



Thursday 9 September

MEDIA RELEASE

RAISING FUNDS. RAISING SPIRITS

United Way Glenelg has illustrated that even in challenging times community generosity shines through with over \$54,000 raised virtually from this year's SharkPitch event.

Over 120 people embraced the virtual fundraising event from their lounge room, to see three deserving community organisations pitch for their projects.

With encouragement from MC Neil O'Donnell, the audience were encouraged to pledge to their favourite project. Supporting the event was AWA Alliance Bank which matched pledges up to \$15,000.

The event was held entirely virtually, with the 3 pitch speakers having to establish makeshift recording studios from their home, using items such as bedsheets, cling wrap and boxes.

Thanks to the online platform CrowdCast, United Way Glenelg was able to reach more people, particularly those in Casterton who "tuned" in to see their community project featured.

"The number of people connecting to the event far exceeded our expectation of a face-to-face attendance," said Nicole Carr Executive Officer of United Way Glenelg.

"Residents from Edgarley Assisted Living watched on as their CEO Sue Wray made a passionate pitch for a multigenerational playground for their residents and families."

Sue's pitch started with a startling statistic, and we learnt that approximately 4,900 people are living across Southwest Victoria needing care and assisted living arrangements, with 45% of these local citizens having a diagnosis of Dementia.

"A common problem in aged care is the separation, isolation and often disconnection associated with living outside the family home and network,' said Ms Wray.

"Due to a range of external forces, a lack of interaction between the different generations can occur."

Building a safe playground for all ages is their solution.

"Where residents and their grandchildren will have a safe environment to share in meaningful moments of laughter, share stories, and open opportunities for the residents to feel young again."

Edgarley Assisted Living received pledges to the value of \$15,532.

"Portland Community Garden is a very special place because it is more about growing a community and supportive relationships than it was ever about growing cabbages," said President Wayne Barrett.

Moving from Cabbages to snails to sheds, Wayne outlined the important relationship the garden has had with connecting the community.

"I grew up with a sense of community being a normal part of life and that's why I am drawn to the Portland Community Garden because it brings to me and so many people that same sense of community," he said.

However inclement Portland weather inhibits the ability of local groups to access space for short-term projects.

The solution is to establish a new all-weather "Community Hub."

"This will require an extension of the existing building and remodelling of both the current small workshop and meeting room," said Mr Barrett.

..." passionate community volunteers change lives and connect our community. They come from all ages, backgrounds and abilities and they create the connections that build a stronger and more resilient community," conclude Mr Barrett.

Portland Community Garden received pledges to the value of \$13,000.

Mick Doherty from Portland Yacht Club set a vivid image for the beginning of his pitch giving the audience an insight into his maiden voyage.

"At 7 years old I was in charge of my own vessel on the open ocean. From that moment onwards the success or failure of that afternoon was all on those young shoulders, and trust me, the water in Portland is icy-cold so failure wasn't an option," said Mr Doherty.

We were then welcomed into Mr Doherty's "playground".

Mr Doherty wanted the audience to appreciate why it matters about giving a "...new generation of potential sailors with the same opportunities that I had."

"84% of our kids in the shire don't meet the national physical activity guidelines. There are around 970 high school students across Portland and Heywood, which equates to 815 of them not getting enough exercise!!!"

If this wasn't enough to motivate people to open their wallets or quickly sign up their, or any young person to play sport, we were then told living in the Glenelg Shire means 25% of us are "more likely to develop type 2 diabetes compared to anywhere in the state."

Mr Doherty provided encouraging instances of how sailing had connected families and changed lives.

"I asked one of the ladies in our sailing program what sailing meant to her? She said "In one of the toughest periods of my life, sailing gave me an escape from reality. At times it was awesome and other times beautiful and peaceful"

Portland Yacht Club raised \$ \$26,632.

The pitchers were coached with the support of Bayview College English teacher, Mrs Debra Crespan, learning the art of storytelling through an intensive workshop to sharpen their message

Now in the third year, the event has raised over \$150,000 for community projects in the Glenelg Shire.

AWA Alliance Bank has already committed to supporting United Way Glenelg next year to continue improving the lives of people living in the Glenelg Shire community.

Gavin Heathcote, CEO of AWA Alliance Bank, said the night exceeded all his expectations.

“Partnering with United Way Glenelg allows us to contribute to an improved and sustainable future for our members and local communities. As a social enterprise bank, now more than ever, you're making a difference with us.”

“It was truly wonderful to see the community spirit at its best!”

Sue Wray from Edargley Assisted Living had the most appropriate quote of the evening by stating “Medical research shows that even a smile can improve health by decreasing stress levels and lowering blood pressure.”

With smiles all around, there is no doubt 120 people had lower stress levels and improved blood pressure.

If you missed 2021 Virtual LiveSharkPitch event you can watch the replay here. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eyt5J6YIHu4>

You can still pledge for your favourite project. Click on this link <https://www.givenow.com.au/unitedwayglenelg>

If you would like more information on how you can become involved in the 2022 event, please contact Nicole Carr at United Way Glenelg mail@unitedwayglenelg.com.au or phoning 0410 513 305.

- End -

Media enquiries to Nicole Carr on 0410 513 305 or mail@unitedwayglenelg.com.au