



Sisters of Charity
Foundation

Heart of the Foundation

Bringing you closer to the lives you help change

Newsletter Autumn 2022

“I wouldn’t be here without your help”

Our scholarship student Cleo was struggling under the pressures of work and study. Here’s how your support brought balance to her life.

Like many of our scholarship students, Cleo found herself living on her own at a young age. She was in her first year of a Bachelor of Communications and Media at The University of Notre Dame – while also working full-time hours at a local pharmacy.

“The first few months of uni I was working really, really hard,” says Cleo. “I was thinking, ‘I just wish I could apply for a scholarship’, because it would really help me.”

The gift of education

Cleo chose to apply for the Foundation scholarship because of her out-of-home care background and because, as a Catholic, it felt aligned with her beliefs.

“I was so delighted when I got an email saying, ‘We’d love to go to the next step and meet you’,” she recalls. “At the end of the interview they told me they’d like to give me the scholarship. Honestly I was shocked,

I was so happy, I can’t even explain the feeling I had in that moment.

“I felt so lucky and felt it was meant to be, I was meant to come to uni, I can do this and I have support along the way.”

Shifting her focus

Since receiving the scholarship Cleo has been able to cut her hours at the pharmacy from 40 to 20 per week, which has made a massive difference to her study and enjoyment of the course.

“Without this help and the opportunity, I don’t think I would have been so persistent with uni,” she says. “I don’t think I’d have even been able to pass because of all the work I was doing.”

There was another immediate benefit. During the last lockdown she wasn’t able to access the university’s technology to record and edit video content for her digital media production and drama subjects – the scholarship allowed her to upgrade her phone.

Graduation is still a couple of years away but Cleo is already working toward her dream job as a television news presenter. She has plans to do work experience for one of the big TV networks, apply for internships, and create content for a Walkley Award submission. ❖

“I’m so incredibly and eternally grateful to the supporters for everything. Having this opportunity has been unreal. I feel so privileged and so lucky.”

“I want to be able to devote as much time as I can to creating my future and doing uni.” ▶



BECAUSE OF YOU...

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Cleo can focus on her education and career

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Kevin received help to deal with his grief

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Manar found a sanctuary for her family

“Thank you for helping me live again”

It's every parent's worst nightmare. After a tragedy, Kevin turned to a 'Table' of men to help process his grief and find purpose in life once more.

“I awoke at 2.30am one night with car headlights shining down the driveway. It was the police. They told me my son had been in a hit and run accident. Shortly after I walked into the hospital, the first words someone said to me were, ‘We’re so sorry’.

“I was lost. My identity was stripped away as a father. My instinct as a dad was to protect my children, and that role had been taken away. I felt like a failure. I couldn’t get out of bed.”

Take a seat at the Table

The Men’s Table is a grassroots organisation that builds safe emotional spaces for men. Once a month, men meet to share openly about their lives, their challenges, their highs and lows with a group of 12 they learn to trust and respect.

Because of your generosity we were able to give The Men’s Table a Community Grant to help open more Tables on the NSW south coast. Since then new Tables have opened in Albury, Tumbarumba and Bodalla.

“The men at my Table gave me a unique kind of support. To start with, I got to offload some of my burden with people outside my immediate family.”

“Amidst the raging river that was sweeping me along, out of control, I was desperate to have something to cling on to, like a log or a rock I could rely on to hold steady,” says Kevin. “My Men’s Table was one of those stable places.”

Facing the challenges

Kevin’s son’s death started a chain reaction beyond his own despair: the immense grief of his wife and other boys, legal issues that lasted years, financial pressures, unhealthy habits and weight gain.

Despite everything that was happening Kevin knew he had to make getting to his Table every month a priority. “They listened and at times when I asked for it, offered useful perspectives,” he says.

“There wasn’t one turning point that helped me get through. It was an accumulation of things; different things people shared along the way; a book I’d read. Probably more than anything, I learned to be open about it.” ❖



“Apart from the support I got, it was also nice to hear what the other men were going through in their lives... Listening and supporting them was a real help to me, too.” *Photo: Getty Images*



The benefits of sharing

- “When one man shares feelings and vulnerability, he opens the door for another man to walk through it with his own sharing of authentic feelings.” (Ben)
- “Even if problems aren’t solved, just talking about stuff is cathartic. I’m a shy person... So it’s nice to come here once a month. It makes me feel good, feel uplifted.” (Carlos)
- “There is a change occurring and my loved ones are noticing my mood and reactions are quietened.” (Jim)
- “The Table is helping our men to move from transactional to emotionally connected relationships.” (Steve)

A family finds peace because of your gifts

After a treacherous journey, Manar and her family found peace in a home once belonging to the Sisters of Charity.

"Someone offered us, 'You can go to Australia, and live and get your kids in peace', so we said yes," explains Manar*, a mother of five who is seeking asylum for her family. They were shown pictures of big boats the size of the Titanic, and forced to hand over a lot of money to secure their passage from Syria.

"We are shocked it's a small boat, maybe 10 metres," recalls Manar. "When you spend four days in water you see up sky, down the ocean and small boat. No safety, nothing, we are each one sitting on each other, four days we don't know if we are living, we will be alive. Always I pray, 'Please God make my kids be alive', because no food, no water, nothing."

A gift to change lives

The Foundation is deeply grateful to the Sisters for their gift of an ex-Congregational house in Berala, which is now being used to house people seeking asylum.

Thanks to your generous support, we were able to undertake various upgrades and maintenance to ready the house for occupation once more.

Sanctuary in the suburbs

Manar's family of seven moved into the house last July. "We move in and we are enjoying life inside. It's a big house, more privacy," she says. "With this step we are able to save money to help my family. Even now I'm able to get a few things for my kids I'm not able to before because my cash was limited."

"You say, 'Please God help me' and you receive something. He answers your question and sends this house."

The older kids are enrolled at local schools, and the family is enjoying going to the park and playing football.

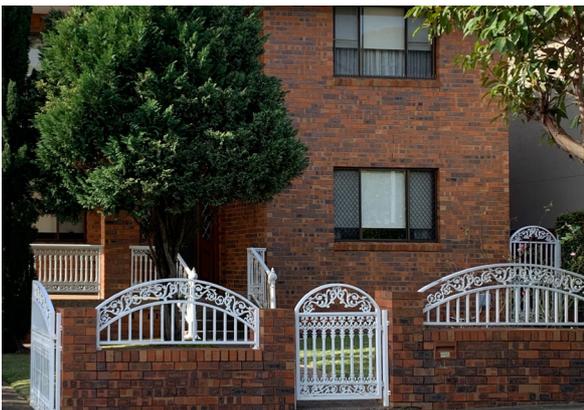
"As a mum when I see my kids happy – I don't want anything else in my life, just to make kids happy, and that is what happened when I moved to here." ❖

**Name changed for safety reasons.*



Manar's wish is simple: "I need time for my kids to grow up, in peace." Photo: Getty Images

The history of Berala



The Sisters of Charity lived at the Berala house from 1999 until 2017, ministering in St Joseph's Hospital and local schools around Auburn. It was home to up to six Sisters at any one time.

"For several years it was a gathering place for up to 20 Sisters who came together every two months or so to pray and reflect and share their faith," explains Sisters of Charity of Australia Congregational Leader Lauren Dixon rsc. "We are so pleased that this suburban house, which was for us a physical and spiritual home, is now able to offer stability and assurance to those seeking refuge."

◀ Living at Berala, the family now has stability to focus on improving their future with the help of Asylum Seekers Centre caseworkers.

A word from Louise

Join us as we farewell our much-loved Foundation Manager Judy, who is retiring in early 2022.

After 11 years the time has come to say goodbye to our wonderful Foundation Manager Judy, who is leaving us to embark on a long-planned retirement. Although I've known her departure was coming



Judy at Admiralty House in 2021.

for some time, I wasn't prepared to actually hear the decision had been made!

Since I joined the Foundation in 2020 I have been supported by her knowledge, professionalism and friendship. In her role she has worn many hats, supporting every aspect of our operations to the highest possible standard. She has also assisted hundreds of Community Grant applicants and dozens of scholarship students, who no doubt will remember her fondly.

In her time here she developed warm relationships with many of our Sisters, especially those on our Board and in the Congregational office. She is greatly loved by the Sisters and will be much missed by them – and not just as a fine baker of delicious cakes and slices!

Many of you will know Judy and have spoken to her on the phone.

I'm sure you took note of her calm, no-nonsense manner, with a hint of mirth just present beneath the surface.

The causes that we support and the people we help have always been very close to her heart. The Foundation simply won't be the same without Judy.

“On behalf of our supporters, our partners, our staff and Board, and the Sisters, thank you Judy. We wish you every happiness in your retirement.”

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Louise M Burton".

Louise M Burton, CEO

Celebrate the life of a loved one

When a loved one passes away, making a donation to the Sisters of Charity Foundation can become a beautiful tribute to their life, and a meaningful way to give hope to others.

Our supporters are now able to create an online, personalised *In Memory* page to celebrate the life of your loved one with friends and family. The webpage is easily set up, with space for you to add a photo of your loved one and share the story of their life. The *In Memory* page allows family and friends to make a donation in lieu of sending flowers, and share their memories and messages of support for everyone to take comfort in.

Visit sistersofcharityfoundation.com.au for more details, or contact us on (02) 9367 1211 or foundation@rscoffice.com.

