

Biography program comes to the Ranges

Older people living in aged care residences in the Macedon Ranges can now have their precious memories recorded in a biography to share with families and friends.

The biography is produced free of cost by trained volunteers from the not-for-profit organisation, Beyond Words.

Beyond Words chairman, Richard Hill, said the program provided an important, life-affirming service for people living in aged care.

"Biographies can help make older people less invisible, can humanise and empower them. They also have a positive impact on carers and families," he said.

The program has produced hundreds of biographies since it was established in Melbourne in 2012 by a group of caring volunteers who saw the need for older people to have their life stories recorded and preserved for future generations to know, share and celebrate.

During the COVID pandemic Beyond Words, which relies almost solely on grants and donations for its funding, nearly folded due to visiting restrictions and aged care home closures.

In 2021 a small group of volunteers revived the organisation, which now has about 65 volunteers, many of whom are retired or semi-retired, to produce, edit and manage its operations.

Specially trained volunteer biographers work with aged care lifestyle coordinators to identify residents who might like a biography. Their life story is recorded by the biographer during face-to-face weekly interviews for up to 10 weeks. The recordings are transcribed and edited into a book, which is presented to the storyteller at a morning or afternoon tea celebration with family and friends.

"Our plans are to expand this important service into regional and rural areas of Victoria and we are very pleased to have the program in place at Respect – Ray M Begg residence in Kyneton and also at Central Highlands Rural Health Aged Care in Trentham and Daylesford," Richard said.



Trentham resident Andrea Woodward knows well the power of the written word. The former teacher and librarian was keen to take up the opportunity to become Beyond Words volunteer biographer.

"We are fortunate to already have a three trained biographers living in the Macedon Ranges and hope to recruit more from the local area to meet the demand for biographies.

Trentham resident and former teacher and librarian, Andrea Woodward, was keen to take up the opportunity to become Beyond Words volunteer biographer.

"As biographers, we assist older people to tell their stories. Sometimes, for sure, they see their lives with new clarity, understand more, gain more peace about their lives," Andrea said.

Having also worked professionally in volunteer management, Andrea said she found the role as a volunteer biographer a unique and rewarding one.

"It's the new energy and purpose we bring to our storytellers, which I think I love seeing the most. Having a laugh with them is great too."

Beyond words can be contacted at info@beyondwords.org.au or visit the website www.beyondwords.org.au.

For more information about volunteering with Beyond Words contact 0407 569 724.

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Gisborne theft under investigation

Police are investigating theft from clothing store in Gisborne on January 24 about 10am.

It has been reported that a female attended the store at the Gisborne Village Shopping Centre and took two dresses without paying. She was last seen leaving the centre in a red hatchback.

Investigators have released an image of a woman who may be able to assist with enquiries.

Anyone with information is urged to contact Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 or submit a confidential report at: crimestoppers-vic.com.au



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