



Sisters of Charity
Foundation

Heart of the Foundation

In the tradition of the Sisters of Charity

Newsletter Spring 2024

“Now I can focus on my studies”



“Thank you for supporting the dreams of those who come from challenging backgrounds.”

Brianna is studying a Doctor of Medicine and Surgery at Australian National University, and considering a career in reconstructive surgery.

“For as long as I can remember, I have always wanted to go to university,” she says.

Getting into medicine was a joyful moment. “I was so happy and relieved that my hard work had paid off,” Brianna says. “I was also very proud of myself – I had managed to get accepted despite my

circumstances and certain people doubting my ability to get in.”

Helping others live their best life

Brianna’s favourite subjects so far include anatomy, physiology, and pharmacology. “I love learning about how the human body actually functions, and what we can do to help others live life to the best of their ability,” she explains.

It’s early days yet, but Brianna is thinking about a career in reconstructive surgery. “The prospect of restoring function and appearance to patients who have

suffered from injuries, defects, or illnesses – to improve their self-esteem and quality of life – stands out to me significantly,” she says.

“Everyone deserves to have the best quality of life possible, and I believe reconstructive surgeons can play a significant role in helping patients in need.”

“By combining medical expertise with compassion, I hope to make a tangible difference in people’s lives and contribute to improving their physical and emotional wellbeing.”

Finding the support to study

Being accepted into her degree brought other challenges – studying medicine is a full-time job in itself. “I was starting to really worry. I didn’t have anyone that I could ask for financial aid,” she says. “I had just started medical school, and was beginning to feel the intensity of the degree alone, so the idea of having to work heaps on top of my already hectic schedule was freaking me out.

“So, when I got the call that I had won the scholarship, a huge weight lifted off my shoulders. I just went home and studied without the extra stress looming over me – it was a very nice feeling.” ❖

We would like to thank The Snow Foundation for supporting students, like Brianna, in the Canberra region.

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Faith is breaking down traditional barriers

How you gave Rose a second chance at life

At the age of 13, suffering from extreme anxiety and depression, Rose attempted to take her own life.

"In her words, it was just too hard, and she couldn't go on anymore, not knowing if anything was ever going to get any better," says her mother, Helen*.

Rose* had tried art therapy, talk therapy, and medication, but nothing was helping. Helen was desperate – then she heard about the Go Remarkable Equine Therapy Program for Girls.

A remarkable way to improve mental health

Hoofbeats Sanctuary received a Community Grant to help run the program, which helps those who are living with mental health challenges or trauma. Many live in foster care or domestic violence refuges.

The program consists of 12 private weekly appointments. "Our facilitator Marie is an inspirational young woman with lived experience of mental health challenges from

childhood experiences, especially in dealing with feelings of unworthiness," says Founder and CEO Barb Blashki. "She understands what it takes to heal and is proof that it's possible."

A brighter future awaits

"From the first day that Rose set foot onto the grass at the Sanctuary, she seemed to relax a little," Helen shares. "Going somewhere new, meeting someone new, and having to talk in that one-on-one environment was a confronting scenario for her. Marie was so gentle, supportive, and just gave Rose the space to 'be'.

"Each week, Rose spoke more and more in the car on the way home. She would describe the different horses and their quirky personalities, who was bonded with who, and which horses seemed to really enjoy her company. She taught me how horses blow out their breath to release tension, and how humans could do that too.



"Hoofbeats Sanctuary and Marie have been an integral part of Rose's recovery," says Helen.

"Thank you for the profound impact that you have had on my daughter and my family."

"By the end of the 12 weeks, Rose had made incredible progress and for the first time, it seemed that she could deal more with everyday life." ❖

**Names changed for privacy reasons.*

The healing power of horses

"As prey animals, horses have evolved extremely effective communication skills within their herd to enable them to survive," explains Barb. "They are finely tuned to even the most subtle changes in the body language and emotions of other horses, and people.

"They want to be around, and to please, those who display calm, controlled, confident and kind behaviours and they will distance themselves from, and be uncooperative with, those who

are agitated, unpredictable, and aggressive in their approach.

"This allows us to teach participants to be wholly present in the moment and attentive to how the horse is responding. This attentiveness is like mindfulness meditation, and particularly useful for trauma-healing. As participants work through the program they develop not just improvements in self-esteem and confidence, but they learn how to self-regulate, taking control of their emotions and behaviours."



"Thank you for giving me this opportunity"

Faith was committed to her chosen career as an automotive mechanic – but cost-of-living pressures were making it impossible for her to gain industry experience.

It's not easy to complete an apprenticeship in the current environment. Struggling to afford work gear and cover essential expenses such as food and transport, Faith applied for a Tradeswomen Australia Start-up Scholarship.

"As the price of living increases, the pressure of succeeding in life gets hard," she says.

Pathways to trades

Tradeswomen Australia works to educate, encourage, recruit, and retain more women in trade careers. The organisation raises community awareness, and supports women who may be in vulnerable situations to become financially secure.

Faith completed 'Hand Brake Turn', a five-week pre-accredited automotive work skills training program, through Concern Australia, and started working at the charity to continue gaining experience. Her goal is to begin a light vehicle automotive apprenticeship – so she was delighted to win the scholarship.

Changing social attitudes at work

"I'm incredibly grateful and want to express my appreciation for this amazing opportunity," says Faith. "It means so much to me as it brings me one step closer to my goals in the trades industry.

"Women often face societal expectations to remain within the confines of their home where the only people that are given support are the men. This scholarship is not just financial assistance, it



Faith received a scholarship to help her begin a light vehicle automotive apprenticeship.

"Thank you for supporting women in trades and helping us break through traditional barriers."

represents a powerful statement that women like me can pursue their dreams and thrive in fields traditionally dominated by men.

"Your support is helping to challenge and change these norms, allowing

me to contribute to the trades industry and serve as a role model for other young women like me. This financial assistance will greatly ease the cost of living while I work towards my goals and I am deeply thankful for this incredible support." ❖

Empowering women to enter and succeed in trades



Electrotechnology apprentice and scholarship winner Kasey.

"Women's participation as apprentices and trainees in male-dominated trades is less than 3% and has changed little over the past 25 years," says Tradeswomen Australia CEO Clea Smith. "These problems are compounded for women living with disadvantages or in vulnerable situations, limiting their access to secure employment even further."

The organisation received a Community Grant to provide eight \$2,000 and \$500 scholarships to financially disadvantaged female Victorian trades apprentices, to help them deal with cost-of-living pressures and support them towards achieving their career goals.

A word from Louise

We recently had an inspiring team outing to the Sisters of Charity of Australia's Heritage Centre at Potts Point, Sydney.

We were so fortunate to be led through the collection and told the history of the Sisters by Sr Genevieve

Walsh rsc and Sr Margaret Fitzgerald rsc. Although I have visited a fair few times, I am always delighted to learn something new each time.

I believe it's so important – for me, and for the rest of the Foundation's staff – to keep these stories at the forefront of our minds as we carry out our work. We are inspired by a quote that appears on one wall of the exhibition:

“We can all be people of thought and action. We can choose a fairer world. We can advocate for the voiceless. We can challenge the unjust. We can respond to need where we see it.”



The Foundation team during their visit to the Heritage Centre. Top (L to R): Nicole, Kynwynne, Estelle and Brigid. Seated (L to R): Sister Genevieve Walsh, Louise and Sister Margaret Fitzgerald.

I wholeheartedly agree with these sentiments, and I'm sure you do too! Together we can make a real difference to people facing disadvantage or isolation.

Visitors are always welcome at the Heritage Centre and I highly recommend the experience. See socheritagecentre.org.au to plan your trip.

Louise M Burton, CEO

How will you be remembered?

Leaving a gift in your Will is a beautiful way to ensure your values, kindness and impact on future generations live on.

By supporting the work of the Sisters of Charity Foundation, you will bring compassion and practical assistance to people in Australia who are disadvantaged or marginalised. No matter the size of your gift, you will make a difference. To learn how easy it is to leave a gift in your Will, or how to prepare your Will for free online, please phone (02) 9367 1211 or email info@sistersofcharityfoundation.org.au.

