

The Companion

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OUR PEOPLE ARE WITH YOU EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

SPRING 2010



Nativity Scene created by Gina Stolfo at Queens Park. Gina has collected the pieces over a lifetime of Christmases.

It's looking a lot like Christmas!

The days are getting longer, the weather is getting warmer and, very soon, we will be celebrating with our nearest and dearest during the Christmas festivities.

I know staff and residents right across the group are already in decorating mode. Gina Stolfo's beautiful nativity scene (above) at Queens Park is a wonderful reminder of what an important and enduring tradition Christmas is to millions of people across the world.

I look forward to visiting every facility during the festive season and enjoying the burgeoning yuletide spirit, come December 25th.

As the weather warms up, all residents are urged to ensure they keep their fluids up to prevent dehydration. Dousta Galla has teamed up with Victoria University to conduct a study on how a change to the diet can increase thirst levels. It's a great project that can benefit us all.

We recently received the results from the staff and carer survey conducted earlier this year, and I am happy to report that Dousta Galla scored higher than the industry average with strong support from the nursing staff.

I am also happy to report that one of our Yarraville residents received MS Society's Go For Gold scholarship for her mouth painting. Urania Michaelidas was awarded \$5,000 to spend on more supplies and lessons to improve her mouth-painting.

Dousta Galla's recommendations for a more flexible funding system have now been submitted to the Productivity Commission's "Caring for Older Australians" public inquiry, which will produce a final report in June 2011.

On behalf of Board and Management team,
Merry Christmas!

Mark Anderson
Chief Executive Officer



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Gina and Jimmy Stolfo 2010

50 years knitting a golden marriage.

On 12 November 2010, Jimmy and Gina Stolfo celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary at Dousta Galla Queens Park aged care facility. Surrounded by their family, friends and fellow residents, it was a grand celebration of many years of happiness together.

Gina, now 69 years old, first met Jimmy when she was 15 years old, shortly after arriving in Australia from Italy in 1956 when he was working at a brickyard with her brother, but it was not until two years later that they started to go out together. In 1960, Gina and Jimmy married in a small ceremony at St Francis Church in Wentworth (NSW).

“It was a very rainy day and we had to walk about 1km from the wedding reception to get home,” Mrs Stolfo said. “I had my hair done for the ceremony, which was a real treat back then, but, by the time I made it home, my hair was completely flat!” Mrs Stolfo said.

Far from a bad omen, the Stolfo’s lifelong partnership has been anything but supine. The young family moved from their country home in Wentworth to Melbourne in 1972 to give their children a better education.

Asked for tips on how to keep a marriage alive, Mrs Stolfo said the secret to a long-lasting bond is give and take.

“My mother used to always tell me, ‘marriage is a piece of knitting, you’ll do it and undo it a million times’,” she said.

Knitting was certainly a dominant theme for those early years in Melbourne when Gina sewed the holes in Jimmy’s clothes – the family budget didn’t extend to new clothes.

Mrs Stolfo said the birth and rearing of three children was the most beautiful experience she has shared with her husband. She is now the proud grandmother of four grandchildren. Gina describes her husband as a very skilled lawn bowler and keen dart player.

Jimmy, now 82 years old, was diagnosed with dementia in 2000, and moved to Queen’s Park facility in 2005, while Gina moved into the independent living units next door to ensure she could continue spending her days in the company of her husband.



Gina and Jimmy on their wedding day 1960.

Feeling thirsty?



As we're coming into the summer months, it's important to keep fluids up to prevent dehydration. Recent research has shown that, as we age, our sense of feeling thirsty decreases, increasing the risk of becoming dehydrated and making it even more important to ensure that we're drinking enough water.

Conditions which cause the body to lose too much water, such as excessive heat, sweating, illness, low humidity and medication side effects, are often the cause of dehydration. A loss of too much water negatively affects the body's functions such as eliminating toxins, delivering nutrients, carrying oxygen to the cells of the body, producing energy, and lubricating joints. Dehydration can also impact the balance of vital electrolytes, such as sodium and potassium, which are essential to a healthy functioning body.

Doutta Galla and Victoria University are teaming up to undertake a clinical study which will investigate how supplementing the diet with omega-3 fatty acids in people over the age of 65 can increase thirst levels.

The study is expected to take around three months with participants receiving study-related testing and medication free of charge at various Doutta Galla locations.

You may be eligible to participate if you are over 65 years old and have a history of symptoms relating to dehydration.

To get involved, or for more information, contact **Anitha Dudhani** on **0431 586 077** or **anitha.dudhani@live.vu.edu.au**

107 and a new record!

Avondale Heights resident, Johanna Kelly celebrated her 107th birthday in November in the company of her family, grandchildren, friends and fellow residents. As the oldest resident to ever stay at a Doutta Galla facility, a grand affair was held in the honour of this grand dame.

A passionate Collingwood supporter, Mrs Kelly waited 20 years to see the Magpies take home another trophy but it was nothing compared with the six year wait for her fiancé to return from World War II, after he was held as a prisoner of war on the Greek island of Crete.

Never one to despair, Mrs Kelly kept her mind off things by staying busy, working at different guest houses while travelling around Victoria, helping others until her husband Leo walked back off the boat and home again.

Over the years, Mrs Kelly stayed healthy and fit through gardening, walking and keeping an optimistic outlook on life. In fact, her best piece of advice to get over a bad day was a good movie and some retail therapy!

Mrs Kelly grew up in Victoria's south-western town of Koroit and, once married, moved to Lilydale. At the age of 97, she left her Lilydale home and moved into a retirement village before moving to Doutta Galla Avondale Heights four years ago, at the age of 103.



Johanna Kelly and daughter Bernadette Stainsby.

Commission update.

In the last edition of *The Companion*, we announced that Dousta Galla was preparing its submission for the Productivity Commission Inquiry into aged-care services in Australia.

The Commission will be developing detailed options for redesigning Australia's aged care system to ensure that it is equipped to meet Victoria's ageing population.

Doutta Galla has now submitted its recommendations for a more flexible funding system, which asks the government to consider a range of issues and programs to ensure we continue to meet the needs of all its residents, regardless of where they were born and what language they speak. Dousta Galla has sent a briefing to all local MPs who represent the regions we work within, to ensure they are aware of the positive change required.

Expected earlier, the Commission's draft report is now set to be published on 21 January 2011. *The Companion* will continue to keep you updated on the progress of the inquiry.

Let's get physical!

For the last two months, Dousta Galla residents have been receiving physiotherapy sessions from Domain Health Physiotherapy & Fitness Centre, and will continue to do so in the future.

Physiotherapists from Domain Health frequently assist residents to make sure they remain mobile and keeping their independence. Our local physios also help residents who may be recovering after a fall or loss of balance, as well as those with arthritis.

One of our physiotherapists is Chris Jells. With a Bachelor of Physiotherapy and Sports Physiotherapy from Melbourne University, Chris's background includes working with hospital related injuries such as getting patient mobility back after car accidents, surgery and strokes, as well as helping the elderly at Domain Health's private clinic.

Golden moments.



Urania Michaelides

Doutta Galla Yarraville resident, Urania Michaelides has been awarded the MS Society's \$3,000 Go For Gold Scholarship for her outstanding mouth paintings and inspirational outlook on life.

The Go For Gold Scholarship is awarded to people with multiple sclerosis across ACT, NSW and Victoria who display a goal and the potential to achieve it.

"The judging panel said that my application stood out because it was not just focused on me coping with MS, but demonstrated the pure enjoyment I get out of mouth painting," Urania said. "I feel very honoured by the number of painting requests I've had from the people in Yarraville."

Stay tuned for Urania's upcoming exhibition.

Chris said that he finds caring for people and making their lives a little less painful is extremely rewarding. He particularly likes Dousta Galla's close-knit community feel.

"Going out to the different Dousta Galla facilities gives me the opportunity to help those that cannot make it to the clinic," he said. "I like to see people becoming healthier and living better, longer lives," he said.

Asked if he had any tips, Chris said that everyone should keep moving and keep walking and, if you have any mobility issues, physiotherapy exercises are really important.