

Annual General Meeting

UMSLV's AGM took place on 21 October. We had an inspiring talk by our guest speaker Rhonda Renwick on what Kindred Spirits does for grassroots community organisations. Kindred Spirits have supported us through our Eid Festival in 2015 as well as through our MY Story project. Thank you, Rhonda, for all that you and Kindred Spirits do to support community organisations and for your continued support to the muslim sisters.

Thank you Lisa Sinha for being our returning officer. The AGM was opened with a verse from the Quran recited by Zeinab Badreddine and translation given by Syeda Husseini. Yumna was MC for the evening. Arfa spoke about the activities that UMSLV was involved in over the past year and highlighted areas that should be developed in the new year. Yumna and Khatija presented a progress report on the MY Story project and showed a documentary type video of the process that



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2016/2017 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

President:

Arfa Khan

Vice President:

Khatija Halabi

Secretary :

Yumna Ahmed

Treasurer:

Nicky Ogunsina

Communications:

Hina Faisal

Youth Co-ordinator:

Zeinab Badreddine

Coopted Members:

Lubna Chawdury,

Syeda A Husaini,

Tahmina Tanveer,

Nurun Nahar.



HANDING OVER THE KEYS

Yumna Ahmed

Yumna Ahmed was on a panel as a member of the CMY youth leadership advisory group at a forum that looked at “Handing over the keys and power sharing in the multicultural sector” on 11 November. The discussion was about how elders and leaders can pass on the keys to the youth. Yumna spoke about her migration from Pakistan and her involvement in UMSLV led activities. She is passionate about empowering youth and women in the community, to speak out and challenge misconceptions and to be actively and positively involved in the wider community. It was an amazing experience speaking at the conference. Being introduced as a youth leader was a childhood dream fulfilled”

“It was an amazing experience speaking at the conference. Being introduced as a youth leader was a childhood dream fulfilled” -Yumna Ahmed

MODERATOR’S LUNCH WARRAGUL

Arfa S. Khan was a guest speaker at the moderator’s lunch in Warragul on 10 November. The topic was “*Courage does not have to roar*”.

The following article was published in the Warragul Drouin Gazette about the event.



Panel members (from left) Uniting Church moderator Sharon Hollis, Gazette editor Carolyn Turner, United Muslim Sisters of the Latrobe Valley president Arfa Sarfaraz and UnitingCare Gippsland chief executive Tracey Gibson.

Panel discusses resilience

Developing resilience and having courage in the face of adversity were the key themes of a luncheon held earlier this month at the Uniting Church in Warragul.

Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania moderator Sharon Hollis chaired the panel which included Gazette editor Carolyn Turner, United Muslim Sisters of the Latrobe Valley president Arfa Sarfaraz Khan and UnitingCare Gippsland chief executive Tracey Gibson.

The panel discussed resilience in workplaces, life in general and in regional areas.

In particular, the panel discussed resilience and courage in rural life and particularly for farming families as a result of the milk price crash and for people employed in the power industry in the Latrobe Valley.

The panel members agreed that their resilience had developed from growing up and particularly through lessons taught to them by their parents.

DIGNITY PROJECT

The Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) organised and presented a Dignity Forum on 5 November in Dandenong. UMSLV partnered with WFWP on this project and our role was to assist with the designing a flyer (thank you Hina Faisel) and be a guest speaker on a panel (thank you Ieda Azhari for your assistance with the preparation of the PowerPoint presentation).

It was good to see that the values of UMSLV were so similar to the philosophy of WFWP and other well established organisations such as the Wellness Centre.

They had 4 speakers on a forum. Topics included Dignity of the homeless, dignity of asylum seekers, dignity of victims of domestic violence and dignity of muslim women.

Retaining dignity of Muslim women in the current climate

Khatija Halabi

Dignity can be defined as the quality of being worthy of honour or respect. The concept of dignity has been used to express the idea that a human being has an *innate* (born with) right to be valued, respected and to receive ethical treatment. As a representative of the muslim sisters, I spoke about retaining dignity for muslim women.

I mentioned a few points on how our Prophet Muhammad (May peace be upon Him) and Islam restored dignity to girls and women over 1400 years ago but focused on what is happening today, in Australia.

I highlighted the diversity of our committee, which represents the diversity of the muslim community in Gippsland. Although we all practise Islam, the culture of each family has been intertwined or influenced by the traditions of the countries that they originated from.

Getting my opinion as a South African Indian muslim on an issue may be quite different to the opinion that you will get from a muslim woman from Bangladesh or Afghanistan, not only because of cultural differences but also due to our different life experiences, not forgetting generational differences.

When working with communities it is important to not just look at risk factors but also to look at resilience factors. There's not much we can do with challenges but resilience opens the doors to opportunity.

So what have UMSLV done to impress on the idea that muslim women have an innate right to be valued, respected and to receive ethical treatment? I explained some of activities that we have run, which provide opportunities for the women to integrate, connect and become empowered and to build resilience.

In reference to what's been said in media about "domestic violence and crime being identified as muslim problems" I advised service providers present, wanting to help restore dignity to muslim men and women in these situations, to treat these situations as social problems, not muslim ones! As ill treatment of spouses and fellow human beings have no place in our teachings.

I believe that it is important for all women, not just muslim women, to be able to identify abusive behaviours and to have the assertiveness to negotiate with her partner and make clear what she is prepared not to accept. And to have the necessary training so that she can be financially independent regardless of the outcome of her marriage.

For the muslims present in the audience, we are not here to live a life free of challenges. We don't carry our challenges alone but also in communities. For example, unemployment does not pose a challenge to the individual but also to the community. It is the responsibility of both the individual and his/her community to carry and help overcome the challenge that they are faced with.

Our prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) said that there is no disease or problem except that there is a cure for it. And when faced with problems or challenges it is important to ask the question What are *We* going to do to solve that problem or overcome that challenge? Be led by the dreams that you have for yourself, your family and your community and by the love of Allah. Don't let challenges settle in your hearts, but keep them in front of you so you can deal with them. I love the analogy of Nahla (the palm tree) mentioned in the Quran. No matter how much things bend you, bounce back and stay strong from the inside.



COMMISSIONER FOR SENIOR VICTORIANS

Nuray Ardolli

I was fortunate to attend Kernot hall on 23 November to hear the Commissioner for Senior Victorians talk about the project in our local community.

The report identifies that although there are many factors affecting our senior Victorians (over 60) the obvious is isolation and loneliness that has the major impact of Latrobe City community for senior Victorians. Latrobe City is auspiciating the funds which total \$80,000.00. The idea is to form a committee of sorts from various sectors to “reach out and better respond to the seniors needs and interest” by maximising opportunities while closing challenges and gaps by developing a strategy/plan for seniors to reduce social isolation and loneliness. This funding is a one off, there is no funds to continue maintenance for the plan other than the Latrobe City’s reviews.

GIPPSLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY Nuray Ardolli

I was given the opportunity to attend and represent my sisters at the Gippsland Regional Assembly in Moe. Some of you may not have heard of the Assembly like me, well at least until November 17th. When I asked Khatija if I had to do anything she kindly responded with “ You don’t need to do or say anything. Just go with the flow”.

Gippsland Regional Partnership is a group that is working together with local residents, businesses, traders, groups and services providers to improve our Gippsland, our home. The Partnership held a forum. In attendance, we had the Hon Daniel Andrews, MP, local representatives and our Mayor Kellie O’Callaghan in addition to various members throughout Gippsland to share and hear our ideas on what improvements we would like to see.

So yes, I did go with the flow; I had to pick a category; there were 7 categories;

- * New jobs and Industry
- * Education and wellbeing
- * Food and fibre
- * Latrobe Valley
- * Tourism/visitor economy
- * Environment
- * Connectivity

Each table had to participate in group discussions about our Concerns followed by the Why factor then brain storming for Ideas/Possibilities. Each table had to pick three (3) of their best ideas and share them with the rest of the group (only about a couple hundred people) then we were asked to place a dot on the most appealing or preferred ideas. Overall the night was interesting with great ideas from all the tables and was filled with discussions, laughter and business, one might even describe it as a large consulting process to narrow the most common interests in improving Gippsland as a whole. You can view live streaming and pictures of the forum on Facebook Gippsland Regional Partnerships or via this link <https://www.facebook.com/GippslandRP/?fref=ts>. I am looking forward to the report of the forum that will follow in the near future.



ENGLISH CLASS AT CHURCHILL HUB Ida Azhari

I joined the English conversation class at the Churchill Neighbourhood Centre more than a year ago, and it was one of my happiest decision Al-hamdulillah. The class is more than just learning about Australian slangs and cultures; it builds solid friendships and becomes a support group for the participants who all came from different parts of the world. We are made up of people from Chile, Colombia, Iraq, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Malaysia (me!), and our instructor is an amazing Aussie lady with Scottish roots. We look forward to our Wednesday classes every week. We talk, we eat and we laugh. The program also welcomes kids, so moms can bring their little ones too. We all have to go on our own separate journeys one day. Whatever it may be in the future, I am grateful Al-hamdulillah that we all crossed paths at this point in life in this foreign land to meet each other. It was a priceless experience, and I encourage you to check what programs your neighbourhood house has to offer and join in!



“The class is more than just learning about Australian slang & cultures; it builds solid friendships and become a support group for the participants who all came from different parts of the world” -Ida Azhari

MOE COMMUNITY MARKET

On Sunday 20 November 2016, Latrobe Valley residents gathered for a community celebration at the opening of the Moe Service Centre and Library. There were children's activities, cooking demonstrations and market stalls. Tehmina provided a cultural flavour to the day with her Pakistani dishes, henna tattoos and costume jewellery. Organisers of the day would like to hold more market days in the future.



MAWLID

ARFA S. KHAN

Rabi' al-awwal is the third month in the Islamic calendar. It was in this month that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was born and also the month in which he passed away.

Allah (swt) has stated in the glorious Quran "Indeed Allah conferred a great favor on the believers when he sent among them a Messenger (Muhammad PBUH) from among themselves, reciting unto them His verses, (The Quran) and purifying them, (from sins by their following him) and instructing them (in) the Book (Quran) and Al-Hikmah, (the wisdom and the Sunnah of the Prophet PBUH) before that they had been in manifest error," (Surah 3. Al-Imran: Verse 164).

Our purpose of life should be, to read about Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) life experiences and gather the moral lessons from them. Many Muslims around the world celebrate Mawlid—the birth of the Prophet (PBUH).

The history of this celebration goes back to the early days of Islam when some of the Tabi'in (the successors of the Companions of the Prophet) began to hold sessions in which poetry and songs composed to honour the dignity and the righteous example of the Messenger of Allah were recited and sung to overflowing crowds in the major cities of Islamic Civilization. There are different rulings in favour of and against celebrations. I am not in any position to tell anyone what they should do or not but while celebrating Rabi-ul-Awwal, we should be mindful and not opt for the ways which are considered *bid'ah* or sin in Islam.

On the 12th of September 2016, I went overseas to the wonderful and lively country of Indonesia. It is a beautiful nation overflowing with culture, colour and joy. Indonesia is the 4th populous nation in the world, with over 17,000 individual islands. However when Indonesia is mentioned, all that comes to mind are the Bali islands.



None of my close acquaintances went on this trip with me, which frightened me a lot, but that shouldn't hold anyone back. Personally, I think it's good to go without people you know so you can branch out of your comfort zone and develop new friendships.

There were always chances of speaking the language, but most of us gave up and just spoke in English. I have spent four years learning the language, so it would've been nice to be able to have more chances to speak the language.

The living conditions the locals were living in were not ideal, but they were still very happy and thankful and made do with what they had.

I was lucky enough to get an opportunity at this level to learn about new places, and if you get an opportunity like this I strongly recommend that you take it. Step out of your comfort zone and explore the environments and cultures of new places, whether it's a different country or the next town over.



LIFE OF THE PROPHET (PBUH) Arfa S. Khan

In order that people do not elevate Mohammad (PBUH) beyond the level of humble human being, he often reminded them that he is a man like them, one day a man came to see Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The man was very nervous to be in the presence of the Last Messenger of Allah and started shaking. Seeing his state, Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) told him: "so and so I am a Prophet but remember I am a man like you and the son of a shepherd woman". "And say: I am only a man like you ..." (Quran 18: 110)

When a Roman delegation came to see Prophet Mohammad, they asked people which man is their Prophet as all they saw was a group of men sat in a circle on the floor with Prophet Mohammad amongst them, they expected him to be sat on a throne like emperors do!

His life and teaching was not only about preaching Islam but was a thought provoking lesson for leading our daily lives and dealing with others.

SCHOOL HOLIDAYS ACTIVITIES

Game Makers Workshop



Saturday 31st December 2016

11:30am - 1:30pm

191-193 Argyle Street, Traralgon 3844

In this workshop the kids can come along and have some fun creating their own games to take home with them. Free glitter tattoos and balloons for all kids.

Kite Making

KiteMaking holiday fun
Make and decorate a diamond kite to take home

Event Details

When and where

Churchill Library - 9-11 Phillip Parade
Wednesday 25 Jan 2017 at 10:00AM

Moe Library - 1-29 George Street
Tuesday 24 Jan 2017 at 02:00PM

Morwell Library - 63-65 Elgin Street
Wednesday 25 Jan 2017 at 02:00PM

Traralgon Library - 35-38 Kay Street
Tuesday 24 Jan 2017 at 10:00AM

How Much

\$6 per child. Places are limited so bookings are required.

Contact Details

Call Centre and Library staff
Phone:1300 367 700
Website:www.latrobe.vic.gov.au/library

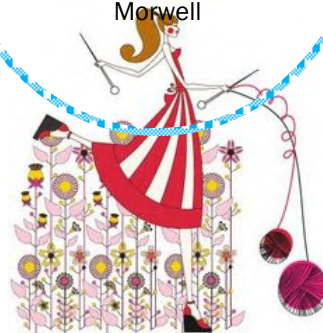
Crochet

With Yumna

Monday 9 Jan 2017

12-2pm

GMS Community Room,
Morwell



Craft making holiday fun for kids

Join in the creative fun

Event Details

When and where

Churchill Library - 9-11 Phillip Parade
Thursday 19 Jan 2017 at 10:00AM

Moe Library - 1-29 George Street
Friday 20 Jan 2017 at 10:00AM

Morwell Library - 63-65 Elgin Street
Tuesday 17 Jan 2017 at 10:00AM

Traralgon Library - 35-38 Kay Street
Wednesday 18 Jan 2017 at 10:00AM

How Much

Free event

Contact Details

Call Centre and Library staff
Phone:1300 367 700
Website:www.latrobe.vic.gov.au/library

Heroes & Villains



Holiday stories

Come dressed up in your favourite hero or villain costume

Event Details

When and where

Churchill Library - 9-11 Phillip Parade
Wednesday 11 Jan 2017 at 11:30AM

Moe Library - 1-29 George Street
Friday 13 Jan 2017 at 11:00AM

Morwell Library - 63-65 Elgin Street
Tuesday 10 Jan 2017 at 11:00AM

Traralgon Library - 35-38 Kay Street
Thursday 12 Jan 2017 at 10:30AM
Thursday 12 Jan 2017 at 11:30AM

How Much

Free event

Contact Details

Call Centre and Library staff
Phone:1300 367 700
Website:www.latrobe.vic.gov.au/library

Heroes and Villains



Event Details

When and where

How Much

Free

Contact Details

All summer holidays at Churchill, Moe, Morwell and Traralgon Libraries
Phone:1300 367 700
Website:www.latrobe.vic.gov.au/library

MAHWISH

WE WANT YOU TO BE SAFE

WE WANT YOU TO TAKE
CARE

WE WANT YOU LET GO OF
YOURSELF AS YOU FEEL THE
FRESH AIR

ENJOY BEING HOME IN
CANADA

WE WILL MISS YOU



Merry Christmas to all our
Christian friends celebrating
and season greetings to all
our readers!

Editor

Khatija Halabi

Contributors

Ida Azhari

Nuray Ardolli

Yumna Ahmed

Nabiha Ahmed

Arfa S. Khan



COMMUNITY NEWS

With fire season upon us,
please download the Vic
Emergency app on your
phone and stay safe!



Congratulations on your
marriage, Amani.

We wish you, Sharjeel Raja
and Yassin a lifetime of love,
peace and joy. Stay happy
always!

Congratulations Zonia and
Zahir Yousaf on the safe
arrival of Zayd Muhammad
Yousaf on 17 November.

May he be the coolness of
your eyes.

VIC EMERGENCY

Your source for emergency information in Victoria

App

The VicEmergency app keeps you informed of warnings and incidents taking place near you or within your designated watch zones. Create a profile so that your watch zones can be accessed from your smart phone, tablet or even the VicEmergency website.

Download on the **App Store** | GET IT ON **Google Play**

Website

Like the app, the VicEmergency website displays warnings and incidents on an interactive map. You can also access information to help you prepare or recover from emergencies.

Visit emergency.vic.gov.au

Hotline

The VicEmergency Hotline is the only phone number you'll need for warnings, preparedness and recovery information in Victoria.

Call 1800 226 226

Social media

Follow VicEmergency on Facebook and Twitter for real-time warning notifications and other emergency information.

facebook.com/vicemergency
twitter.com/vicemergency

Support

For support using the VicEmergency app or website, visit <http://support.emergency.vic.gov.au>

Logos: VICTORIA, CFA, SES, MFB, Life Saving Victoria, FOREST FIRE MANAGEMENT VICTORIA, Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology

MULTIFAITH COMMUNITY MEETING

Yumna Ahmed

On the 7th December 2016, we had our last multifait meeting for the year. As it is bush fire season the meeting was dedicated to bush fire precaution. It doesn't matter if you live in the town or the bush it is important to take code red days seriously. In case of a bush fire the council has a list of vulnerable people. These are people who are not connected to the community so might not hear about the bush-fire, for example the elderly or those who cannot drive. If you know of anyone in the community who you think might qualify for the list, please let the council know about them. Another thing that was asked was to download the "VicEmergency" app from the app store or google play.