drawn on Thursday November 18. 2010 is rapidly moving on but not without a conscientious focus on the needs of our students and on the future possibilities for all of our programs in 2011 and beyond. Above all else, the life of our community continues to be sustained by the generosity, dedication and solidarity of so many people in both our immediate and extended community and for that, we remain extremely grateful.

Prayers and best wishes

Tony Fitzgerald

For more pictures of the events mentioned visit our gallery at www.materdei.org.au