



Sisters of Charity
Foundation

Heart of the Foundation

In the tradition of the Sisters of Charity

Newsletter Autumn 2024

“Your support allowed our family to heal”

Loss and grief are difficult for adults to process, let alone children. But a new picture book is making a big difference.

Lianne and Ronan were happily married and became parents to a beautiful girl, Isla. But in 2020, when Isla was two, the family suffered the stillbirth of their daughter Ailie. Tragically, their third daughter Isobel was also stillborn in 2021 at 25 weeks' gestation. Ailie and Isobel will forever remain part of their family. But how do you approach conversations about death and dying with a young child, when you as a parent are steeped in grief?

Coping with loss

Every year, around 110,000 families in Australia suffer perinatal bereavement in the shape of pregnancy or baby loss. The loss of a baby is not only traumatic for parents but for siblings, too.

To help parents talk to their children about death and allow them to process their feelings, we awarded a Community Grant to grief support charity Possum Portraits to develop and print a children's picture book:



Lianne, Ronan and Isla – happily, in 2022 the family welcomed a baby boy!

“As a grieving parent, I often block my feelings and keep myself busy, so that I don't need to really feel them.”

The House in Ollie's Tummy. Five hundred copies will be donated to and distributed via maternity hospitals.

Though devastated, Lianne and Ronan decided to approach these difficult topics openly with their eldest daughter Isla. They felt strongly that this was in her best interest.

A mother's testimonial

“My daughter Isla and I enjoyed reading this book together,” says Lianne. “It brought up some feelings for us both, which we spoke about afterwards. *The House in Ollie's Tummy* really reinforced the concept about feeling your feelings, and trying not to ignore them.

“The book reminded me that this is not necessarily the healthiest way of dealing with grief. I could 100% relate to the experiences of the mother's character in the book.

“My husband Ronan read the book by himself and his first comment was that ‘it was much better than any of the books we got from the hospital’. This refers to the books we received from the hospital after our two stillbirths. We feel like those books were very abstract and didn't really talk about death or grief. I feel like *The House in Ollie's Tummy* will be an excellent tool for grieving families.” ❖

BECAUSE OF YOU...

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Lianne's family is thriving

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John's future looks stable

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Lilly is embarking on her career

“Your help changed my life for the better”

John was alone, without support. Here’s how a forward-thinking social enterprise empowered him to rely on himself.

Nineteen-year-old John was living in supported accommodation and managing a mild intellectual disability and mental illness. At risk of homelessness, he was referred to For Change Co., a hospitality-based social enterprise with the mission of eliminating youth homelessness through its paid training and employment program.

Trainees learn on the job, gradually taking on more responsibility as they experience the organisation’s multiple venues: a coffee cart, several cafes, and a crepe-making food truck.

Opportunities for growth

“John brought a great sense of humour and a larger-than-life personality to his work in our program,” says For Change Co. Co-Founder and Managing Director Tenille Gilbert. “He found the work provided great structure and routine, as well as a safe space where he could be himself.”

The program offers support beyond paid training: John attended a financial literacy workshop to learn how to budget and better manage his finances; and an employment goal-setting workshop, where he was taught how to write a resume and prepare for job interviews.

“We also provided mentorship and support in his life outside our program and helped him connect with different people and organisations in line with his personal goals,” says Tenille. “We were able to arrange a crash course in music production. John got to create some beats and record some of his music in a professional studio!”



John has many different passions and hobbies and is very goals-oriented – he just needed a little help.

Independence and stability

John spent seven months in the program, learning everything from latte art and customer service to problem solving and working as part of a team.

After graduation he landed a stable retail job and transitioned to independent living, using his new budgeting skills to stay on top of finances. “The financial literacy

“For Change Co. has been supporting me so much and I’m feeling really grateful for how that’s been helping me emotionally and physically. The trainers are so good to talk to and teach me really unique skills that I’ve never learned before.”

workshops helped me understand my finances better and plan ahead,” says John. “I use their budgeting resources all the time and whenever I want to spend money on something I always do my math and check to see that I will always have enough money for rent and bills.”

He’s no longer at risk of becoming homeless – and continues to pursue his music dreams! ❖

**Name changed for privacy reasons.*

Breaking the cycle of youth homelessness

For Change Co. believes in the power of employment to build skills, experiences, confidence and social connectedness, all of which contribute to a young person’s sense of self and ability to create the future of their choosing.

The social enterprise received a \$15,000 Community Grant for its evidence-based training and employment program, which was designed by hospitality and youth homelessness experts. The grant contributed to 22 young people graduating from the program.



Lilly: a dream career behind the scenes

Please join us in congratulating one of our recent scholarship program graduates, as she embarks upon her dream career in live theatre.

Lilly has been passionate about theatre since the age of 16. After high school she began a Diploma of Live Production and Technical Services at the Academy of Film, Theatre and Television, Ultimo.

“I like performance, storytelling, I’m not good at acting but I’m good at organising stuff so that’s why I decided on a career in stage management,” Lilly explains.

Finding support

When she found out she got the scholarship she was, “Surprised and very happy. I told my foster carers and they were over the moon!”

One of Lilly’s first purchases with the scholarship money was a digital watch so she could accurately track the actors and timing on set. “It also helped me get a pair of noise-canceling headphones; they helped with my study because some parts of the school are very loud and echoey and you can’t think.”

Building up the resume

Since graduation Lilly has been volunteering as stage manager and operator on a production playing at the New Theatre in Newtown. She’s operating the sound and lights and is getting lots of hands-on experience.

“Once I’m done with this show I’ll have a proper show on my resume and can start job searching,” she says. “Assistant stage manager would be a good starting point or general tech crew, then I’ll work my way up to stage manager on a production that pays a decent



In her downtime Lilly enjoys reading, watching films and embroidering: “Mostly flowers and cats!” she says.

“I’d like to say a huge thank you to the Foundation’s supporters for my scholarship, and for believing in me and my future.”

amount of money! The Sydney Theatre would be nice to work at.”

And thanks to an opportunity arranged through a Foundation

board member, Lilly has also landed a job as an usher at The Concourse. “I check tickets, help people to their seat, clean up the theatre after, and be generally helpful,” she says. ❖

Welcome our new students

We’re thrilled that our Tertiary Scholarship Program continues to grow in both awareness and impact. The Foundation has given out 13 new scholarships so far in 2024, the largest number of scholarships awarded at one time in the program’s history.

Our new students are doing everything from physiotherapy and paramedicine to design, agriculture and science; and are studying at universities and TAFEs in New South Wales, the ACT, Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania.

Please join us in wishing our new students best of luck in their studies.



A word from Louise

It's wonderful to see students learning about modern slavery and getting behind our Raise the Roof campaign.

Foundation Board Member Sr Suzette Clark travelled up to Brisbane to attend the Mt St Michael's College Year 7 Father-Daughter breakfast. There she addressed the gathering, speaking about our Modern Slavery Transitional Housing Program and how the school community can make a real difference.

The students had built a House of Compassion, and attendees then posted messages of support on its roof. The school has committed to fundraising for the program throughout the year.



Louise M Burton, CEO



Students pin messages of hope and love to survivors on the House of Compassion.

“I'd like to warmly thank the caring school community of Mt St Michael's College for getting behind our Raise the Roof campaign to house survivors of modern slavery.”



Foundation Board member Sr Suzette Clark with students from Mt St Michaels.

Join us in Tasmania in 2025

We're inviting you to join us on a four-day trek through Tasmania's stunning Bay of Fires.

As part of our 25th anniversary celebrations next year, and in honour of the courageous and pioneering Sisters of Charity, we'll be taking a group to trek the stunning Bay of Fires along Tasmania's northeastern coast.

Friends and family are most welcome, so if you're not up to trekking please share this opportunity with them.

We only have 20 spots available, so be sure to view the trip itinerary and register your interest as soon as possible: inspiredadventures.com.au/event/sistersofcharityfoundation-bayoffires-2024.

