

Media Release

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Volunteer Betty shows age no factor in help of others

On the eve of NSW Seniors Week (6-13 April 2008), one elderly Sydney resident is proving a walking advertisement for the event's theme of 'Live Life'.

For the last 20 years, 87-year-old Betty Grugeon has been visiting a Catholic Healthcare Community Services Day Centre for older people in Thornleigh. On the face of it, a less-than-earth-shattering affair – until you learn that Mrs Grugeon is a volunteer at the day centre rather than a client.

Betty Grugeon started playing piano each week at the Mercy Community Care Day Centre in Thornleigh in 1987, at age 67. The Day Centre offers a variety of social and therapeutic programs for older people and carers in the community, and is run by Mercy Community Care, a Catholic Healthcare service that provides extensive community services in the lower and upper north shore areas of Sydney.

It is not without its irony that many of clients who gain so much joy from Mrs Grugeon's volunteering are many years her junior.

"To see the smiling faces at the centre is very rewarding. I think it keeps me going as much as it keeps them going," Mrs Grugeon said.

"When I started 20 years ago, I had no way of knowing I was going to stick it at as long as I have – but I'm glad I have. I've always received a great reception from the clients. It's very gratifying and the memories are great."

Mrs Grugeon has been officially recognised for her efforts by Mercy Community Care, having been presented with a 20 Year Service Award.

Mercy Community Care Volunteers and Corporate Partnerships Manager Kerry Lovell was delighted that Mrs Grugeon had recorded such a wonderful milestone.

"The current trend is for volunteers to give 2.5 years to a charity or service, and then move on to something else. We're very lucky at Mercy Community Care to have many volunteers like Betty who have been with us for extraordinary lengths of time," Mrs Lovell explained.

"It just shows the level of Betty's commitment and passion. She's volunteered through thick and thin and just keeps on keeping on. It's important that we celebrate achievements like Betty's.

“When you see the faces of the clients at the Day Centre when Betty plays, it’s clear just how much joy she brings to them. Music touches everyone.”

Pic caption: Play it again, Gran...87-year-old Betty Grugeon, who has volunteered her piano playing at a Catholic Healthcare Community Service’s Day Centre in Thornleigh for the last 20 years.

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For further information, or to organise an interview/photograph of Betty Grugeon, contact:

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About Community Services

Catholic Healthcare’s Community Services works with a diverse range of people and communities to enable and maintain sustainable and vibrant lives. Community Services works with the elderly, financially disadvantaged, people experiencing homelessness, people with a disability, people with a mental illness, carers and children and young people with special needs or who are at risk of harm.

About Catholic Healthcare

Established in 1994, Catholic Healthcare is an experienced, not-for-profit provider of aged, healthcare and community services across NSW and south-east Queensland. Catholic Healthcare employs more than 3,000 staff and operates 40 residential aged care communities, 10 seniors living communities, three hospitals and provides community services to more than 5,000 people in their homes and communities.

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