



United Way Glenelg

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 21 July 2022

WINTER CARE PACKAGES BRING JOY TO OLDER RESIDENTS

With the cold weather well and truly settling in, the cost of living and energy costs skyrocketing; many older residents are choosing between eating or heating. For some, it can also be the loneliest and most isolating time of the year.

As a response, United Way Glenelg is delivering much-needed Winter Care Packages to make residents feel valued as community members.

An essential part of ageing successfully is having enough energy for cooking, heating, cooling, cleaning, and leisure activities.

Nicole Carr, Executive Officer United Way Glenelg said agencies, when conducting home visits, often find residents rarely putting the heating on, choosing instead to sit in a cold room due to increasing costs, said Ms Carr.

Recent research said many older people will avoid using heating – risking their health and wellbeing to reduce costs.

“We are working very closely with local agencies to ensure we are identifying and reaching those most vulnerable and in need.”

“Being able to meet living costs helps prevent ill health or premature death, manage illness and chronic disease, sustain social relationships, and support positive mental health,” Ms Carr explained.

Delivery of the Care Packages is helping in some small way to improve morale and alleviate some of the stresses associated with winter.

Assembled by the Standing Tall group at Heywood & District Secondary College, the students and their mentors, packed 200 boxes with an assortment of non-perishable food and personal care items, a food voucher for purchasing perishable items such as meat, fruit and vegetables, an activity, reading material, a special treat and a personal note from Merino Consolidated Primary School.

“This year we’re thrilled to include for the first time, a meal voucher. Valued at \$20, the voucher enables the resident to go to one of five Hotels in the Glenelg Shire and share a meal with a family member or friend.”

“We approached All Saints Outreach with the proposal to sponsor the meal vouchers and they jumped at the opportunity to help!”

Another special item was the inclusion of homemade knitted blankets, hats and scarves with Julia Street Creative Space and generous local knitters jumping at the opportunity to contribute.

“We’ve been overwhelmed by the generosity. So much so we’ve started collecting for next year’s packages.”

The campaign for funding the Winter Care packages began early in March when people were encouraged to “turn off the heat,” creating a lived experience albeit for a short period and generating an understanding of the struggles facing many living in the Glenelg Shire.

Ms Carr said it takes a collaborative approach to support a community.

United Way Glenelg tipped in \$10,000 from its Lewis Court Fund to match donations made by individuals.

"We also sought out grants from philanthropic organisations and were pleased to receive generous contributions from The Ian Rollo Currie Estate Foundation, FRRR, All Saints Outreach and Wannan Water."

From anecdotal evidence, by the way of the messages of gratitude from the many letters, phone calls and cards we're just starting receiving, we know the packages are greatly appreciated in supporting older people with basic needs, preventing them from disconnecting from the community and making them feel valued.

Sandra, an 84-year-old widow said the package was a lovely surprise :

"It was very much appreciated. All useful and thoughtful goodies. And the blanket is a huge plus. I am having an operation on my hand tomorrow so the Readers Digest books will be easy to hold. The vouchers will be used. Thanks to each member."

And Joan from Casterton said *"it s lovely to know we are still thought of as we get older."*

"This is our small part, but we are relying on the entire community to look out for one another. Look out for your neighbours, your relatives and friends, anyone that needs a helping hand," Ms Carr explained.

"These packages will make Winter a little more bearable."

Recipients were identified through United Way Glenelg Agency partners including Glenelg Shire Council Aged and Disability unit, Portland District Health Palliative Care and District Nursing units, Portland District Health Telecare, Dhauwurd Wurrung Elderly & Community Health Service Inc, Winda Mara, Dartmoor Bush Nursing Centre, Merino Bush Nursing Centre, Casterton Memorial Hospital and St Vincent de Pauls.

Photo 1: Standing Tall Mentor LJ Bell-Cooper (mentee) and Vin Gannon (mentor) assemble the Winter Care Packages.

Photo 2: Dianne Carlile, Dartmoor Bush Nursing Community Services Coordinator Rachel Pridham and Val Colley.

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