



UNITED MUSLIM SISTERS OF LATROBE VALLEY

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NEWSLETTER 2019 - 2020

Issue 22

Women's Day Family Picnic

9 March 2020 - By Khatija Halabi

Well who would have thought that the Women's Day Family Picnic held in March was going to be the last social gathering we have for months! No family picnics, Iftaar dinners, Eid get togethers or Eid Festivals as we know it. Due to the pandemic our community has been in lockdown, but within the boxes (our homes) we are living in, we were able to get very creative. This has certainly been a time of reflection. When we ponder about the lives of the Prophets (A.S.), we notice that it was during times of isolation that there was exponential spiritual growth. We remember the Prophet Muhammed (S.A.W) receiving his revelations while in the Cave of Hira and the repentance of Prophet Yunus (A.S.). While families have been missing the social interaction with their friends there



has been a renewed connection and opportunity for growth with immediate family members.

The United Muslim Sisters of Latrobe Valley (UMSLV) are proud the way our community has heeded advice based on health regulations and completely adopted the mindset of "Apart but together for the benefit of our region and country".

According to 'Sahih Al- Bukhari' :

" If you hear of an outbreak of plague in a land, do not enter it; if the plague breaks out in a place while you are in it, do not leave that place,".

The UMSLV committee accepted the SOPs that came from government and got on with what we do, is to provide platforms and opportunities for social connection, learning and empowerment for the women and children. We have adopted the online platform for our activities and in one instance even used a hybrid approach of face to face and online. As the restrictions ease, the delivery

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of our activities will be amended accordingly.

The resilience shown by the parents has trickled down to our younger generation too. Although we acknowledge that the pandemic has had a significant impact on our young people, we are so proud of the way they are getting through this. Inshallah, we pray that you all continue to stay safe and this Covid 19 pandemic goes away as quickly as it came. In the meantime, we will embrace the challenges to attain self-transformation!

Our Committee



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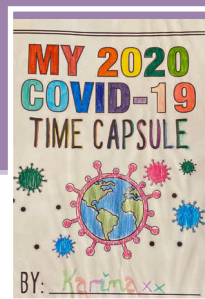
COOPTED MEMBER
Aisha Alim



COOPTED MEMBER
Syeda Hussani

School Holiday Activity Covid Time Capsule –

By Bianca Pezzutto



Crazy times in 2020 has brought with it so many changes, in so many ways. People have been trying to get through together, keep active and even make a record of what will be, a moment in history. At this time, a lot of organisations, businesses, services and community groups have had to move the way they operate to an online world.

One activity that came along during the first lockdown was a workshop held by the United Muslim Sisters of Latrobe Valley (UMSLV) creating a COVID Time Capsule. A well facilitated workshop for both children and adults we looked at recording what we were experiencing, what we were doing during COVID, what things we missed and so much more. The resource gave participants opportunity to record messages, significant events that happened during this time and collect keepsakes.

What a wonderful opportunity to engage with young and old and be guided by the women of UMSLV. We were supported to share what we wrote and ideas on how we could use the time capsule or even share it with friends and family.

I work in the Community Services sector and am grateful to have joined in with the workshop. It has been shared with our staff to potentially use with clients and our own family members. With many of us working remotely it was great to be able to have a relevant and useful tool to support us during and after COVID lockdown.

Thank you UMSLV !

Ramadan

By Shazia Bano

The month of Ramadan during this year was significantly different due to lockdown and social distancing that resulted in the closure of mosques and spiritual centres in Australia. We usually get together for breaking our fast with the local community of muslims and friends. Although I had a different experience during this pandemic instead of visiting or inviting friends for iftar, I prepared simple food at home and sent small iftar boxes to family friends. This year we ate simple healthy food during ramadan which is one of the Islamic principles.

During this ramadan instead of going to mosque for prayer, we prayed five times daily prayers with our own family and children at home. During this Ramadan we had time to recite Quran every day. It was such an amazing time of self improvement and teaching our children some good lessons. Inshallah, this pandemic will be over soon and we all get back to normal as before, but having the quiet, valuable time with our family will be treasured.



Eid ul Fitr and Eid-ul-Adha

Thank you GAMCI for organising an online community catch up so we could do Takbirat together, listen to the talk and have a virtual meet and greet!

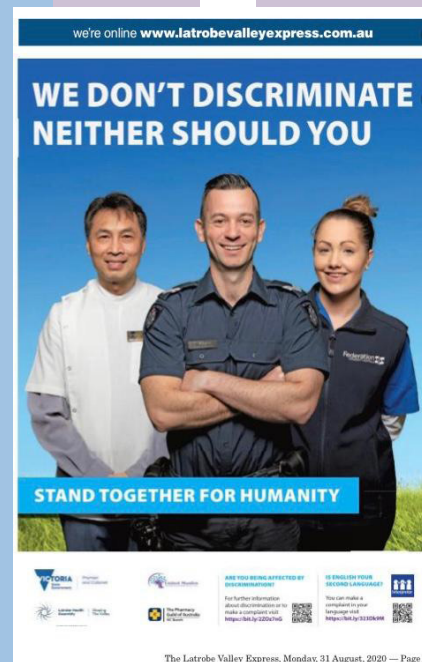
It was great to see at least 32 families join on the mornings of both Eids.

May Allah accept the community's efforts.



Q & A with a Health Panel

UMSLV was very happy to support a very informative session arranged by GAMCI & AAPP about COVID-19 with health specialists on the panel. After the presentations there was an opportunity to ask questions. With all the information that was available on social media platforms, it was good to clarify on several issues. Not only were there doctors on the panel but also a young person who had the lived experience of Covid 19. He and his wife were positive at the time and they spoke not only about symptoms but also access to testing and service delivery.



Anti-Racism Webinar

UMSLV organised a webinar in collaboration with Latrobe Health Assembly and Pharmacy Guild Victoria on 30 July. The webinar was part of an anti-racism campaign funded by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Victorian Government.

Issues tabled at webinar

By CHER JIMENEZ

A CALL for Gippsland to have its own database of racial discrimination incidents was issued during a recent webinar.

Ninety people from different cultural backgrounds, including government and service providers, sat down for a webinar on July 30 and discussed the issue of racial discrimination.

Organised by the United Muslim Sisters of Latrobe Valley, in collaboration with the Latrobe Health Assembly and the Pharmacy Guild of Victoria, the one-hour webinar allowed participants to share ideas about and experiences of racism faced by members of multicultural and Aboriginal communities.

UMSLV president Arfa Khan said racial discrimination was prevalent in Gippsland, but maintained it was "under-reported", unlike in metropolitan Melbourne.

"There were incidents happening in schools, there's bullying because of one's colour, discrimination in the workplace, and Indigenous Australians experiencing racism," she said.

"These are



Touching base: Ninety people participated in a webinar organised by the United Muslim Sisters of Latrobe Valley last week. photograph supplied

under-reported (and while) there are laws the practices are different."

Ms Khan said it was important to build a database of racial discrimination incidents in Gippsland as many people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds settle in regional areas.

She said racial discrimination can occur in many instances, however it was not reported, largely due to "fear of backlash".

Ms Khan said CALD

people sometimes feel discriminated against when they're looking for work and even in the workplace.

"There's this expectation to perform better, like you need to always prove yourself to employers," she said.

She said some instances of discrimination had the potential to negatively impact a victim's mental health, with some feeling they had no choice but to resign.

She said the coronavirus

pandemic had intensified incidents of racial discrimination, with some people inferring a link between the pandemic and certain cultural backgrounds.

"We know that these things happen, so there really needs to be a study conducted in the Gippsland region," Ms Khan said.

Ms Khan said people experiencing racial discrimination should report incidents to police or the Victorian Multicultural Commission.

Qualities of a Good Mother -

Online Workshop by Life Coach Sumaiya

Article by – Beenish Akram

Parenthood – the joyous phase in our lives which brings smiles, challenges and struggles altogether. As Muslim parents, our biggest concern remains as how to inculcate Islamic values in our children. How to raise them, is a question that has no 'perfect fit' answer which could work for everyone. Every child, every household is different! We often find ourselves in a bit of a stride and look for someone who is reliable and relatable. Thankfully, these days, internet has made everything accessible.

One such workshop, conducted by the UMSLV group, was a great example of how you can gain help and knowledge on everyday issues. It was on the topic 'Qualities of A Good Mother', conducted by Sister Sumaiya Afzal, the Relationship and Parenting Coach at Mumkin. It was an interactive Zoom session that answered many questions and addressed some important situations we as parents/ mothers encounter in our day to day lives. The session touched on the topic of the beauty of motherhood and the strong family structure we have in Islam.

After a few technical problems (which are the very nature of anything online) and a slight delay, the session started off with the questions from the participants. Everyone was comfortable and open to put down their concerns and worries and Sister Sumaiya was very welcoming about it. It took off with a few pointers on how to deal with children on their emotional and psychological wellbeing. Among the topics that were discussed were:

- Too much screen time
- Aggressive behavior from children
- Practicing gratitude – teaching courtesy to children
- Teaching them respect and giving them independence
- One helpful tip that Sister shared was 'Tell Not Yell', which speaks for many of us when we are caught up in unpleasant situations. When something happens which should not have, we tend to lose control, we shout and get loud – all of which is disturbing for children. They take this behavior as a normal reaction. As mothers, we need to stay calm, practice patience and 'tell' them what they should have done differently, rather than 'yelling' at them.

Children learn what they see. For them to be good human beings they need good role models. Our physical and emotional health reflects in them, they get the positivity and energy from us, therefore first and foremost thing is to look after our own selves. We as mothers have the responsibility of raising children with proper islamic values. We should be proud and confident in our role. We often undermine and do not appreciate the hard work we do, but this beautiful responsibility

that Allah (S.W.T) has conferred on us, is precious and rewarding like nothing else in this world.

During the session, a 'Happiness Test' was shared. Depending upon the answers it indicates how emotionally happy we are. It is a good measure to improve our mental health.

Sister Sumaiya came up with some practical and helpful suggestions to raise a happy and healthy child. She emphasized on:

- Setting up boundaries for children and maintaining a firm attitude
- Acknowledging their emotions and Communicating - giving them your full attention
- No comparisons with other children
- Spending quality time with them – doing constructive things together
- Treating them as a person, listening to their opinions and letting them make decisions.
- Always be there for them and staying non-judgmental.

Children are a gift of Allah (S.W.T). We should be immensely grateful to be bestowed upon with the most beautiful status of Parent/Mother. We should cherish every moment and take guidance from our teachings in order to fulfill this responsibility nicely and become successful in both the worlds.

The session concluded with this beautiful Dua: 'Our Lord! Grant unto us wives and offspring who will be the comfort of our eyes and give us (the grace) to lead the righteous'.

-The video of this session has been uploaded and is available on the UMSLV Facebook page. It was scheduled for Saturday, 22nd August 2020.

- Sister Sumaiya is a Life Coach working from the platform of Mumkin – a private coaching company in Pakistan.



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Zoom Art Room Activities –

By Bec Vandyk

Term 2 of the school year was the beginning of a new kind of normal that included remote learning, and restrictions on all face to face social groups. While businesses began to change their working procedures, recreational social connections decreased. By now though, we have all become a little more used to these new processes. We fit in our social lives where we can through Facebook, phone calls, and in the case of me and my mum (who is in aged care) “visits” through a window.



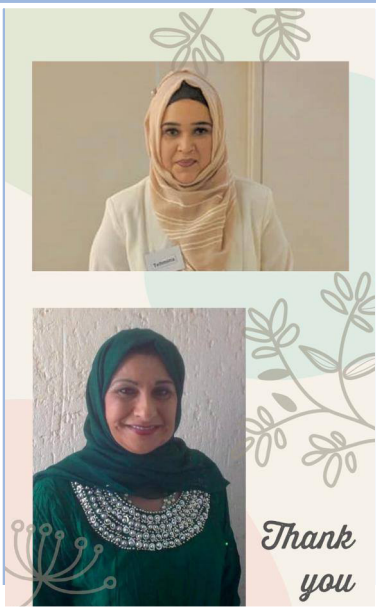
Back in Term 2 as the first lockdown changed everyone’s daily lives, a conversation with Farhat Firdous led to a few weeks of zoom Art sessions during lockdown, then two more sessions during the relaxing of lockdown in the School Holidays of Term 2. Prior to the social distancing and lockdown requirements, Farhat and I had previously been planning work with Latrobe Community Health Services - a series of art-making sessions to culminate in theatre - to increase the local welcome felt by multicultural newcomers to the region, to share their stories.

The ‘Zoom Art Room’ had several regular attendees, working through some painting skills and other art-making processes. During the School Holiday sessions (one in Yarragon and one in Trafalgar), attendees were both in person and via zoom, so that more people could participate beyond the social distancing requirements.

Using acrylic paints we explored the concept of home, and how we make the idea of home in our minds and among our families - often through travel, often through memory or imagination. Sometimes what feels like ‘home’ is not the place where we live, but the feeling we get when we are with certain people.

All the attendees’ artworks have been collected to create a simple stop-motion short-film, which will be shared very soon. I am currently looking for spoken-word poems telling stories of homecoming to use as a soundtrack in the short-film.

Arts & Health Gippsland is currently working on ongoing Zoom Art Room sessions, which are free every second Sunday. Called ‘The Melting Pot’, the sessions explore all the things that go into our creativity, a ‘melting pot’ of ideas and inspiration. Everyone is welcome to join in - sign up here: <https://artsandhealthgippsland.com.au/live-well-come-share/>



Islamic studies classes for children –

By Aisha Tahir

Three years back, moving to this land of the free, as an immigrant I was not only struggling to acclaim my cultural heritage but also battling to preach deen to my two little girls. In this foreign home fate would have it that my overpowering zeal to teach my girls Islam opened doors to the Islamic lessons initiated by UMSLV.



This beautiful group brought forward this platform forward this platform for children to know our religion. Every month when I see my girls asking me “When is the next Allah’s class?”, it brings great joys of recognition and accomplishment. Though, we greatly miss the comfort and colours life brought with face to face interactions. Despite these stressful times of the pandemic the online Islamic sessions organised by UMSLV given the little joy to see each other and gain some fruitful thoughts to ponder later for the month. UMSLV has brought us multicultural sisters and children an opportunity to realise that we are all striving for the same peace inside. I will pause here to marvel at the efforts made by UMSLV in awe and respect. Thank you UMSLV !

Online Quran classes -

By Kooresha Majid

Salaams to all you beautiful and amazing ladies at UMSLV. I have been following your remarkable growth and journey as UMSLV from inception (logo design at Khatija’s home in Churchill) to present day (online sessions). I must say it is phenomenal!



I feel so humbled and privileged to be acquainted with many of you during my several trips from South Africa to Australia.

From charity fund raising walks in the parks followed by an afternoon barbecue or picnic lunches for all the families, Ramadhaan, Eid Prayers, Iftaari dinners to Eid breakfasts and dinners as a muslim community and also with extended invites to the greater diverse peoples of Australia thus reaching out and making a difference in peaceful co-existence.

On the 23 September I once again Zoomed in to Apa Tehmina’s Quraan Tafseer Lessons in Urdu and English. She hosts the lessons with heart and soul. I’m back home in South Africa but cannot wait to join in to these very informative and well explained lessons. Thank you Tehmina for sharing your extensive knowledge and valuable time with all of us! I cannot wait to zoom in all the way from South Africa! I was deeply touched when you made such an earnest and compassionate Duas/ prayers for the young student in your group who is unwell.

I love the ambiance of respect, love and compassion during your group sessions. You are not only a knowledgeable teacher but also a very skilled pastoral worker reaching out with all this kindness, understanding and compassion! May Almighty Allah Reward You Tehmina and all the UMSLV ladies for your unity, determination, kindness and excellent community spirit!

“Remember the kindness you put out to the world has a way of coming back to you”

Corona Virus Messages

Article published in the Latrobe Valley Express

Happy International Translation Day

International Translation Day is celebrated on 30 September with the aim of raising awareness about languages that play an important role in our society. The theme this year is Finding the words for a world in crisis.

It highlights the importance of translators and interpreters in managing situations on international, national and local scales.

We have seen Auslan interpreters getting important messages about bushfires and Coronavirus out to Deaf Communities on a national level. Locally we have had ladies translate Coronavirus messages into 14 languages. This has also created a sense of inclusion and social connections among CALD and broader communities.



Covid 19 Relief

UMSLV has partnered with AfriAus iLeac and five other African Australian Diaspora organisations to provide support to those who have been impacted by Covid 19. We have created a name for the partnership using the first letter of each of the organisations, LUVPAKS.

Our purposes is to provide immediate support due to being acutely impacted by COVID-19 pandemic.

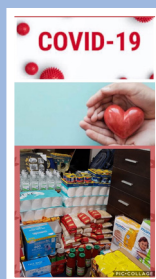
a. Relief of basic needs such as food/personal items to vulnerable Victorian community members of African heritage.

b. Reduce risk of isolation for vulnerable people.

We are doing this by :

1. Providing food and personal items to vulnerable community members, including the purchase, delivery and associated logistics of food and personal items (such as toiletries, hygiene products, personal healthcare products, etc)
2. Conducting remote welfare checks
3. Conducting social support initiatives

UMSLV, in collaboration with service providers who work in the space, are identifying families in Gippsland who can benefit from this program. Their requirements are sent to the partners, so families are sent items specific to their needs.



“Volunteering for umslv has coloured the landscape of my life! Through UMSLV, I met with wonderful & inspiring people that I would never have crossed paths with otherwise. I was able to discover my own self, the things I never knew I was capable of and the many, many ways we can help others

Ida Azhari



“Volunteering with UMSLV made blending in easy for me during the time I lived there. I also loved seeing different parts of Gippsland during the Scarf Story road trip.



“Cooking is an important element in my life and volunteering with UMSLV has really let me enhance it. It has given me the chance to meet new people, connect with different cultures and to try different cuisines. I was involved in the children school holiday programs powered by UMSLV and it really made me develop organization skills and time management.

Zeinab Baderdine



Tahrima Rahman Luma



“Research is something I am passionate about. Volunteering with UMSLV gave me the opportunity to do data collection and data analysis for the MY Story project, which I loved!

Lubna Chowdhury

Volunteering

UMSLV ran a social media campaign asking about the benefits people have had while volunteering with UMSLV. We are so grateful for the overwhelming response from ladies who were happy to share their experiences with us. The overall themes were finding a place of belonging, friendships, learning new skills that could be taken into work or other environments, trying things out of our comfort zones, networking opportunities that led to paid employment and fun!

Thank you Lubna Chowdhury for creating beautiful facebook posts that highlighted these messages. As restrictions ease, the UMSLV committee look forward to working with the ladies from the community to create enjoyable events. We would love for you to get involved and have fun in the process of bringing people together.

“

When I first came to the Latrobe Valley in 2018, I didn't really know any sisters here and initially found it difficult to adjust. After finding out that Morwell had a masjid one particular day, I started attending on a Friday here and there, and met a lady who passed on Khadija's details for me to meet more sisters. I still remember meeting them all at a lunch picnic and felt this overwhelming sense of beauty and acceptance like I found home. I felt a sense of relief that these ladies were just like me - hard-working, committed and genuinely kind-hearted. It was the first time since reverting to Islam in 2017, that I had experienced the true beauty of Islam reflected in the community spirit experienced that day at the picnic. I felt a sense of ease and peace, knowing I had finally been led to a wonderful group of women who were like-minded. Being a part of the UMSLV committee has enabled me to not only serve the community better but to establish true friendships through new connections and social networks I was establishing with them. I still feel truly grateful for these incredible group of women who I not only get to call my sisters but also my friends and committee colleagues. UMSLV is a privilege to be a part of and one I'm thankful to be a part of.

Aisha Aluni



Multicultural committee established in the Valley

Arfa Sarfaraz Khan has been appointed as a committee member for Latrobe city cultural Diversity Advisory committee. The committee's role is to report to the council and provide appropriate advice, information and feedback on matters relevant to committee. As a committee member will help to facilitate decision making by the council in relation to discharge of its responsibilities. Read more about Arfa's interview published in Latrobe Express.



Council Elections

We wish these five amazing women who are running for council all the best.

Arfa Khan for Baw Baw (East),
Farhat Firdous for Baw Baw (central),
Mehak Shekh for Wyndham City Council &
Naureen Choudhry for Monash Council and
Shoheli Sunjida for Officer.

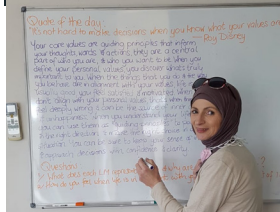
Vote 1 for
ARHAT FIRDIOUS
For an inclusive & connected beloved community

Naureen Choudhry
Candidate for Oakleigh Ward
Traders and ratepayers
community infrastructure
community services
sustainable solutions for a cleaner environment
visible & representative council

VOTE 1 MEHAK SHEKH

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- building a life of purpose & meaning
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- empowering & disempowering language



Samar Shabbir Siddiqui

I highly recommend Aisha as a life coach and mentor. She is fully inspirational, full of positive energy and listen without judging. She taught me how to fight from fears and doubts. I feel much more confident, focused and in control of the choices I make about my life.



AISHA ALIM COACHING SOLUTIONS
OVERCOME FEAR AND ACHIEVE YOUR DREAMS

To put in your expression of interest, contact Aisha.

Date: February 2021

Venue: Traralgon

Cost will include course materials and lunch

Contact details: Aisha Alim Coaching Solutions Email:

aishaalim@consultant.com

Phone: 0411015810

<https://www.facebook.com/Aisha-Alim-Coaching-Solutions-105232071133341>

GAMC (Gippsland Australian Muslim Community Inc.)

**Annual Mawlid
2020 (Virtual)**
5th Dec 20, Saturday
(6pm to 8pm)

Zoom invitation
Meeting ID: 830 6599 2815
Passcode: 392593

**First 25 performing children will get
gift vouchers (register via email)**

**Coaching for children available
contact at gamci.2013@gmail.com**

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