

ODYSSEY HOUSE

NEWSLETTER

Supported by the NSW Health Department

Christmas 1998

Christmas at Odyssey House



The Christmas season means many things to different people. In past years many of the residents at Odyssey House have known isolation and despair at Christmas. This year Odyssey will endeavour to provide its' residents with a happier Christmas by fostering feelings of togetherness and love through traditional Christmas activities.

These will begin with residents decorating the House for an evening of Carols.

The Odyssey Choir will lead the singing and will be helped by the children living with their parents in the program.



Token therapeutic gifts will be presented to both staff and residents during Christmas week.



These are designed to make a telling but kindly statement regarding each individual. This allows everyone to laugh at themselves, and with others - a healthy activity at any time. Most gifts are purchased, but where possible some are made by hand. An

item as simple as an alarm clock would convey to the recipient that it's time to "wake-up" to themselves.

James Pitts, General Manager, describes Christmas Day. "After an unusual and welcome sleep-in, Santa will arrive, gifts will be exchanged in order to enhance the residents' feelings of commitment to the program by sharing the day with their Odyssey 'family'."



"Christmas lunch will include all the good things which most of us look forward to. The rest of the day will be spent relaxing, with volleyball, Christmas movies on TV and perhaps a short snooze to recover from the effects of culinary indulgence."



Help us to help our young residents

Donations to Odyssey House McGrath Foundation of \$2 and above are tax deductible

WE ARE 21 YEARS OLD!!!

Odyssey House McGrath Foundation celebrated 21 years of continuous operations with an Open House held on 8 November, 1998. Odyssey House was founded by Sydney businessman, Walter McGrath, in 1977 after his son, James, died of a heroin overdose. From very humble beginnings Odyssey House has developed into one of the most comprehensive centres for the treatment of alcohol and other drug problems.

Over 350 visitors, many of them family members and loved ones, joined Odyssey Board members, staff, and residents to make it a truly special 21st birthday. We were honoured on the day by the presence of Mr Mark Latham, Federal member for the seat of Werriwa, and the Deputy Mayor of Campbelltown, Mr Paul Blyton. Visitors were able to view first hand the tremendous amount of hard work the residents put into their rehabilitation through a series of displays. These earmarked the many accomplishments of each program department during the year.

The highlight of the day was the ground breaking ceremony for the construction of our new purpose built housing for the Parents and Childrens program. Board Chairman, The Hon. Peter Philips, A.M., Danni Wilson, Parents Program Administrator, and Melinda, a parent, did the honours. The monies to build the house were raised through the Odyssey House Corporate Care Appeal headed by Sydney businessman Mr Ross Grant, the Vincent Fairfax Foundation, Sylvia and Charles Viertel Foundation, Variety Club of Australia, James N Kirby Foundation and the Baxter Perpetual Charitable Trust.



The afternoon culminated in the official ceremonies which honoured the many supporters of Odyssey and graduates of the residential and outreach programs.

The Odyssey House choir put everyone in the mood with two opening numbers, "On Top Of The World" and "Celebration". Certificates of appreciation were passed out to many supporters who were in attendance. Graduates were acknowledged for their tremendous accomplishments as were long term graduates and affiliates of the program who received SAP (Self Actualised Person) certificates. Staff were honoured by Marie Tickle, past president of the Parents and Supporters Association. Barbara Anderson, Clinical Manager, received a plaque in appreciation of her work with the Parents and supporters group, while Lesley Mosbey was acknowledged as "Staff Person of the Year" by her peers.

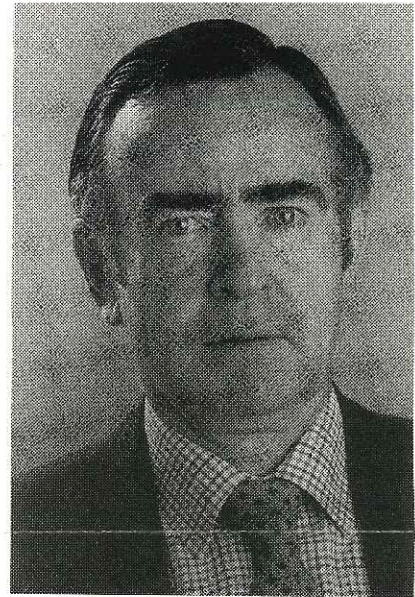
It's great to be 21!

DIRECTOR PROFILE - BILL BLANSHARD

Being a charity and operating through a company structure means that Odyssey House must comply with numerous legal requirements and be aware when legal advice might be needed.

Odyssey is fortunate to have as a director, Mr Bill Blanshard, a retired partner (now consultant) of Mallesons Stephen Jaques, who continue to provide pro bono services to Odyssey.

In addition to Odyssey, Mr Blanshard has several directorships. He also has an active family involvement, his wife and himself having two married daughters and six grandchildren. Finding time to support Odyssey House is a priority as he considers any charitable work to be a challenge particularly when, as with Odyssey, it is addressing some of the community's most pressing problems.



A MOTHER'S PERSPECTIVE

Motherhood would be the most wonderful and difficult experience that I have ever engaged in.

Being a parent in the Odyssey programme only highlights this. I came to Odyssey when my child was 5 months old. Being a first time mother, with no previous knowledge of children has been hard, as I am sure it is for most first time parents. I thought when I came to Odyssey



Fortunately my child was at an age where my previous lifestyle had little affect on him and during the six months we have been here I have watched him develop into a happy, healthy well adjusted one year old. Not only have I learnt to do all the basic functional things that a parent needs to do, but I have also learnt to just be able to enjoy my child and the time we spend together.

To be able to take him out shopping, to the leisure centre, circus, duckpond and enjoy these things through him. To be able to send him to pre-school everyday and pick him up, with the finger painting, that he has made that day, brings me an indescribable joy.

CHANGE

I think for me the
time is coming

To face my life
and just stop running

It won't be easy,
It'll mean some pain

To learn to live
my life again

And one day maybe
then I'll see

The person I
was meant to be

Jodie C



that I was here to get off drugs. Now I am here not only for that reason but to learn how to be a parent.

REFLECTIONS

"When my father left the family I did not feel that this had any effect on me personally as I was too young to understand; however, it had an effect on my mother and eldest brother which I had to live with for years to come.

I have constantly been abused both physically and emotionally from an early age. I can recall instances of both kinds from the age of seven or eight from both my mother and eldest brother. Having been a victim of abuse has damaged my feeling of self worth and my faith in others. After having done Odyssey I learned to accept that this was the damage and that I am no longer a victim of this abuse. I have learned that I deserve to be treated better than that.

In regards to feelings of rejection that I have felt


from my father, I have written to him and he not replied. I accept that this is his choice and I can live with that. At least I won't have to wonder any more if maybe he did wish to know me.


By far the most important issue that I have dealt with has been conflict resolution. I may not be the best at it but at least I don't lean towards a violent solution and can accept confrontation and eventually work towards a compromise rather than be constantly wrapped up in win/lose situations.

As for trusting people I suppose that not a lot has changed although I am now far more willing to take risks. And I can say there are a few people I am willing to put my faith in. Without these people I would not have much of a life."

 *From
all at
Odyssey*

Odyssey House McGrath Foundation ACN 001 418 257 is located at:

 Level 1, 431 Elizabeth Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010
PO Box K1115
Haymarket NSW 2000
Telephone: (02) 9211 2400
Facsimile: (02) 9211 2368

 PO Box 459
Campbelltown NSW 2560
Telephone: (02) 9820 9999
Facsimile: (02) 9820 1796

Thank You..



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