



SPRINGVALE LEARNING AND
ACTIVITIES CENTRE INC.

BUILDING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS
1945 - 2015

70 YEARS *of* DOING IT RIGHT

£650 GRANT
YOUTH CLUB

Springvale Community Youth Club
received from the Hon. G.
L.C., the good news that it

Government grant of
grant has been divided
these headings:
Building, £400 (when
visions to the building

History, Challenges, Achievements, People and Memories
Springvale Youth Club 1945 - 1983
Springvale Community Centre 1983 - 2007
Springvale Learning and Activities Centre 2007 - 2015

70 YEARS OF DOING IT RIGHT

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Thanks to Jenny Ferguson and Chris Keys from the Dandenong and District Historical Society for pointing the way and the countless hours spent sifting through scarce data obtained from the Dandenong Journal, reading through 27 Annual Reports and the myriad of meeting minutes, then bringing it together to create this beautiful piece of community history.

Thanks to the volunteers at the Dandenong and District Historical Society for making the time SLAC staff spent researching through old issues of the Dandenong Journal enjoyable, for your valuable advice and care for resources of historical value.

Thanks to SLAC staff, Elena Sheldon, Jenifer Poudret, Mariela Sonn and Nabila Marzouk who together spent over 300 hours diligently looking through each and every issue of the Dandenong Journal from 1944 to 1990 at the Dandenong and District Historical Society. Particularly, many thanks to Jenifer Poudret for taking on the largest share of this work.

Thanks to the Springvale Historical Society for providing access to and allowing the use of rare historical images of Springvale.

Thank you to everyone who spent time sharing their stories. Your contributions truly enrich our understanding of how community connections have been built and enhanced by this amazing centre.

Thanks to the City of Greater Dandenong for making the Community Support Program Grant available to us to be able to start this project.

SLAC COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT

Leah Douglas

Bev Douglas

Ken Branch

Mila Waise

Kevin Tram

Kim Tao

David Hawkins

Aamir Iqbal

Samar Mougharbel

Nooroo Andrew

PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD

This publication is a celebration of seventy years of history, paying tribute to the countless members, volunteers and staff who have contributed to making the centre a fantastic place to be and be involved in. It is the wonderful result of countless hours of research, exploration and interviews by our wonderful staff, volunteers from the Dandenong and District Historical Society and is a testament to the ongoing importance of the centre.

I can only guess that as you are reading this publication, you may have been involved with the centre in some way and will appreciate how beautifully it captures the ever changing community and the centre's ongoing evolution to meet the community's needs. You will see that the Youth Club, Community Centre and Learning and Activities Centre played an important role in the lives of so many people, including mine.

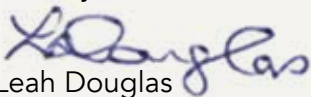
My involvement goes back to attending Calisthenics as a 4 year old (I can't say it was my cup of tea), jazz ballet, piano lessons and gymnastics throughout my youth. Then, assisting the gymnastics coach as a volunteer, working on reception on Saturdays for a number of years, teaching dance and since my early 20's being a member of the Committee of Management. Like most who joined in their youth, this wasn't possible without a parent seeing the benefits the centre had to offer. Apart from being a taxi to my brother, sister and I taking us to and from the centre and other activities, our mum Bev, has volunteered at the centre since the mid 1970's and still does as one of the many silent heroes who may think they just help out a little bit, but achieve massive and positive change for the community.

I've seen many people come and go who have felt a connection and belonging to the centre. For some it's a place of fun, exercise or leisure, a place to escape or meet with friends, a place to grow, develop and learn. Whatever the reason, we continue to provide a continued and important role in building community connections.

As you can see, our centre is a perfect example of community and government partnerships. We have survived and prospered with an ongoing and valued connection with the City of Greater Dandenong. Grants from state and federal governments have enabled us to work with and within the community; continuing to grow and develop together.

I trust you'll find this publication an interesting and entertaining read and believe it's an important community resource. The inspiration of those who have come before us can give new life to the proven ideas and value of continuing to connect communities and generations.

Thank you,



Leah Douglas
President





As Mayor of the City of Greater Dandenong, I would like to congratulate the Springvale Learning and Activities Centre on its 70th anniversary.

SLAC has a proud record and wonderful reputation within the diverse Greater Dandenong communities. 70 years is a momentous milestone and I commend and congratulate the staff and volunteers of the Springvale Learning and Activities Centre for seven decades of outstanding community service.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Cr Heang Tak'.

Cr Heang Tak
Mayor



On behalf of the City of Greater Dandenong Council I congratulate the Springvale Learning and Activities Centre (SLAC) on this publication which tells the important story of a wonderful organisation.

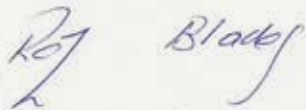
Over the past 70 years SLAC has been through a number of name and location changes but its vision has always been to help local people reach their full potential through education and skills development. The City of Greater Dandenong is proud to partner with this organisation and is immensely grateful for its contribution to the community of Springvale.

Personally, I have found this to be an incredible facility. My connection began when I first began taking my young children to the hall for kinder gymnastics and it has since grown to include many other very enjoyable occasions including diversity days, annual general meetings, community and a range of other functions.

This is no ordinary building. It is an extraordinary place that invites the community to gather together for many diverse and wonderful reasons. Run by a voluntary committee with very caring staff, SLAC has assisted generations of people to access education, leisure activities and health information. It forges strong community connections and over many years has enabled many in our community to break the cycle of poverty, escape social isolation and go on to lead more meaningful and enjoyable lives.

I am grateful for the personal connection I've enjoyed with the Springvale Learning and Activities Centre over many years and on behalf of Greater Dandenong, I extend heartfelt thanks – and congratulations – for its outstanding achievements and contribution to our city.

Yours sincerely



Cr Roz Blades
Paperbark Ward

Mayor in: 1998, 2011

Springvale to celebrate its

'100th'

Special
feature
Pages
18,19

A STEAM train will arrive at Springvale Station on Thursday as part of the City of Springvale's 100th anniversary celebrations.

The Mayor of Springvale, Cr Andrew Papayannis, and his wife Effie will be on the train, along with about 600 local school students when it arrives at the station at 11:52am.

A welcoming party comprising Springvale's Chief Executive Officer Mr Ian Taiter-

son, Springvale councillors and members of the local historical society will dress in period costume and meet train passengers.

A procession along Springvale Rd to Cr Andrew Papayannis' home will follow the train's arrival. Cr Andrew Papayannis' wife

Junction of Springvale Rd and Balmoral Ave, Springvale, in 1923, looking south down Springvale Rd.

Junction of Springvale Road and Balmoral Avenue in 1923. Looking south down Springvale Road. Photo published in Dandenong Journal, 29 September 1986 in anticipation of 100th celebrations.

Spring Vale used to be a small town, nothing like it is today. Bill Warner, former councillor and active member of Springvale & District Historical Society gave us this word picture of early Springvale.

Spring Vale as it was then (two words) known consisted of a railway crossing, a main street with a brick post office on the east a vacant block of land and Mrs Cushing's shop Mrs Wickham's pie shop and then the Spring Vale 3510 Primary School, built in 1911 and opened in 1912. From the Railway Station to the Post Office consisted of a two storey corner shop (almost on the corner of Lightwood Road) a chemist shop, and double-fronted butcher's shop (H McKinnon), another vacant block of land Herbert Adams Shop, Sammy Bakers Radio Shop and a Dick Hume's Barber shop. Teddy Brown's fruit shop, the Mr McQueen's Garage...

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SPRING VALE YOUTH CLUB

HOW IT ALL STARTED

During the Second World War, every Victorian town was affected. Most of the adult men had gone off to fight for their country, only to lose their lives, or to come back damaged in some way. The women were doing the work that the men used to do. Bill Warner recalls that: "A lot of troubled youth were hanging around the streets." It must have been a very unsettling time for those young people. With dad away and mum doing her war work, family life was almost non-existent. The youth must have been wondering what the future held for them, without any male role models to point them in the right direction. It was scary for the residents too and the police would have often been called out to keep order.

One policeman, Constable Harold Murdoch stationed at the Spring Vale Police Station, decided to call a public meeting on 10 November 1944. The meeting was held at the Mechanics Hall and all those who attended were most enthusiastic when it was decided to form a Boys' Club. Office bearers were elected with Mr Murdoch being made the President; Mr Erickson, Vice-President; Mr Haynes, Secretary; and a committee of six willing helpers.

Their first clubrooms were quite cramped, in an old loft, on top of a disused bakery, in Springvale Road. This was also shared by the Pigeon Club.

It was important to get this project underway as quickly as possible, so fundraising had to begin in earnest. Card evenings and other social events were organised, and all of them had to be accompanied by a good supper! There was more than one reason why this Boys Club was so well-supported. Not only would it get the boys off the streets but also healthy activities would give them healthy bodies and make them good citizens.

In a very short time, a public meeting was organised for Friday, 29th June 1945 to talk about buying a block of land. Later they planned to erect a hall on this site. Raising funds was to be the main focus now, and a building committee was formed.

A month later the newly-formed Spring Vale Youth Club held a Community Singing and Variety Show at the Mechanics Hall. The hall was packed. The Youth Club choir was impressive, with voices that were considered sweet and well-harmonised. Takings on this night enabled them to add another £26 to the funds.

At this time, the new Youth Club was not only learning to sing, but also to master carpentry and how to use the vice. Other activities included gymnastics, hobbies, social activities and sport. The boys were divided into competitive groups with senior boys as leaders. Trophies would be given out at the end of the year. All boys joining the club were issued with badges.



Mechanics Institute in 1950s. Image courtesy of Springvale Historical Society.

SPRING VALE YOUTH CLUB

Other youth clubs were being set up in other towns, the nearest one being at Dandenong. The idea behind these Youth Centres was to perfect the individual, rather than turn them all out in a mould.

The Dandenong Journal 3 October 1945 announced the launch of an appeal for £5,000 for the Spring Vale Youth Club. Held at the Mechanics Hall, the entertainment consisted of a very successful variety show with community singing. Mr Dowse, the chairman of the Spring Vale Youth Club's building fund committee said that the aim was to promote the physical, mental, social and spiritual welfare of the youth; and to enlist the support of parents and others interested in helping the young people to become better citizens. The organisation hoped to cater for all subjects most helpful to youth and train them in various pursuits.

Soon after, the Ladies Auxiliary of the Springvale Community Youth Centre raised £130 at a fete. The stalls at the fete sold ice cream, toys, cakes and many other appealing items. The enthusiasm for the youth club seemed infectious. A willing band of helpers made up the committee, all keen to raise money for the youth club and

the local community was always happy to attend and support each event.

By March 1946 the Spring Vale Community Youth Hut Building Appeal had reached over £218. A youth centre concert was held in May, a community singing and variety show was planned for October.

In October 1946 Harold Murdoch and Mr Brown of the Spring Vale Youth Club Executive had the important task of measuring out the ground at the intersection of Osborne and Railway Avenues. There would be space for a hall 60ft x 50ft, a swimming pool and two tennis courts. The permanent home for the Youth Club was within reach, it seemed, with the matter of the building now being before the Emergency Building Department.

What was Spring Vale like in 1946? According to Cr Andrew Ericksen, the town had 650 houses, 55 shops, 4 banks, 15 major industries and 3 big sawmills. When the Progress Association first started, its focus wasn't on halls or youth clubs but rather basic infrastructure such as sewerage, railway gates, and drainage.



Dandenong Journal, October 24, 1945. Spring Vale Happenings was a regular feature in Dandenong Journal in 1940s.

CLOSED AND RESTARTED

With such an amazing start to the Youth Club, it began to falter and was closed down. Harold Murdoch ended his term as President in 1948. The next President, Mr D Marks, did not take office until 1954. Perhaps the community's focus changed direction and fundraising slowed down, and club leaders and instructors had lost interest. Or possibly the Youth Club failed to attract members. In

July 1955 we learn from the local newspapers that the Spring Vale Community Youth Club had reopened. Classes had begun at the Mechanics Institute with both boys and girls attending. A newspaper article noted that the Club owned the block of land in Osborne Avenue plus a considerable amount of money. It was hoped to erect a building soon, to cater for most forms of physical recreation.

In June 1955, the newly elected Youth Club Committee had organised a social evening to provide the youth of the area with wholesome entertainment and a healthy outlet for their energies. There were games, community singing, dances and a picture screening. Forty parents attended this event with 200 children. Whatever had gone wrong in those previous years, the interest in a youth club in the district had certainly been revived.

A Quonset building was hired and erected for the use of the Youth Club. A Quonset or Nissan Hut was

a cylindrical structure designed by the military in World War One and used extensively in World War Two. These huts were very useful for civilian activities after the war and provided the community with large meeting places until a permanent building could be built. The Quonset building in Balmoral Avenue was used by the Youth Club and was fondly known as the Igloo.



By the end of 1941, approximately 8,200 T-Rib Quonset huts were produced in the US. Huts sent to Iceland proved their success in their first winter of use. According to George A. Fuller Co.: "A night gale of hurricane proportion that wrecked shipping in the harbor, tossed crumpled PBVs on the beach like paper hats, and ripped the covering completely off of many British Nissen huts, left the Quonset huts practically undamaged." <http://www.quonsethuts.org/huts/index.htm>

SPRING VALE YOUTH CLUB

Wrestling and boxing were popular activities for the Youth Club in 1956. Norm Nilsen was one young 18 year old Spring Vale wrestler who had talents that suggested he could be an Olympic possibility. The local boxers visited South Melbourne for a boxing night held to aid the South Melbourne Police Boys Club. The Youth Club's first football team played the Mentone Midgets twice, doing much better in their second game against this more experienced side.



Promising Spring Vale wrestler. Norm Neilsen, holder of the Victorian 9-5 Wrestling Title, gets to work on Instructor Tom Simmonds. Norm, only 18, is an Olympic prospect. (See story on Page 27).

Spring Vale Wrestler, Norm Nilsen gets to work on Instructor Tom Simmonds. Dandenong Journal, 3 October 1956.

By the beginning of 1957, the Youth Club had to give up some of their use of the Igloo, to make way for temporary quarters for the Westall Technical School. The Mechanics Institute was again used for some of the Youth Club's activities. Tuesday and Thursday nights were for the boys and Wednesday night for the girls, from 8 to 9.30pm. Even so the girls had to forgo one of their club nights. A Naturalisation Ceremony was being conducted on one Wednesday night. The Spring Vale Youth Club was quick to congratulate the new Australian citizens and invite them to be actively involved with helping the local youth.

By April 1957, the Youth Club had received an important letter from the Federal Taxation Commissioner, indicating that all future donations would be allowable for taxation purposes. This would give fundraising a real boost.

On 5th May the local shire had organised a celebration of Commonwealth Youth Sunday, assembling at the Quonset Building in Railway Avenue and marching to the Spring Vale Theatre, led by the Spring Vale Salvation Army. The Youth Club contingent was led by banner-bearer Lynette Hedges. The girls were dressed in their club's green gymnasium frocks and the boys looked impressive too. Norm Nilsen had done an excellent job in designing the banner. Norm's wrestling abilities were admired by all and he was considered almost a certainty for the Australian team going to New Zealand later that year.

The Club's football team had a runaway victory over Carnegie's "Bon Ami" team.

Meanwhile basketball had begun its season, and the team representing the Spring Vale Youth Club was undaunted by a loss to the Dandenong Methodists. There was a belief among the girls that they would only improve, as they played

more games. Boxing and wrestling bouts were mentioned regularly in the local newspaper. In fact, there was a Spring Vale Community Youth Club Notes column that featured weekly in the Dandenong Journal. Johnny Killeen had a magnificent win in the Victorian Amateur Boxing Championships in August. Locals were invited to see the young champion in action on Channel GTV 9! Johnny Killeen was secretary of the Hobby class, with the members busily making articles for the Club Bazaar in November.

Sporting achievements were not the only focus for the Youth Club members. Senior members of the Club visited the Council Chambers while a meeting was in progress, to better prepare themselves for citizenship.

An Open Night was organised for Thursday 24 October 1957 when members of the public were given the opportunity of seeing demonstrations of boxing, wrestling, weight-lifting and body-building, and also the work of the hobby class and the projects of the Nature Class. The girls attending the Spring Vale Community Youth Club gymnastics classes gave their first concert to a large audience in November. The local paper reported that 60 excited young performers, who had been in training only for a short time, captivated the onlookers with a bright display of rhythmic numbers. The largest number on stage at one time was 40 juniors and intermediates combining for the Irish Jig, all in costume.

Finishing up the year, a Careers Night was organised with speakers from the Commonwealth Employment Service.

By 1958, the Spring Vale Youth Club had well-established itself in the community. A big event occurred on July 11 that year to raise much needed funds for Marilyn Harris, the Spring Vale Community Youth

Club Queen. It was considered one of the most successful social functions for the year and was held in the spacious dining hall of Davis Co-op, with a distinct Dutch theme.



Springvale Youth Club was active in processions and parades popular in 1950s. Images courtesy of Springvale Historical Society

SPRING VALE YOUTH CLUB

Glimpses of Springvale in 1950s:



Balmoral Avenue



Springvale Road



Springvale Station



Springvale Road flooded in 1951.

SPRING VALE YOUTH CLUB - OWN PREMISES ON OWN LAND

At last, in 1959, the Spring Vale Youth Club had begun to establish clubrooms on their own block of land at the intersection of Osborne and Railway Avenues. The Club had purchased the land in the mid 1940s but had opted to hire facilities elsewhere until enough money was raised. Club membership was increasing and it was considered the right time to put down permanent roots.

It was decided to purchase the Quonset Building from the Shire of Springvale and Noble Park for the sum of £200 and have it moved to the present site. Unfortunately sewerage contractors excavated along the full frontage, and high mounds of clay and water lay around for months, affecting the attendance and loss in fees. The grounds were a quagmire. Eventually the children came back and membership rose once more.

Well over 200 boys and 100 girls were now enrolled at the Youth Club. More activities were needed but there was one problem holding the Club back - lack of parental involvement to both organise and conduct the classes. The club had begun in 1960 in its own clubrooms and was no longer paying hiring fees elsewhere, but this was counter-balanced by the need for staff and equipment plus maintenance owing to the ever-present destruction by vandals. A further handicap was that the building was only half completed. Having spent most of its money last year, the Youth Club could only consider doing the essentials. In 1960, their plans were limited to having a cupboard installed under the stairs and the addition of a sliding door. On their urgent wish list were

dressing rooms, kitchen, showers and more toilets. The committee would have to find a way to address these matters in 1961. And what was to be done about the leaking roof?

The youth were probably unaware of the issues facing the Board. They were too busy having fun! Teenage dances were being held regularly by the Youth Club at the Igloo. Girls were to bring a plate, please, and admission was 2/6. However, the price went up for one organised for Friday 30th September 1960 to 3/- for members and 4/- for non-members. The reason? A real live band had been hired, instead of dancing to discs!

By the end of 1961, the Youth Club Board were thrilled to hear the good news from Hon. G L Chandler, MLC that they would receive a State Government grant of £650. This was to be allocated as follows: £400 towards the building extensions once started, £50 for sporting equipment and £200 for maintenance.



Dandenong Journal, December 6, 1961.

But not everything was rosy about youth clubs, as the Springvale Apex Club found out from their guest speaker Mr Ellery Hamilton-Smith in September 1961, who was the Public Relations Officer of the Association of

SPRING VALE YOUTH CLUB

Youth Clubs. He claimed that of the 200 youth clubs in their association, 20 were doing an excellent job and at least 100 were doing more harm than good. He believed that if youth clubs had the wrong leaders, then the clubs were often driven by programs that culminated in a flash display. Two essentials for a good youth club were that the activities were enjoyable, and that the members built up a feeling of loyalty and group responsibility. Hopefully Springvale Community Youth Club was among the 10% who were classed as excellent. Nevertheless, the Springvale Apex Club felt inspired to repaint the Youth Club hall in February 1962, just a few months later. Nine Apex members turned up for the chore and worked hard to finish the exterior, with the assistance of some of the young Youth Club members. Here was proof that the young members certainly did feel a sense of loyalty and group responsibility!



Springvale Apexians 'good deed'. Dandenong Journal, 21 November 1962

By the 13th Annual General Meeting in October 1962, it must be noted the important role Cr Bob Luxford had played to ensure the success of the Spring Vale Youth Club. At that meeting he was re-elected for his 6th year as President and Mr Prokhovnik was elected Secretary; two important contributors to the Youth Club's story. The new building would be officially opened on Saturday 10 November 1962, providing additional amenities including office, toilet blocks, meeting room and kitchen at a total cost of £4600. The 10th November marked the 18th anniversary of the Spring Vale Youth Club.



Cr Luxford Springvale's Mayor. Dandenong Journal, 4 September 1963

The Youth Club was a buzz of activity. In 1963, members of the Ashwood Miniature Car Racing Club staged a two-day exhibition of scale model electric car racing on their 120 ft track at the Spring Vale Youth Club Rooms. It was also the venue for the Dandenong Caged Bird Society's annual show. Regular activities available to the youth included gym classes and boxing, swimming and wrestling. Girls could attend calisthenics classes on Saturday afternoons. Boys' basketball was popular, as was baseball. Girls' basketball "C" grade juniors were doing well after 4 wins and one loss, while the seniors, although reported to be playing extra well, were losing out with bad goal throwing!

A social afternoon was held on July 4 1963, admission two shillings per person. The highlight of the afternoon was the appearance of Dick Cranbourne from Radio 3DB, arriving to present "The Robur Tea Party". Fund raising activities for the Youth Club were continually being organised by the Ladies Auxiliary and Service Clubs. The Rotary Club of Springvale held a successful Auction and then a Baby Show, at which they raised £41.17 and £30 respectively, all for the Youth Club.

The Springvale Youth Club break-up presentation night on 13th December 1963, welcomed an attendance of over 300 children and adults as trophies were handed out. Cr R Luxford, the Mayor of Springvale, was given a Life Membership badge in appreciation of his service to the Youth Club of over six years as President.

Fundraising for the Youth Club attracted interesting sponsors. In 1965 the Harley Club of Victoria held

an open scramble in Westall Road to assist the Springvale Community Youth Club. No doubt this was an exciting and noisy event for all the youth and dads of the district. At the club itself, an appeal had gone out for old newspapers, rags and clean milk bottles.

SPRINGVALE YOUTH CLUB - COMES OF AGE

Lack of interest in the gymnasium saw the disbanding of the gym classes for the time being. However on the bright side, the Marching Girls had increased in popularity and had been instrumental in raising an amazing £1190 for the Club. Every pound, shilling and pence was desperately needed at the Club. The club was attracting more members than the club could accept. The clubrooms were too small but there were no funds to expand them. Each year the club was costing more money to run, resulting in little being put aside for extensions or new clubrooms. The newly elected President, Mr S Wright, appealed to the local community in September 1965 " Now is the appropriate time to put forward the suggestion, What are we, as citizens of Springvale, going to do about this not far distant problem?"

The Springvale Youth Club had just celebrated its 21st anniversary.

Enrolments for 1966 were being taken on Tuesday 25th January at the club rooms between 6.45 and 8.00pm. The annual member's subscription remained at five shillings. Activities available for that year included: slot car racing, boys' basketball, boys' gym and boxing, unicycles and judo for both boys and girls. Girls' calisthenics and basketball would be starting shortly, and a "capping day" was planned soon for the marching girls' group.

SPRING VALE YOUTH CLUB

Members of the Springvale Youth Club were being taught to ride unicycles in just a matter of hours, after which they quickly progressed to learning all kinds of tricks and could give a creditable display of basketball-a-wheel. A unicycle consisted of a wheel, pedals and a seat, and soon the budding unicyclists wanted to do away with the seat!

The Slot Car Club membership could boast about 120 members, and plans were afoot to build another smaller track to cater for more members. They were also considering the replacement of the aluminium tracks with copper strips.

By the end of 1966, 120 parents attended the Springvale Youth Club's presentation.

SPRINGVALE YOUTH CLUB - SURVEYS, CHALLENGES AND CHANGES

The City of Springvale completed a "Planning for Youth in the City of Springvale survey" in 1967. This was carried out by a team of social and research workers and resulted in a lengthy document that looked at the problems and needs of the youth. Once a young person had outgrown sporting clubs, scouts and the youth club, what else was there to do, other than hang out in the local pub? How he utilised his spare time, depended on what facilities were available in Springvale. A Springvale Youth Survey Subcommittee began to meet to discuss the challenges ahead of them.



Dandenong Journal, 17 October 1967.

The problems and opportunities of the youth were not the only issues facing the local council and the community. At the beginning of 1968, tenders had been called to build a unique star design migrant hostel in Westall Road. Once built, this would herald a dramatic change in the city's population.

Cash help was being made available to youth organisations from the Victorian Government during 1968-69, with applications going through the Youth Advisory Council. Financial assistance was categorised into 5 different grants: building, maintenance, equipment, youth leadership and camping.

The City of Springvale's commitment to youth now extended to a Youth Expo. The first was held in 1968 with non-stop exhibitions on show. The second Youth Expo in October 1969 also included

famous sporting identities and the judging of Miss Business Girl and Miss Teenager. One of the highlights of the second Expo was the actual use of underwater equipment demonstrated by leading members of the Australian Underwater Federation in a 15 ft tank. Attendances were expected to top the previous year's total of 20,000.

By the end of the year, the Springvale council were making provisions in their estimates to appoint a Youth Services Officer, with £3,500 being set aside for the purpose. To assist the council with its selection of a suitable social worker, two experts had been consulted. As welfare, charitable and benevolent organisations already existed, it was recommended that council efforts would be best directed towards the youth.

SPRINGVALE YOUTH CLUB - SPRINGVALE COUNCIL PURCHASES YOUTH CLUB PREMISES

In the 1969 Springvale Youth Club annual report, club president Mr K Johns said that it was very important for Springvale Council to purchase the club premises, thus enabling the Youth Club to concentrate its fund raising on equipment and general improvements. After more than 20 years of operating independently, of raising its own money to buy land and erect its own buildings, the Youth Club was struggling to maintain the property, and run the organisation effectively. The time had come to hand over the ownership of the land and club rooms to the City of Springvale, and concentrate on the day to day needs of the Club.

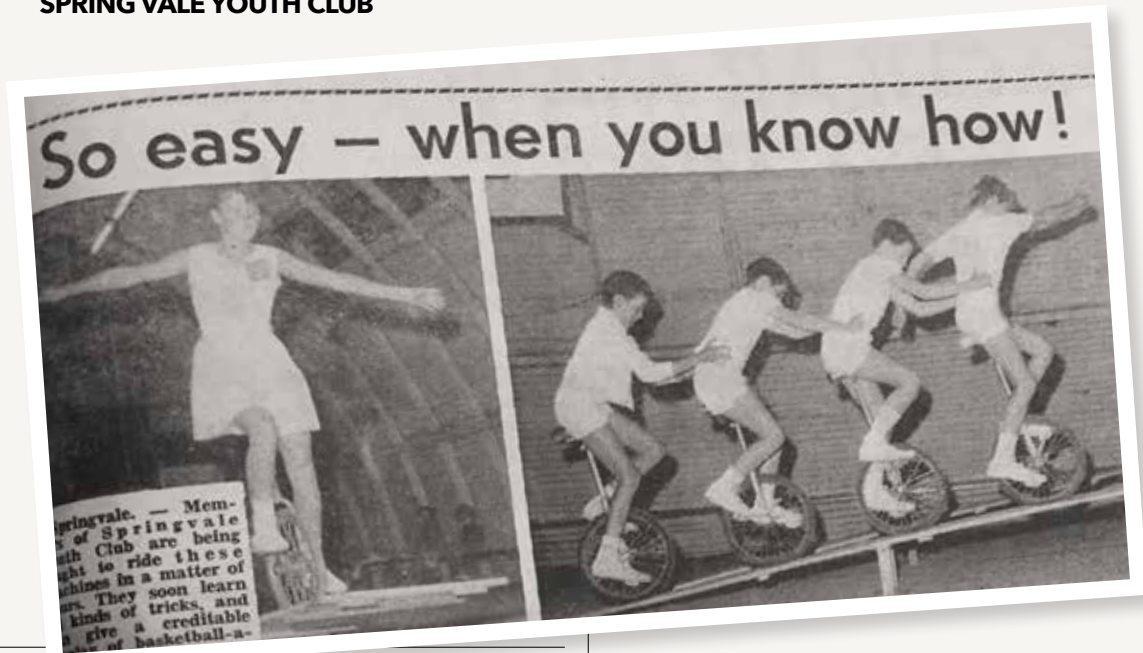
In the same report Mr Johns said that although there had been an increase in teenage membership, it was not as high as expected. The plan was to form a Teenagers Club, to be under the guidance of a suitable adult.

Mr Johns had not only the needs of the Club at heart but also its Secretary. He put an appeal in the local paper, looking for a three bed roomed house for the Club Secretary Mr Joe De Souza and his young family. He said: "A good club secretary is hard to come by and we would be sorry to lose his services if he is forced to leave our area. He can provide excellent references." It must have worked, as Joe continued to be actively involved with the Youth Club for many more years, including Life Membership in 1974.

By 1970 the negotiations with the City of Springvale had been successfully completed. It was seen by the more practical board members of the Springvale Youth Club as having reached a fruitful conclusion. Others viewed the handing over of their main asset, the ownership of their building, with much regret. However, it was now anticipated that the long overdue maintenance and improvements could at last be carried out by the Council, while the Club could now channel its efforts into helping the youth of the city.

Mr Digby Jessop, the Youth Services Officer for the City of Springvale, was keen to address a criticism from the young people in the community that there was nowhere for them to meet informally, other than the local hotel. Many of them did not want to join a youth group. He had obtained permission to convert one of the small rooms in the Town Hall into a coffee shop for under 25s. It would have an informal and relaxed atmosphere with entertainment supplied by local folk groups, and would be opened as part of the Youth Expo for the three days. If it proved popular, then it would become part of the local scene.

SPRING VALE YOUTH CLUB



Dandenong Journal, 28 April, 1966.
Unicycling started at Springvale Youth Club in 1960s and became increasingly popular over the years.

At the Springvale Youth Club, gymnastics for juniors, intermediates and seniors were all flourishing in 1970, as were the unicycle group and the marching girls. Men's basketball had its ups and downs, as did boxing and judo all with declining numbers, particularly during the football season! The women's basketball teams were performing well. Badminton and calisthenics were still popular on the program. The idea for a teenage club, although enthusiastically embraced at the previous Annual General Meeting, had yet to get off the ground. It was difficult to find a vacancy at the club rooms, with the premises being used every week night, and often on Saturday and Sunday nights too.

In March 1971, Digby Jessop wrote an article in the Dandenong Journal called "Youth Clubs' Role is Not Understood". He challenged the community's

misconception that youth clubs were only there to keep kids off the street or to get them to attend church. He believed that successful youth clubs were founded on the belief that young people should be offered a situation that would be sympathetic to their needs and assist them in their maturity. This could only be achieved by the involvement of adults who understood adolescents and were prepared to volunteer some of their time. Without the help and commitment of parents and other adults, the youth club would be weakened, limiting the variety of activities and restricting membership. These adults need not be skilled, but instead interested in young people and prepared to learn.

Digby Jessop also advocated in June 1971 that a service club should be formed for both sexes, single and married between the ages of 18 and 30. The aim would be to assist in fundraising for selected charities within the municipality. Fundraising functions would include barbecues, car trials, wine tasting, as well as monthly dinner meetings at hotels in the city.

Interested people were invited to contact Digby at the City of Springvale.

By the end of 1971, there was a building boom in Springvale. Over \$16 million worth of new buildings had been erected during 1970/71.

At the Springvale Youth Club's Christmas trophy night, Cr Bob Luxford and his wife Betty were thanked for their 16 years service to the Club. Cr Luxford, a former office bearer, was presented with a set of travelling cases, and Mrs. Luxford received an overnight bag.



Cr. Bob Luxford and his wife Betty. Dandenong Journal, 5 September 1973

The Youth Club was busy again in February 1972, enrolling young people for many different activities. Boys and girls were catered for in judo, unicycles and ballroom dancing. Classes for boys were available in gymnastics, basketball

and boxing, while girls specialised in calisthenics and marching. A paper and bottle drive was held in April in the Springvale-Noble Park area, with all proceeds going to the Springvale and Noble Park Centre for the Mentally Handicapped. A barbecue was held a month later to raise further funds for the same organisation.

By winter 1972, the Springvale Combined Pensioners' Association had to meet in the Youth Club premises while the new Springvale Library was being built and the Mechanics Institute was being used for the cataloguing and preparation of new book stock. The pensioners found out how tough the young people had it at the Igloo. The hall had galvanised iron walls, with gaps between the walls and the floor. Caught up in the big freeze, the pensioners shivered without air-conditioning or a workable heater!

The Springvale Community Youth Club boasted 500 members from all over the south-eastern suburbs. One of the club's most popular activities was the Teenage Dance Club with 200 members. Dress code was strict, and jeans and slacks were not allowed. The dances were held in the Springvale Town Hall. Admission was 60 cents for members, 80 cents for non-members and \$2 for family groups. Proceeds would go towards the Club's new building fund. The present club house in Osborne Avenue was not big enough to cater for all the club's activities. Other activities included the Teenage Club on Friday nights with sports, dancing, a coffee lounge, single wheel bike club, judo club and gymnastics club.

1972 also heralded a new event for the youth, with the first Springvale Youth Arts Festival organised for September.

SPRING VALE YOUTH CLUB

Digby Jessop, the council's Youth Services Development Officer, organised it with assistance and finance from the Australian Meat Industry Employers' Union and the Arts Council. More than 8000 local school children were expected to attend. The program included music, creative dancing, ballet and drama.

When the youth club classes reopened in 1973, the new Sunday night ballroom classes proved very popular. The numbers had increased from 60 to 180 the following year. This was solely due to the commitment and enthusiasm of the President Mr B Gardiner, with the dancing prowess of Gary Hallihan who was a professional dancing instructor and Mr Barbieri. Teenage girls were asked not to wear slacks and the boys to wear a collar and tie. Jeans were not permitted.

SPRINGVALE YOUTH CLUB - NEW HALL TO BE BUILT

The youth club hall was far too small and in a dilapidated condition and it was time to replace it. The existing "hut" in Osborne Avenue would be demolished to make way for a new \$90,000 hall, measuring 90ft by 47ft and would include a multi-purpose stage and changing rooms. It may have been a blessing in disguise when the Springvale Combined Pensioners' Association froze using the Springvale Youth Club rooms the previous winter! Work would begin in June 1973.



Dandenong Journal, 27 June 1972. A rare glimpse to the inside of the Igloo.



The New Youth Centre as it was planned. Dandenong Journal, 15 May 1973

By April 1974, an appeal went into the local paper for a leader for the Springvale Youth Club Teenage Club. Although the Teenage Club was run by a committee of teenagers, meeting at the new Youth Club building in Osborne Avenue, it was felt that an older man or woman was needed to act in a supervisory capacity. The Teenage Club catered for anywhere between 80

and 120 teenagers, enjoying a mixture of activities including billiards, table tennis, chess, draughts and handball. Local music groups sometimes provided entertainment.

In May the President of the newly-opened Youth Club premises, Joseph de Souza, was furious that the Club was regarded as a "cheap baby-sitting and child-minding centre". Parents would just deposit their children at the Club, and show no interest as to what happens after.

A thirty year dream was realised when the new Springvale Youth Clubrooms were officially opened by Councillor Luxford in May 1974. The hall featured a Stramit roof, wide stage and an enlarged kitchen. The Youth Club had started its meetings in a Bakehouse, graduated to the Mechanics Hall, then the Igloo in Balmoral Avenue. The Nissan Hut was then relocated to Osborne Avenue. At this special event, Mayor Cr Luxford presented Life Membership badges to four committee members: Joseph de Souza, Alan Smith (marching girls), Mary Gardiner (unicyclists) and Mrs Njaire (general committee member and social organiser).

Other highlights of 1974 included the Springvale Youth Club holding its first annual debutante ball in the Springvale City Hall, running a successful school holiday program and the opening of a coffee shop on Sunday evenings during the summer holidays. In the coffee shop they would be entertained by folk singers; cost of admission was 50 cents.

SPRINGVALE YOUTH CLUB - FIRST PAID MANAGER

Now the Springvale Community Youth Club had its purpose-built premises, the committee's next task was to appoint

a full-time paid manager. By the end of 1975, Mr Gary Hallihan, 29, became the first paid manager of a youth club in the area. The City of Springvale gave a \$2,500 grant towards his wages and approached the Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation for a further grant. An experienced youth and community worker, Gary Hallihan had already been involved with the Centre for 6 years.



Gary Hallihan. Dandenong Journal, 8 October 1974

Starting early November, activities were being organised to suit every young person from the active, not-so-active and the placid. The Teenage Club, to be called Meeting Place, was reopening for the youth aged 14 years and older. Activities such as table tennis, snooker, volleyball, badminton, dancing were designed for the more energetic, while chess, draughts, arts and crafts and an exchange library were on offer for the more passive. Photography, angling, travel and pottery were also being planned. Bus trips were being organised for the school holidays by the new manager. Day trips would travel to Phillip Island, Walhalla, Point Leo, Barwon heads and Queenscliff, Castlemaine and Rosebud. Costs per head varied from \$3.50 to \$5.00. The club also arranged for ice skating at the

SPRING VALE YOUTH CLUB

Olympic Ice Skating Rink and 10-pin bowling at Mentone Bowls. No one could complain that they were bored during the school holidays!

What a busy year 1976 proved to be! The Springvale Community Youth Club certainly had a full program, with basketball (men's and women's international rules) on Sundays at 9am, badminton on Mondays at 7.30pm, boys' gymnastics on Tuesdays at 6.30pm, marching girls on Wednesdays at 6.30pm, judo on Thursdays at 6.30pm, girls gymnastics on Fridays at 4.30pm, Jazz Ballet for girls on Saturday mornings, unicycles on Saturdays at 1.30pm and Meeting Place and the Teenage Club on Sundays at 7.30pm. Other activities included an angling club, pottery classes and cricket clinics. And that wasn't all! Calisthenics was attended by more than 50 girls, held on Saturdays between 1.30pm and 4.00pm at a cost of 40 cents a lesson. Annette Jackson was in charge of these classes, with 17 years of experience to share.

Other events worth noting for 1976 included a three and a half mile walkathon to raise money for new equipment at the Club. The walk started at the clubrooms, proceeded down Queens Avenue to Springvale Road as far as Heatherton Road. The contestants then turned right and continued to Westall Road before heading back to Osborne Avenue. A car rally was also organised at a cost of \$2 per car, with the lure of a barbecue at their destination.

A discotheque was debuted at the club on Sunday 4 July from 7pm until 11pm. It would comprise a disc jockey (normally ex-radio), sophisticated lighting and the latest in modern records, all for the princely sum of \$1 admission. Old-time dances were also

being considered complete with an old time band on a regular basis. Cost was expected to be \$1.50 a head, mostly to cover the cost of a good four to six-piece band. Dancing was certainly on the minds of the Youth Club with their Third Annual Debutante Ball scheduled for Friday 20 August. Twelve debutantes were eagerly preparing for their presentation to the Mayor of Springvale Cr Bill Warner and his wife. The Ball was BYO with a three-course meal. Dress code was formal and tickets cost \$16 a double.



Heavy rock 'n' roll band Black Diamond was featured at Springvale Community Youth Club discos. Dandenong Journal, 24 April 1978

SPRINGVALE YOUTH CLUB - Other uses for the youth club building?

Big changes were in the air in early 1977, heralding a change in direction for the Youth Club in more ways than one. This began with Gary Hallihan resigning from his position as manager, to take up the challenge of running a mixed business in Queensland. He had

been with the Club for seven and a half years and had been its first manager for the last 15 months. He was replaced by Helen Bower.



ABOVE: Springvale Youth Club's new manager, Mrs. Helen Bower, says goodbye to former club manager, Mr. Gary Hallihan.

Gary Hallihan passes on the reigns to Helen Bower. Dandenong Journal, 21 March 1977.

Helen had been involved with community activities for several years. She was keen to extend her expertise to the youth. By June of the same year, she was reported in the Dandenong Journal, as being keen to explore ways to get the maximum use from the Youth Club clubrooms. The premises were being used extensively over six nights each week and on weekends, but very little use on week days. At that time it had only been used for fitness, netball and art classes. In July, a Baby Show, was held in the Springvale Youth Clubrooms, in aid of the Harold Blair Aborigine Children's Project. By November the same year, the Club was

offering a free child-minding service for local mothers using the facilities.

The Springvale Youth Club's senior marching girls' team, the Toranas, had been selected to represent Australia, in the Inter-Dominion Championships in New Zealand, held in October 1977. Torana was an Aboriginal name, meaning "to fly". However, these marching girls had to keep their feet firmly on the ground! Only a few Australian teams were to attend the championships in Wellington, and the Toranas were the only ones going from Victoria. What a proud honour for the Club! They had qualified by finishing second in the national championships in Brisbane. Although they performed well in Wellington, the Toranas were not rewarded with any placing in the 10-team championships. Unfortunately, some of the drills varied between the two countries, affecting the judging outcome. By the middle of 1978, the Springvale Youth Club's Marching Girls were seeking new recruits through the local paper. They claimed to be the strongest marching girls' club in Australia.



SPRINGVALE Youth Club senior marching girls' team, the Toranas, is one of three teams to represent Australia in the Inter-Dominion Championships in New Zealand later this month.

Toranas preparing to represent Australia in the Inter-Dominion Championship in New Zealand. Dandenong Journal, 10 October 1977.

SPRING VALE YOUTH CLUB

There continued to be a focus on attracting more daytime usage of the Clubrooms in 1978. In May, the program for local women was as follows: exercise classes and badminton on Wednesdays, yoga and art on Thursdays. Evening classes also extended to men in the evenings with judo, art and fitness classes. In addition jazz ballet was on offer to women on Saturday afternoons.

By the 1979 Annual General Meeting, the Springvale Youth Club was considered to be the largest youth club in the State. Graham Don, the club secretary, was proud of the Club's efforts to collect newspapers and bottles as a fundraiser for the Club. They averaged six tonnes of papers and 600 dozen empty bottles each month. He paid a special tribute to their manager Helen Bower. She devoted at least 60 hours to the club each week. However, the Youth Club was struggling financially and now sought council funding.

The Toranas continued to win titles for their marching, this time in Perth. Once again they looked forward to competing in New Zealand. Other highlights for 1979 included the introduction of macramé classes, an art and craft exhibition, sponsored by the Springvale Rotary Club, and a full-scale musical entitled *Jonah Man Jazz* to be staged at the Springvale High School in December. The Springvale Youth Club was the venue for one of 20 police-run Blue Light Discos in Melbourne. Parents could drop off their kids, knowing they would be in safe hands. It could be a regular dance, depending on how well it was attended.

Ethnic groups were regularly hiring the hall, ensuring that the facilities were being used by the general community,

not just the youth. Another highlight for the year was a ranch night on Saturday 1 September, organised by the Springvale Community Youth Club's Ladies Auxiliary. Guest stars would be the famous Hawking Brothers, providing entertainment from 8pm until midnight. Tickets cost \$5 each but patrons were asked to bring their own supper and drinks.

The trend to make better use of the facilities during the weekdays continued in 1980. Macramé classes were now available on Wednesday mornings at 11.00am and for those who were keen to impress their guests on Christmas Day, flower arranging for Christmas decorations was being taught on Thursday mornings for two hours. In addition, crochet and tapestry classes were available on Tuesday evenings. In late August, the Third Annual Art and Craft Exhibition was held over the weekend at the clubrooms. Well-known artists, including Neil Savage, Ernie Trembath, Alan Almes and Wendy Courtney, would be among the exhibitors. Admission was free with a number of specialised craft stands and demonstrations featured.

The Springvale Youth Club continued to cater for all ages, from five and over, with some classes for adults, but the emphasis was still on youth. The musical performed by the Springvale Community Youth Drama Group in September 1980 was "*Salad Days*". Music was by Julian Slade and the play was produced by Jill Page. The cast included Andrew Dudley (Tim); Angela Chant (Lady Raeburn), Ursula Ulejnik (Troppo) and Scott Russell (Nigel). Tickets were \$3 for adults and \$1.50 for children and pensioners.



Musical had a crisp beginning. Dandenong Journal, 8 September 1980.

Cr Bill Warner moved at Council that \$1300 for re-surfacing the rear of the Springvale Youth Club be referred to the 1980-81 estimates meeting for consideration.

There was an emphasis on fundraising in 1981 with a Garage Sale in April and a Bargain Sale in August. New clothes, jewellery, car parts, plants, garden tools, toys and cakes were on sale at the Garage Sale, and art and craft, crockery, jams, livestock and second-hand clothing were a feature of the Bargain Sale. Springvale Youth Club received \$535 grant from the 1980-1981 State Youth Budget.

By 1982 the Youth Drama Group was in full swing with rehearsals for their forthcoming production of "Anne of Green Gables" scheduled for August in the Chandler Community Theatre. Theatre classes were available for anyone between 10 and 26 to join. Their biggest challenge was to attract musicians for the orchestra with at least two years of experience. Appeals

went out for those who could play violin, French horn and flute. This prompted musical lessons in all musical instruments to be added to the club's program.

Other highlights for the year included: a "Night of Commercial Rock" held at the Banquet Room, Monash University on Saturday 1 May; and the Sixth Annual Art and Craft Exhibition in October boasted over 650 entries with the drawcard of a chicken and champagne function. A total of \$1500 worth of art prizes would be awarded. The Blue Light Disco was to be given a second chance, even though a previous attempt had proved unsuccessful. This was prompted by the knowledge that Blue Light Discos were working well in Dingley and Keysborough and another was being set up in Noble Park. It was believed that such an event was definitely needed in Springvale. Two Saturday nights were to be trialled for October and November.

SPRING VALE YOUTH CLUB

Yoga relaxation classes were now being offered at the clubrooms on Wednesday mornings. Jazz and classical ballet classes for all ages would be held on Saturdays, with instructress Sally Compton offering 60-minute graded classes. The Springvale Community Youth Club's badminton team recently won the grand final of the Southern Suburbs Badminton Association. The club finished with two teams in the top four in what was a most creditable effort.

In September 1982, the State Government made a \$1215 grant to the Springvale Community Youth Club. The money was from a Community Youth Development Grant, established for the purpose of encouraging young people to identify with and take responsibility for planning their own services.

The year ended with the resignation of the Manager Mrs Helen Bower, after 6 years at the helm. She felt the role of a coordinator was a viable role for a maximum of five years. She had been employed to work for 35 hours a week but instead had been working about 70 hours. When she started the Club had 460 members but now had more than 3000. Helen was looking forward to a well-earned trip around Australia.

This time, the Springvale Council would appoint the replacement coordinator, instead of the committee.

SPRINGVALE YOUTH CLUB - NEW NAME, NEW COORDINATOR

While Helen Bower was enjoying her holiday, the Springvale Youth Club was about to get a new name. Thanks to Helen, the clubrooms had widened its scope to include classes and activities for all ages. Although the emphasis was on the youth, the increased community involvement prompted the

committee to change the name of the Club. On Wednesday 16 March 1983 an extraordinary meeting was held to change its name to the Springvale Community Centre. According to the Dandenong Journal "Increased unemployment, earlier retirement and an increasing multicultural society are among the reasons to try to make the move away from the attitude that community facilities are only for the youth".

Springvale Council had also appointed a new Coordinator Jeff Mills, 25, with the challenge to increase the usage of the clubrooms. The Centre was currently used 54 hours out of a possible 100 hours. Mr G Don was the current President and had been since 1980.



Jeff Mills with a rare photo of the 'Igloo'. Dandenong Journal, 14 March 1983

SPRINGVALE YOUTH CLUB - PEOPLE AND MEMORIES

The Springvale Youth Club was in existence between 1944 and 1983 and in that 40 years, contributed greatly to the development of youth in the community. It was more than just a youth club to many members of the community.

Bev Douglas wanted to ensure that it was a well-run club, and an appropriate and safe place for her children. The only way she could ensure this, was to play an active part with any of the organisations they joined. What an asset Bev and her daughter Leah proved to be for the Centre as a result!

Graham Don and his wife Lyn had the same concerns for their children and became actively involved with the Springvale Youth Club for the same reasons as Bev Douglas. Their many years of service showed their commitment to the Centre long after their children outgrew it.

Faye Bolger and her family were involved with the Club for many years, including judo, calisthenics, ballroom dancing and Sunday night Blue Light Disco. Faye remembered how active the Marching Girls were, touring the country to participate in many competitions. She was heavily involved with fundraising for judo and calisthenics.

Susan Voutier remembered attending the Jazz ballet classes with her big sister Catherine. Susan wasn't as keen on jazz ballet, and sometimes faked a splinter in her foot. In later years, her brother Thomas was a patient in the Royal Children's hospital. By an amazing coincidence, Carolyn who had been one of their jazz ballet teachers, was a nurse on the same ward! Susan believed that this was a fantastic example of the importance of

an institution such as a local youth club, forging connections with the community.

Bill Warner's involvement was not as a parent but a Springvale Councillor. He went on the committee for one year, then attended subsequent Annual General Meetings, sometimes chairing the election of office bearers. He assisted in deputations to Council and other bodies for funding. He thoroughly enjoyed the time he spent with the Centre.

Joseph de Souza became aware of the Club from 1966. Living across the road from the Youth Club premises, his first introduction was that of loud music blaring, keeping him awake! Joe was Anglo-Indian, not feeling accepted by the Europeans or the Indians. Once they had arrived in Springvale, this feeling of not belonging changed. Encouraged by his employer Bob Luxford, Joe approached the club to start up a Badminton Club. Before long he was on the Committee of Management! A quick glance at the Honour Boards at the Clubrooms will attest to his dedication and commitment to the Springvale Youth Club. His three words to describe his experience of his ten plus years at the Centre are SATISFACTION, SUCCESS and FUN, not necessarily in that order!!



Club Takes On a New Role. Dandenong Journal, 14 March 1983

SPRINGVALE COMMUNITY CENTRE

SPRINGVALE COMMUNITY CENTRE - NEW NAME, NEW FOCUS

The Springvale Community Centre with its all-inclusive name and a new coordinator settled down to business. By October 1983, an entry in the Dandenong Journal advertised that the centre catered for all ages and was open seven days a week. It listed the health and fitness classes: aerobics, badminton, boys' and girls' Olympic gymnastics, calisthenics, classical and jazz ballet, judo, ladies' fitness, tumbling gym for preschoolers, weightlifting, and relaxation/yoga. Craft included cake decorating, art/ oil painting and woodwork. Other activities at the centre were listed as Parents without Partners (every third Tuesday of the month), a theatre club and music lessons.

The Ninth Annual Springvale Art and Craft Show was held in the Springvale City Hall on 23 and 24 March 1985, as part of the City of Springvale Arts and Festival weekend. This was run by the Springvale Community Centre with assistance from the Rotary Club of Springvale and the Light Car Club of Australia. The Arts Festival included the three day Springvale Garden Club Show, Dingley village craft and a display and parade of 150 years of transport through Springvale, Noble Park, Keysborough and Dingley. The coordinator Jeff Mills was kept very busy processing over 700 paintings from 300 artists.



Springvale Art Show 1985. It was not easy to choose the winner for the first prize.

In 1985, the range of classes on offer at the Springvale Community Centre began to widen. A 10-week course in gardening and horticulture was sponsored by Vic Williams Forest and Nursery in Oakleigh. Participants paid a course fee of \$12 each. A Chinese cooking course ran for 13 weeks on Thursday evenings in term two, costing \$74 per person, which included all ingredients needed, but only 10 people could enrol. A Malaysian cooking course was available on Tuesday evenings. The cost of the cookery courses was later reduced to \$65 plus \$4 membership of the centre. Tae Kwon Do, woodwork, Fimo clay modelling and jewellery classes were also added to the program.

The Springvale Marching Girls Club celebrated their 21st anniversary with a special booklet detailing the club's history, its achievements and its individual triumphs.

With over 1,200 people using the centre weekly in 1986, the Springvale Community Centre was growing in importance in the local community. The Springvale Italian Club and the Chinese Basketball Association were both

regular users of the centre. The Italian community could attract an attendance from as far as Chelsea, since they had moved from the Neighbourhood House to the more spacious Springvale Community Centre. In 1987 the Springvale Italian Senior Citizens Club celebrated its fourth anniversary with a luncheon at the Springvale Community Centre. The Mayor of Springvale Cr Andrew Papapetrou and other local dignitaries attended this feast.



Italian Elderly Citizens Club Committee of Management with the Centre Coordinator and Cr. Youhorn Chea, December 2005.

The 11th Annual Springvale Art and Craft Exhibition and Sale was once again organised and held in the Springvale City Hall at the end of March 1987. Displays from the Springvale Garden Club, Springvale Gem Club and the City of Springvale Historical Society provided many value-added attractions for the Exhibition.

The following year, the Exhibition was named the Springvale Bicentennial Art and Craft Show to reflect that it was being held in 1988, and no doubt could attract some Bicentennial funding. The Show Coordinator was now Mrs Helen Heintz, who had replaced Jeff Mills at the Springvale Community Centre.

Helen Heintz stated that there were now 560 paintings from 160 local artists who would vie for a share in the \$3455 prize pool. This event was held in October 1988.

At the Annual General Meeting of the Springvale Community Centre held on 25 October 1989, Mr Graham Don was re-elected President, as were Mrs P Wade, Vice-President, Mr K Johns Secretary and Mrs L Koch Assistant Secretary. The position of Treasurer had not been filled and Mr Don kindly offered to act in this position until they could find someone else. The priorities for the current year ending in September 1990 were to increase the use of the centre to 85% and participation to 80% in all activities. Fundraising and local sponsorship was an important focus as was more voluntary help from parents. Major equipment needed for the centre included an Acromat, spring floor strips, a safety belt and a rail system.

SPRINGVALE COMMUNITY CENTRE - MORE OFFICE SPACE AND PURPOSE BUILT PLAYGROUND

In January 1990, the Springvale Community Centre was given a new look. The office was relocated to the front to the building and increased in size. The coordinator, Helen Heintz, and her team could now work more effectively in the larger work area provided. A disabled toilet had also been installed. The centre's program had been extended to include hair cutting and care, sign language, Esperanto, beauty and skin care, and cottage crafts. Bev Douglas was available to take phone enquiries and bookings from the public between 9am and noon.

SPRINGVALE COMMUNITY CENTRE



Bev Douglas in front of the Centre during extension works. Dandenong Journal, 5 February 1990.

In 1990, the Boys Gymnastics had to be cancelled after second term through lack of interest. Fortunately all other activities continued to be well-attended. Community groups regularly used the facilities. The Springvale Italian Citizens Club used it for 12 hours a week, and the Springvale Combined Pensioners were there every Thursday. The Karate School had a regular booking on Mondays, the Chinese Basketball Association were at the centre every Sunday, and the Springvale Badminton Club on Tuesdays. The Dandenong Taxation Office Badminton played on Thursdays and Neighbourhood Watch used the facilities once a month. Parents without Partners and other groups continued to rent rooms through the year. The centre has also been a popular venue for weddings, dinner dances, engagements, birthday parties, and ethnic religious events, totalling 40 nights during the financial year.

The Coordinator was delighted that the newly constructed playground and equipment allowed children to develop their coordination skills in a safe environment.

SPRINGVALE COMMUNITY CENTRE - MIGRANT ENGLISH CLASSES

The commencement of Migrant English classes at the centre in 1990/1991 had proved both time-consuming and rewarding. Ronnie Schapel, the Program Coordinator, was thrilled once the funding came through. However, one simple advertisement opened the flood gates with so many people desperately eager to improve their language skills. Further Council funding was obtained later in the same year to help ease the waiting list burden.



English class at Springvale Community Centre in the 1990s.

The Committee of Management in 1991/1992 consisted of Graham Don as President, Patricia Wade, Vice President and Ken Johns Secretary, ably supported by Lil Koch, Bev Douglas, Betty Groszmann, George Rees, Philip Reed and Alan Leithhead. The year had been particularly special for Graham Don, when his fellow committee members nominated him for the Springvale Citizen of the Year Award.



Graham Don and Cr Joan Beverly Sheen, the Mayor of the City of Springvale at the Australia Day Awards event. January 1992.

Helen Heintz reported that they now had funding to provide Occasional Childcare. It had been slow to be utilised, but she felt that word of mouth would build up regular users. The English classes were proving to be one of the most popular classes offered. Waiting lists were a testament to their importance in the community. New and old arrivals from many different cultural backgrounds used the lessons to improve their conversational and writing skills, learning the basics or to provide them with skills for re-entering the work force. The Return to Study program was providing assistance to students to take the first step toward further study. Several of them had been able to take up classes at Holmesglen and Dandenong TAFE. This program was made possible through funding from the Adult Community and Further Education Board.

At the Annual General Meeting in October 1993, Graham Don was saddened to announce the resignation of Mr Ken Johns, who had been involved with the Springvale Youth Club since 1948. During that time,

Ken had had held every position on the committee. Helen Heintz, the coordinator, said that the introduction of Computer and Bookkeeping classes were proving most popular. She hoped to offer these again in the following year, together with workshops on how to write Job Application letters and Resumes. She also noted the popularity of cake decorating classes, with some of these classes requiring waiting lists.

During the financial year 1993/1994 the Committee of Management consisted of Graham Don, President/Treasurer, George Rees, Vice President, Bev Douglas Secretary, Robyn de Sachau Assistant Secretary ably supported by Lil Koch, Amy Weaich, Joan and Laurie Rule. The centre could only function well with the support of parents and volunteers, and many of the committee gave time in some extra capacity each week. The success of the place was only through the skills and dedication of the coaches and instructors. Even the role of the cleaners was essential and these included Lyn Don and Bruce Simpson.

Many short courses and workshops were well-received by the community, such as floral art, decoupage, computer, microwave cooking, dried arrangements, ribbon rose and gentle exercise to music. Numbers had dropped in dance and the girls gymnastics, but the English for further study, and basic literacy and numeracy were both in demand.

SPRINGVALE COMMUNITY CENTRE



Neighbourhood House Week 1993. The banner is definitely in need of an upgrade. But with the girls from Springvale Community Centre performing – background does not matter.



Craft and floral arts classes at Springvale Community Centre.

By 1994/1995, all Community Centres were required to devise a Business Plan for the following three years. Helen Heintz, the Coordinator and Robyn de Sachau, Secretary took on this task. Helen and Robyn had to first research what was required, but after many meetings, hours of hard work and several sleepless nights, they had an outcome. This may have taken its toll on Helen who had taken sick leave lasting a few weeks. Robyn had filled in for her, which was much appreciated by Helen and everyone else at the centre.

SPRINGVALE COMMUNITY CENTRE - OPERATING WITH A DEFICIT

In the 1995/1996 Annual Report, it is evident from the list of names on the Management Committee that the multicultural nature of the Springvale community was well-reflected at the Springvale Community Centre. Graham Don was President/Treasurer, Phillip Reed Vice President, John Hamilton Secretary, Naim Melham Assistant Secretary; ably supported by Lil Koch, Bev Douglas, Leah Douglas, Tuyet Hamilton, Rebekah Fredrick, Morgan Lew, Henry Tiong, Wilfredo Zelado, Carlos Estrato, Giovanni Vacirca and Frank Ryan. However, the financial report indicated that for the first time ever they had a deficit. This was partly as a result of Helen's ill-health during much of the fourth term, with Robyn de Sachau, now Program Coordinator, stepping in. The payment of two Coordinator salaries put an added strain on the centre's finances.

By the following year, the financial report showed that the Springvale Community Centre was back in the black by way of money in the bank but in the red because of the centre's liabilities. The Saturday night private function hiring numbers were down

coupled with the purchase of a much-needed photocopier and a printer. Robyn de Sachau continued to place advertisements in the local papers and the Council community newsletter. Frustratingly, as it was free advertising, seen as a community service, the advertisements were not always published. However, Robyn was having better success in circulating their brochure over a wider area.

In the Annual Report for July 1997/June 1998, Graham Don was disappointed that his grant application to the City Improvement Program to make their office comply to Occupational Health Standards had been rejected. This was not the first time. On a different note, Springvale Community Centre was part of a cluster made up of Community Centres and Neighbourhood Houses in the City of Greater Dandenong municipality. Together they could share ideas and resources. The cluster had been fortunate to receive \$5000 through the 1997 Community Grants Program which enabled them to purchase display boards and put together a promotional package of all the centres to be used at open days and festivals.

1998 saw the end of the dance classes which had been a feature of the centre for many years. On the other hand the boys gymnastics was about to be restarted. Activities at the centre at this time included: cake decorating, fitness (gentle exercise to music), paper tole, glass painting, decoupage, ribbon embroidery and tassel making, folk art modern and traditional, yoga/meditation, gymnastic classes, line-dancing, playgroup, occasional childcare (funded by Human Services), English classes, Springvale Italian Elderly Citizens Club, Springvale Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of Victoria, health and fitness - badminton. Children's activities were confined to only girls gymnastics and jazz ballet. Many different groups used the centre on a regular basis.

Everything has its season, and while cake decorating used to be popular only six years before, now in 1999 cake decorating classes ceased through lack of interest. On the other hand teddy bear classes had been introduced. The folk art tutor had recently published her own folk art book and been invited to demonstrate overseas, so the Springvale Community Centre was certainly attracting a high calibre of instructor.



Open day display at the Centre. New promotional package was definitely needed.

SPRINGVALE COMMUNITY CENTRE



Some of the amazing things community could learn to make at the Centre.

Another new class in term four was based on learning how to make flavoured oils and vinegars. Floral art and folk art had been dropped, with a possibility of being restarted after a break. Yoga classes did not resume after the sad passing of Ivy, the tutor.

A big disappointment for the centre was the removal of their individual brochures from the Council Customer Service Centres. They had always been able to attract clients from these centres and now this avenue had been closed.

By the Annual General Meeting in 2000, the Springvale Community Centre had installed the MYOB accounting system on their computer, to make life easier for the Treasurer, especially with the introduction of the

“dreaded GST”. Groups now using the centre on a regular basis included: Springvale Elderly Citizens Club; Springvale Combined Pensioners & Superannuants Association; Wah Chin



Vovinam Martial Arts were regular participants at Moomba Parade in Melbourne. Photo taken in 2000.

Sports Club; Vovinam Martial Arts; Lin Yi Lion Association; Music Methods; Neighbourhood Watch; Nursing Mothers Association; and BOW Angling Club.

SPRINGVALE COMMUNITY CENTRE - DEMISE AND REBIRTH OF THE YOUTH ACTIVITIES

By 2001, the gymnastics classes were no longer offered. Sadly the remnant classes from the Springvale Youth Club days were fast disappearing. Gymnastics had been available for boys and girls throughout most of the youth club's many years of activity.

Positive thinking and meditation had proved to be winners with the community and the demand for the playgroup suggested that a second session be started. Armchair travel social get-togethers had commenced in February, with much interest from the senior members from the community, eager to share their travel experiences with others. A book discussion group was another new activity for 2002.

The MYOB system had not been configured correctly and Jenny Watson the Treasurer said that this was the reason for the inconsistencies in the financial report. She believed that the MYOB and GST software should be uninstalled and reloaded by someone who knew what they were doing!

In 2002, the Springvale Community Centre had developed its own Mission Statement:

To manage, maintain and develop the Community Centre for the benefit of the diverse multi cultural community of Springvale and the surrounding neighbourhoods.

The President Graham Don was pleased to report a profit of \$4831.25 had been made in the financial year 2001/2002. The City of Greater Dandenong had carried out an audit of all centres and Neighbourhood Houses and identified areas for improvement for the Springvale Community Centre to address. The Council was also encouraging ways that the centres could implement energy savings strategies. Over the previous 12 months, the Coordinator had worked 22 hours a week, while the Program Coordinator had worked 20 hours a week.

New classes proved to be a success. "Springy Walkers" had been well-received with participants enjoying group walks around the neighbourhood. The playgroup was now known as Multicultural Playgroup and was attracting new interest. This was now the only children's activity offered at the centre. The Springvale Community Centre had joined the Springvale Neighbourhood Literacy Cluster and they were part of a successful joint submission to run English as a second language. Another successful new class was stress management.

Unfortunately, numbers at the Combined Pensioners Association fell drastically to such an extent that they held their final meeting in June 2003. The City of Greater Dandenong ceased its funding so one of the Springvale Community Centre's regular groups ceased to exist.

A partnership came into place with Springvale Neighbourhood House, Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau and Springvale Secondary College. They successfully applied for a grant from council, which allowed

SPRINGVALE COMMUNITY CENTRE

them to organise a community market. Meanwhile, the Community Centre regularly celebrated Neighbourhood House Week and Adult Learners Week, the latter used to be a large event at the Springvale Town Hall with all Cluster members taking part.



BBQs were a popular feature during Neighbourhood House Week celebrations at the Centre. Graham Don and Helen Heintz at work.

The Centre Coordinator for the 25 years, Helen Heintz, had retired at the end of Term 1. Robyn de Sachau had taken over the position for 25 hours a week, with Brenda Trigg employed as Assistant Coordinator for 12 hours a week, plus a further 3 hours a week as project worker to implement the quality assurance. Helen had not left the centre entirely and from July 2003 would work 16 hours a month as bookkeeper.

At the end of the 2003 Annual General Meeting, Bev Douglas was presented with Life Membership as reward for some thirty years service that she had given to the Community Centre and the Youth Club before that.

Vietnamese ballroom dancing classes were held every Monday and Friday evening, attracting 70 or more dancers.

This was proving to be a very social activity. Refugees from Vietnam first came to the Enterprise Hostel in 1977 with many of them settling permanently in the Springvale area. The Springvale Community Centre had become a meeting place for them.

In the Annual Report for the centre covering the financial year 2003/2004, the Mission Statement had been updated:

Springvale Community Centre provides the community with a diverse range of activities to support and enhance the educational, health and leisure needs of the diverse multi cultural community of Springvale, in a safe and caring environment.

Their Vision encapsulated their focus and direction in a nutshell:

Springvale Community Centre Catering for the whole Community

Robyn De Sachau, the Centre Coordinator, was at last able to realise her dream to offer computer classes at the centre. This was made possible with funding to cover a total of 500 hours. Six computers were purchased plus new tables, as well as the donation of two computer desks and a classroom dedicated to computers and ESL (English as a Second Language).

A year later the Mission Statement and Vision were still evolving.

A beautifully maintained Community Centre led by a professional, enthusiastic and dedicated team of volunteers and staff to further strengthen our diverse community that will always proudly support its local Community Centre by active membership and volunteering.

Springvale Community Centre - Connecting Community

2005 marked the twenty-second year since the foundation of the Springvale Community Centre. Graham Don, the President believed that one of the most important of the achievements in that time had been the incredible strengthening of their partnerships with a range of community stakeholders in the City of Greater Dandenong. He was particularly proud of their close friendship with Springvale Neighbourhood House and the Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau.

Robyn de Sachau resigned as the Coordinator in December 2004. She was replaced in March 2005 by Elena Sheldon. Graciela Kuzu was taken on as administrator from November 2004.

Elena's first Coordinator's report highlighted 2004-2005 at a glance. In a typical week, 945 people walked through the door attending over 40 hours of activities.



Gentle Exercise to Music group with the instructor, De. 2005.

During the year, Sports and Exercise had taken up 546 hours a year, adult education 520 hours, recreation and well-being 512 hours and community activities 546 hours a year. Elena was already planning an increase in these hours for 2005-2006. Elena was most appreciative of the new Administrator Graciela, describing her as "her angel" making it possible to achieve their plans.

Elena brought a new approach to the role of the Coordinator's position. She analysed, she presented graphic images of what they were achieving, she challenged. She embraced the challenges and diversity faced by the



Sudanese Open Day in 2005. Star News, September 2005

Springvale Community Centre. How could the centre run a Sudanese youth program for over 30 people if the young people could not even afford the minimum fee? How could the centre sustain the school program for Hararian women and children? The Springvale RSL and the City of Greater Dandenong came to the party with funding for these programs.

SPRINGVALE COMMUNITY CENTRE



Fairfax Community Network



New wave

Girls from Dandenong's Sudanese community received training from Myer fashion experts last Thursday to prepare for their first fashion show. The girls got advice and tips about costume technique and fashion. The group hopes to stage its first public event with a show at Sandown at the conclusion of the Commonwealth Games in March. The group's organizer, Nur Fouad, said the girls had been working hard and had staged a public rehearsal on Australia Day at the Rabale Park Community Centre. (Picture: Lucy Oh People)

Unexpected interest and support came from Myer, when a team of Myer experts responsible for fashion shows visited the Centre and facilitated a full day training for the Sudanese girls on how to organise and run their own shows.

Students from Vietnam, Cambodia, China, Burma, Chile, Turkey and Afghanistan were attending the different English classes on offer at the Springvale Community Centre. As they progressed in speaking, listening, reading and writing, they were able to communicate with each other and their teacher, despite their varying cultural and language backgrounds. The centre was most certainly "Connecting the Community".

In his President's report at the Annual General Meeting in 2006, Graham Don paid tribute to Ken Johns who had passed away in May 2006. Ken's contribution to the Springvale Youth Club and later to the Springvale Community Centre had been significant.

By the Annual Report in 2007, the Mission Statement had once again been refined:

Springvale Community Centre Inc. aims to provide community connections and lifelong learning opportunities empowering the residents of the City of Greater Dandenong and surrounds to enhance their health, social and economic wellbeing.

Bev Douglas was declared a Community Hero by ourcommunity.com.au for the month of April.



Hero Award to Bev in April 2007.

A kitchen upgrade was made possible by a generous grant from the Department for Victorian Communities, with over 10 different groups able to benefit from this much-needed improvement. The cupboards no longer fell apart and a dishwasher made life so much easier when activities

involving food for more than 20 people were planned.



Cooking in an upgraded kitchen. Photo taken in 2007.

SPRINGVALE COMMUNITY CENTRE - WINNER OF AWARD

Springvale Community Centre was thrilled to be declared the Winner of the Adult Community Education Award 2007. They had been selected out of twenty finalists, representing Adult Community Education organisations from all over Victoria. This was in the category of Innovation in ACE Learning; with the centre nominating their project "Partners of Tomorrow". This project focused on working with Sudanese young people in Southern Metropolitan Melbourne to address the issues of language and cultural barriers, and develop pathways through community involvement and building the leadership capacity for the young Sudanese community.

The claim in 1983 had been that the renamed Springvale Community Centre would cater for all ages and gradually the centre lost its youth component by stealth.



'The Family' was HOPE's second performance launched at Springvale Community Centre AGM 2007 to a delighted audience of 40 people. The movie was to come out shortly.



Getting to know you

THE Help Our People Educate (HOPE) South Sudanese youth group has launched a theatre production aimed at helping the broader community better understand Sudanese culture.

The Family is the company's second performance and launched last Wednesday night to a delighted audience of 40 people at the Springvale Community Centre.

Lead actor Djenei Raz Chol said the Family worked both ways, allowing Sudanese people to also better understand Australian culture.

The Family analyses some of the conflicts that arise between the younger generation of south Sudanese refugees in Australia, their elders, and service providers that help them settle into life in Australia.

"The young people here, we don't have traditional culture, but neither are we Australian, so we're really not there alone, making our own culture," Djenei said.

All of the actors in the play are young people who came to the area as refugees from south Sudan.

"Our intention is coming to Australia is to build a new life, to make our community grow, to be an effective way and really show that we are a group that can contribute to Australian community," Djenei said.

Members of the South Sudanese youth group, Help Our People Educate (HOPE) after their show.

SPRINGVALE COMMUNITY CENTRE

Pro-active and innovative work of the Springvale Community Centre staff and volunteers supported by the City of Greater Dandenong and Springvale RSL brought the youth back!

By the end of 2007, there were over 200 refugee young people participating in basketball and dancing sessions at the Centre. The young volunteer leaders received invaluable support from the Community Centre staff.

HOPE Theatre group was formed at that time and used Springvale Community Centre as its base for weekly rehearsals.

The impact of the Enterprise Hostel in Springvale since the early 1970s had altered the face of the local community. Another significant change occurred in the early 2000s when a large number of African refugees settled in Springvale and Noble Park. It would not be long before a new change came again. The centre continually addressed the needs of the local people, just as the youth club had done many years before.

SPRINGVALE COMMUNITY CENTRE - CHANGES ITS NAME

2007 was the last year the centre would be known as the Springvale Community Centre. Another name change would signal the final evolution of a centre from a place for the community to play sport and have fun, to a centre meeting all needs of a diverse and multicultural community, preparing them for study, employment, leadership and engagement with each other.

By 2007, the Springvale Community Centre was often confused in the minds of the local community with the Community Health Service and Community Aid and Advice Bureau. Many enquiries in person or over the phone reflected this confusion.

Another name was definitely needed, preferably without the word "Community" in it. For some months, a suggestion list operated at the centre, playing around with words and ideas. After much debate, a special general meeting was held on Wednesday 21 November 2007 to decide the new name. Springvale Learning and Activities Centre was considered the best fit, describing who they were and what they did. The acronym SLAC was easy to say, with a bit of tongue in cheek, as this centre was far from slack in its operations!

The mural was created by a team of volunteers under the guidance of Jan Berrigan, a woman of outstanding talent and a member of the Committee of Management at that time.



The end of the Springvale Community Centre era and the start of Springvale Learning and Activities Centre was marked by creating and installing a mural depicting the history and all the various activities run at the Centre at different times.



SPRINGVALE COMMUNITY CENTRE - PEOPLE AND MEMORIES

Graham Don was much appreciated by Ronnie Schapel, Program Coordinator when she left in 1991.

Thanks also to Graham Don, who is an absolute rock. Pay packets are always detailed and on time and there is always funny little notes to read and to reply to. Behind this somewhat gruff exterior is someone who gives his time and energy freely, not only to this centre but to many other community organisations, resulting in the general community gaining from his resources, networks and talents at no cost.

Helen Heintz, Centre Coordinator, was described by Ronnie Schapel as someone who was always easygoing, quiet and thorough in her dealings with everyone.

Bev Douglas was often the first to put her hand up for any task, whether in the office, making refreshments, helping out with any of the classes and groups. Bev and Leah Douglas had been awarded Life Membership at the centre in 2003. Bev's willingness, honesty, diligence and hard-working nature was evidently much appreciated.



SPRINGVALE LEARNING AND ACTIVITIES CENTRE

This was a family affair, as Leah Douglas, her daughter was Secretary, and also an active volunteer at the centre.

Elena Sheldon was like a breath of fresh air, or should we say a whirlwind, when she took over the role of Coordinator in 2005. Graham described her as "nuisance sometimes" which only suggests a leader determined to get the best results for the centre.

Elena remembered a roller coaster experience working with young Sudanese refugees who showed so much energy and determination to achieve positive change for their community. She admired the young volunteers at the time, Kor Pouc, Jikany Deiwai, Bang Nguoth, Gatluak Deng Gai and many more inspiring young people who spent countless hours and have taken serious responsibilities creating engaging, fun and safe environment for refugee youth.

Elena also believed that it was possible to achieve all those great outcomes working from the Centre's strong ethical and cultural grounds so ably and passionately upheld by Graham Don, Bev and Leah Douglas and everyone who had served on the Committee of Management.

SPRINGVALE LEARNING AND ACTIVITIES CENTRE - REBRANDING THE NAME

In 2008, at the first Annual General Meeting of the Springvale Learning and Activities Centre (SLAC), Graham Don, President, believed the new name, ratified on 21 November 2007, reflected what the centre now did, echoed in its Vision, Mission Statement and Values. By changing the name, the local community could identify the differences between the various community services available in Springvale.

In 2007 the Centre received funding for "Community Leadership through Partnerships & Learning" project and the Committee was delighted to have an opportunity to use the services of the fantastic team of new staff: Mila Waise, Annie Le and Bang Nguoth.

The project addressed the issue of high unemployment among Sudanese young people, aged 14-25, caused by cultural misunderstandings, low confidence levels and inability to adapt to Australian workplace culture. The aim was to empower community leaders with increased knowledge and understanding of a variety of training, education and career pathways opportunities available locally. Additionally, newly established community groups using the Centre were provided with leadership and skills development opportunities. The successful delivery of the project was due to the active involvement of community leaders in the project and the support of our partner organisations: TaskForce, City of Greater Dandenong-Social Development, FGSSA, Apex Institute, Victoria Police and SEAAC.

This project delivered great outcomes for the young people involved and for the local community and helped identify further needs and scope of work required. It was followed by another successful project, "Interpretation Matters" funded by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship in 2009.



Bang Nguoth, active project participant with Christine Nixon, Victorian Chief Police Commissioner. October 2009.



Mila Waise with project participants at Harmony Day BBQ. March 2009

The "Interpretation Matters" project aimed to strengthen the relationship between Sudanese youth and Victoria Police by facilitating various activities: police tours, community education, sports and recreation, round table discussions, training and self-development, and youth events. "Interpretation Matters" DVD was produced with the help of HOPE Theatre group and Diana Nguyen, well-known local community worker and professional actress.

The Springvale Learning and Activities Centre - Vision 2010 had established a strategic plan 2007-2010 that would take SLAC forward. The Manager Elena Sheldon believed she was very lucky to have such a framework, giving a clear vision and directions for all the staff at the centre. The Progress Report for 2007-2008 highlighted a 19.5% increase in membership, succession planning for the committee, consultations with the Council and other community organisations, increase in program hours from 1400 to 2000 over the previous year, and the rise of foot traffic from 1,000 a week in 2007 to 1,700 in 2008.

New programs had been added to interest a wider section of the community: Computers for Beginners and Computers for Community Groups; Financial Management and Introduction to MYOB (for treasurers); Eritrean Social Support Program; Puppetry workshops, New Friendships - New Skills and more.



Nandina Morris and Jan Berrigan planned and delivered Puppetry Workshops in 2008. Dandenong Journal, 2008.

The Committee of Management for 2008-2009 consisted of Graham Don, President; Adel Dafla, Treasurer; Beverley Douglas, Vice-President; and Leah Douglas, Secretary. They were ably supported by the committee members: Jikany Deiwal, Annie Le, Jan Berrigan, Nandina Morris (resigned March 2009), Chunhua Yang, Yaxun Sun and Chris Berrigan from April 2009.

The staff members at that time were: Elena Sheldon, Manager; Graciela Kuzu, Community Development Worker/Trainer; Mila Waise, Community Projects Worker/Trainer; Larysa Podvysotski, Bookkeeper; Subha Siriam, Computer Tutor; Denise Rundle, Health Promotion Worker; Kor Pouc, Community Projects Worker; and Lyn Don, Volunteer Cleaner.

SLAC was proud to become a finalist as an "Outstanding ACE Organisation" in the Adult Community Education Awards for 2008.



Jo Storm, Elena Sheldon, Leah Douglas and Roz Blades at the awards ceremony and recognition event in Melbourne. Cr Roz Blades has been a great supporter of the Centre for many years. Jo Storm, the Manager of Jan Wilson Community Centre at the time nominated SLAC for the Award. August 2008.

SLAC - REGISTERED TRAINING ORGANISATION

The residents of Springvale, Noble Park and Clayton lacked choice if they wished to enrol in vocational training programs. A skills audit was carried out on the SLAC workers, committee members and volunteers to assess their capacity to get involved with delivering such training. As a result, SLAC became a Registered Training Organisation (RTO).

The playgroup gradually increased in numbers, making it a noisy and happy place. Graciela had to start a waiting list again. Computer classes never ceased to be popular, with students learning the basic concepts of searching the Internet, sending emails, creating simple documents, setting up spreadsheets, downloading pictures as attachments to send to family and friends.

In the Manager's 2010 report, Elena Sheldon paid tribute to Denise Rundle, who had recently lost her battle with cancer. Denise had run the popular line dancing classes at the centre since the 1990s. Elena said that Denise was never just a dancing instructor, she was a friend to every member of the group and all others at SLAC.



Denise Rundle with her group of dedicated line-dancers at the Adult Learners Week Celebration event.

Vision 2010 had now been completed, and Vision 2015 - Strategic Plan 2011-2015 was about to be launched.

Graciela reported that many of the children and parents of the playgroup had only English as a second language, resulting in their limited participation in the community. The playgroup gave them the opportunity to improve their skills, and gain confidence. This had the unexpected result of one of them completing the Citizenship course to become an Australian citizen, and another learning to drive.

By 2011, the new Strategic Plan 2011-2015 revealed an updated Mission Statement:

SLAC aims to advance learning and skills development opportunities and create community connections to enable participants to reach their full potential for work, education and life.

The Vision had remained the same for the last 10 years:

Springvale Learning and Activities Centre - Connecting Community

Elena Sheldon said in her 2011 Manager's Report that SLAC had continued to deliver its nationally recognised and pre-accredited courses to the community. The learners' feedback had indicated an enjoyment of the quality of training that they have received and that the friendly atmosphere and individualised support was highly valued. On the technical side, she was pleased that they now had the Microsoft SharePoint portal to manage the RTO Delivery, compliance and continuance improvement. The new system would allow them to reduce paperwork, and be able to focus on the quality of training and assessment for students. Outreach programs could now be developed and trainers would also be able to work off site.

SPRINGVALE LEARNING AND ACTIVITIES CENTRE



Hyleen David took a leadership role and resumed line dancing classes at SLAC in 2013. Hyleen and the line dancing participants have since been active in making Australia's Biggest Morning Tea annual events at SLAC great success.

In May 2011, SLAC held The Australia's Biggest Morning Tea event in memory of their much-loved and sadly missed line-dancing tutor, Denise Rundle. They raised \$500. This has since become an annual event at the centre.

The Committee of Management for 2011-2012 consisted of Graham Don, President; Ken Branch, Treasurer; Beverley Douglas, Vice-President; Leah Douglas Secretary; ably supported by Minthura Wynn; Kevin Tram; Phuong Huynh; Divya Mohan; Joseph Hooks and David Hawkins.

The staff consisted of Elena Sheldon, Manager; Mariela Sonn, Administrative Officer, Mila Waise, Trainer/Community Development; Larysa Podvysotsky, Bookkeeper; Subha Siriam, ESL and Computer Tutor; Christine Bugbee, Business/MYOB Trainer; Jenifer Poudret, Business Trainer; Jikany Deiwal, IT Trainer; Fiona Callaghan, IT Trainer; Pavel Lu, IT Support; and Ansera Ficak, Cleaning.

Graham Don, SLAC President, said in his 2012 report that in April they had begun another exciting project,

Compliance Made Easy Project (CMEP). The project harnessed the benefits of the SLAC MS SharePoint system introducing this software to community centres and neighbourhood houses across Melbourne.

SLAC - NOT A GROUP OF ONE

In Elena Sheldon's Manager's report, she was delighted that the auditor had given SLAC so much praise. The auditor believed that SLAC was in an elite group of one! He was most impressed by the MS SharePoint Compliance Made Easy, where technology changed the culture. The auditing was to ensure that SLAC had complied with all their obligations since they had become an RTO. Elena concluded that it was not a lot of fun being in a group of one, and set out to work with the community of like-minded organisations, sharing experiences and learning.

Community badminton was flourishing, continuing with twice a week sessions. Youth basketball program started in 2006-2007 transformed to an independent association, now known as New Stars and having over 200 teenagers participating weekly. Unfortunately the playgroup sessions had ceased since late 2011. Playgroups organised by local primary schools in the area have had more appeal.

Elena had been made fully aware, after frequent networking with colleagues from other organisations, how fortunate SLAC was to have such a great Committee of Management.

At the 2013 Annual General Meeting, Graham Don was blown away when he learnt that he was to be awarded the Order of Australia medal in June. This was particularly poignant after he had been awarded the City of Greater

Dandenong Australia Day Award earlier in the same year. He saw these awards as not his alone, but also belonging to all his fellow committee members.



Graham received Greater Dandenong Australia Day award from the Mayor, Cr. Angela Long.

SLAC worked with the community to establish an excellent quality Wi-Fi Internet island on the premises: three training rooms, community hall and community kitchen. Also achieved in 2013 was a modernised computer lab with high capacity hard drives and additional 10 laptops that could be used in different rooms of the building. Over 300 young people could access computers as well as their own mobile devices connected to the Internet.

Two Wi-Fi presentation units were installed: overhead projector and motorised screen; and 65" plasma monitor on a mobile cart. Both presentation units can connect through Wi-Fi with SLAC laptops and broadcast digital television.

SPRINGVALE LEARNING AND ACTIVITIES CENTRE



SLAC's large TV is much loved and gets used a lot. Great community asset indeed.

Mila Waise left SLAC team of staff at the end of 2012 to embark on a new career with the Department of Human Services, only to come back to SLAC as a Committee member in 2013.

SLAC team was very fortunate to employ Nabila Marzouk as Community Development Worker in the same year.

In 2014, Elena Sheldon had almost completed her 10th anniversary as Manager at SLAC. She described her role at SLAC as the best job she has ever had. In her wildest dreams she would never have imagined that she

would be in one position for so long. SLAC counted itself very lucky to have Elena continually at the helm. Her love of challenges and new ideas, meeting new people and having fun, had been inspirational.

She had been responsible for managing the ABS PLUS Governance Project that was successfully completed in March 2014 and was nominated for the Learn Local Award in the category of Innovation in Digital Literacy. The Learn Local program had been extended as far as Berwick.

SLAC - SURVEY OF ITS PARTICIPANTS

Mariela Sonn started working at SLAC as the Administrative Officer in 2011.

In 2014 she was responsible for the participation survey at SLAC and reported on the results. Not surprisingly, most participants lived in Springvale, followed by Noble Park, South Clayton and then Springvale South. Being located near the Springvale Railway Station, many would travel by public transport to attend classes. Nearly 54% of the participants were female, 23% under 20 years of age were involved in various sporting and community groups, nearly 40% were between 30 and 65, and 29% were older than 65. The remaining 8% were either between 20 to 29 years or under 10 years. 70% ticked that English was not the main language spoken at home.

The removal of the Springvale level crossing had an impact on the centre, where their car park was closed for weeks on occasion. Fortunately they were given enough warning to make other arrangements. On the bright side, the Springvale Crossing Removal workers donated very comfortable chairs for their Computer Lab, and a whiteboard for their classrooms.

Nabila Marzouk, Trainer/Community Development worker became involved with a new partnership with three local community organisations, namely Girl Guides Victoria, Springvale Indo-Chinese Mutual Association and Springvale Neighbourhood House. The project: Guiding Leadership Opportunities for Women (GLOW) allowed participants to learn new skills and practice them in the workplace.

SLAC and Dandenong Cultural Fashion Retailer, Madina Fashion, joined forces to celebrate women, beauty and fashion during Refugee Week 2014. Sheila, the shop owner, demonstrated special techniques to create modern and unique looks using scarves. This was in attempt to encourage women to see how a hijab could make a fashion statement, and break down barriers and prejudices.



Mariela Sonn and Elena Sheldon receiving new chairs and the whiteboard from Springvale Railway Construction workers.

SPRINGVALE LEARNING AND ACTIVITIES CENTRE



Celebrating women, beauty and fashion to mark Refugee Week 2014.

SLAC- CHANGE OF THE GUARD

The 2014 Annual General Meeting signalled a change of the guard for the Committee of Management. Leah Douglas, who had been involved with youth club activities as a child, served as a committee member for many years and then became Secretary in 1997, accepted the position as President for the financial year 2014-2015. Bev Douglas remained in her position as Vice-President, as did Ken Branch as Treasurer, while Mila Waise took on the role as Secretary. The rest of the Committee consisted of Kevin Tram, Samar Mougharbel, David Hawkins, Aamir Iqbal, Kelel Shenur and Kim Heng Tao.

Accolades flowed for another dedicated SLAC volunteer on 26 January 2015, when Beverley Douglas was made City of Greater Dandenong Citizen of the Year. Bev had volunteered in the community for 30 years. What an excellent way to advertise SLAC to the community, particularly for its 70th anniversary!



SLAC team of staff and committee would implement diverse and innovative community projects every year.

The highlight of 2015 was 'Dandenong Community Stories' project. The idea came from the group of Diploma of

Community Development students who prepared a grant application for the idea for assessment purposes. The idea was welcome by everyone and Nabila Marzouk managed the project working with the student and volunteers all the way to the launch of 'Dandenong Community Stories' DVD and Booklet in August 2015.



SLAC Students and Wahines Group members at a special Afternoon Tea event at Windsor Hotel. Great way to share the stories and make friendships.

Over the 70 years, regardless of two change of names and focus, the centre has always strived to meet the needs of the local community, providing activities and skills to enable the participants to meet their full potential and give them a sense of belonging. The target audience had changed but not the purpose.

SLAC - PEOPLE AND MEMORIES

Graham Don served on the committee in varying positions for 36 years. His two children participated in a range of activities at the youth club, his son participated in gymnastics and his daughter served as a Treasurer for a short time.

Lyn Don had been a volunteer cleaner at the Centre for nearly 20 years! As the Centre matured, she was offered payment for her work but never accepted more than a token honorarium. Lyn would come to the Centre at 6am every day of the week to do her cleaning duties, always with the cheerful smile and happy.



A plaque to keep memories and show the community appreciation was only a token gift in return for Lyn's generous service. Being such a noble and humble person, Lyn would not accept anything more than that.

SPRINGVALE LEARNING AND ACTIVITIES CENTRE

Graham guided the club/centre through its three phases and spent many hours assisting where he could. He became Citizen of the Year with the City of Springvale and later with the City of Greater Dandenong and was also awarded an Order of Australia. He completed his time at SLAC as President in 2014.

Beverley Douglas was presented with the City of Greater Dandenong Citizen of The Year award in 2015. Her commitment to the centre started with the youth club and continued on. Her daughter Leah Douglas is also totally involved with the centre and became President in 2014, after many years on the committee and as secretary.

David Hawkins served on the Committee of Management from 2010. He was impressed with the work ethics of the manager and staff, and how they gave a feeling of care and responsibility in their dealings with the community. His three words to describe SLAC were "vibrant, prestigious and acclaimed".

Jenifer Poudret first came to SLAC in 2007 as a student on placement and was offered 200 hours with administrative duties. A request on the noticeboard for ideas for a new name caught her eye. She enjoyed the challenge and felt proud to be involved at this important time. Once qualified, she dropped into SLAC for a quick courtesy visit and was offered more work. Jenifer also assisted with the research for the SLAC history and soon became engrossed.

Mila Waise was committee member between 2006-2008, and then Community Development worker until 2012. She has been on the Committee since 2013, and became Secretary in 2014. Mila believes that migrant and

refugee families were looking for a place where they could belong in the local community, while preserving a sense of self. She has seen the centre become an important part of many people's lives often without them noticing it. It has become a learning hub, a place where people could learn new skills, a social refuge and a community gathering place. Her three words to describe her experience at SLAC so far are "challenging, diverse and rewarding".

Nabila Marzouk settled in Springvale when arrived to Australia in 2011. Springvale Learning and Activities Centre was one of the first community organisations she approached in the area. She remembers walking in looking for activities and being offered much more. The Community Development Worker back then was Mila Waise. She took time to introduce Nabila to the suburb and the Centre. Nabila was able to gain a part time casual job soon after this initial encounter. Working for the neighbouring organisation, Nabila had many opportunities to work together with SLAC. She enjoyed the simplicity and speed while working with SLAC team. The processes were simple, communication was effective and the jobs got done. Nabila was very happy to join SLAC team in the position of Community Development Worker in 2013. Her three words to describe her experience at SLAC are "friendly, effective and flexible".

Trang Chau joined SLAC as a student in 2012, was a very active volunteer for 'Dandenong Community Stories' project and was offered a part-time job of Community Engagement Worker in August 2015. Trang enjoys working at SLAC because she sees it as a truly learning organisation providing

opportunities to its people to develop new skills all the time.

Her three words to describe her experience at SLAC are “encouraging, challenging and supportive”.

Elena Sheldon, SLAC Manager of 11 years believes that the building alone cannot become community asset without the people who work and volunteer here - always having smiles on their faces, always welcoming everyone, never making judgements of anyone

and just communicating happiness to the community. No matter how difficult the circumstances of a person can be, if they get involved with SLAC they will always have good time, get support and make friends; and eventually will build up the strength to change their lives for the better.

Her three words to describe her experience at SLAC are “busy, diverse, and fun”.



SLAC Team 2015 - taking the Centre into the future.

SLAC team of committee and staff all agree that it is the 70 years' worth of love and memories that creates this unique friendly atmosphere and positive energy at SLAC.

SPRINGVALE LEARNING AND ACTIVITIES CENTRE



Leah Douglas
President

Leah Douglas is a true leader of SLAC governance team. Leah has served on SLAC Committee for many years, she was the Secretary since 1997 until 2014 when Leah was elected President. With tertiary qualifications in Education and Finance and years of experience in business executive roles in the insurance sector, Leah makes invaluable contribution to SLAC work.



Bev Douglas
Vice-president

For the largest part of the past 35 years, Bev looked after the people inside and outside of SLAC. As a true leader she would always have a wise and friendly solution for any problem, and make SLAC experience unique and enjoyable for everyone. Bev Douglas was awarded Citizen of the Year 2015 Greater Dandenong Australia Day Award.



Ken Branch
Treasurer

Ken joined SLAC Committee in 2010. He brings in business acumen, energy and sharpness to our work. His sense of humour and genuine concern for other people are admirable. Ken has been an active member of the Springvale Rotary Club.



Mila Waise
Secretary

Mila holds Bachelor Degree in International Studies and Master in Public Policy and Management; she is also a qualified Trainer and Assessor.

Mila has strong professional background working in community development roles over the past 10 years. With her sharp academic acumen and outstanding community engagement skills, Mila makes a lot of positive difference in SLAC work and the lives of SLAC students.



Kevin Tram

Kevin is an active member of Melbourne Asian Basketball Associations and regularly organises special fundraising events for charitable purposes. With his strong community ties and professional background in Finance and Banking, Kevin plays a vital role in SLAC work.



Nooroa Andrew

Nooroa is our new committee member elected to the position at the AGM on 14 October 2015.

Nooroa is studying towards Diploma of Community Development and brings in valuable learner insights to our work. Nooroa is very experienced and highly sought after community volunteer.



David Hawkins

David holds tertiary qualifications in Business Studies. He has had over 35 years of experience working in managerial roles for State and Local government. David has been involved with the local community for many years and is making a substantial contribution to the Centre with his vigour and experience. David was awarded The Caroline Chisholm Award in 2014 and we commend David for many years of volunteering for the community.



Samar Mougharbel

Samar joined our Committee in 2013. She holds tertiary qualifications in business management and has over 10 years' experience working in community development and coordination roles. Some of her honorary roles over the past fifteen years included Commissioner at Victorian Multicultural Commission, Committee member at Police and

Community Multicultural Advisory Committee, Treasurer at Ethnic Communities Council of the South East.

Samar is committed to cultural integration while maintaining identity and lifelong learning.



Kim Heng Tao

Kim joined SLAC Committee of Management in 2014. Kim first got involved with SLAC as a student in a course of Community Services Work in 2012. Since then he completed Diploma of Community Development and Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.

Kim is involved with a range of other community groups and organisations in the area and makes valuable contribution to SLAC and the community.



Aamir Iqbal

Aamir joined SLAC Committee of Management in 2014. Aamir has a wealth

of experience working in Public Sector Engineering Enterprises from junior to middle management level overseas. He has worked in Customer Service, Security in Australia and is currently employed in Law Enforcement area. Aamir has been involved in a range of charitable NGOs in Australia and overseas.

Aamir holds overseas qualifications in Engineering and Management and is committed to continuous learning and improvement.



Elena Sheldon
Manager

Elena has worked in the non-profit sector for nearly fifteen years and has been a Manager of SLAC since 2005. She holds tertiary qualifications in Education, Linguistics and Business Management. Elena is a NAATI accredited interpreter and a qualified Trainer and Assessor.

Elena's energy, inspiration and positive attitude lead SLAC, its students and the community to prosperity, stability and success.

SPRINGVALE LEARNING AND ACTIVITIES CENTRE



Nabila Marzouk
*Community Development
Coordinator /Trainer*

Nabila holds a Bachelor Degree in International Relations and Associate Degree in English Language and Literature. Nabila has wealth of experience working in business and non-profit sectors in Australia and overseas. Her energy, professionalism and positive attitude empower SLAC students to achieve positive change in their lives.

Nabila is also a qualified Trainer and Assessor.



Trang Chau
*Community Engagement
Officer*

Trang joined SLAC team in the middle of 2014, worked on the Guiding Leadership Opportunities for Women project in 2015. Trang holds Diploma of Community Development and makes invaluable contribution to SLAC community development and learning programs.



Mariela Sonn
Administrative Officer

Mariela holds qualifications in Business and Financial Services.

Mariela is looking after SLAC students and groups, coordinates the use of facilities and maintains important databases. Mariela is the first point of contact for SLAC and always demonstrates patience and empathy to all people.



Jikany Deival
*Information Technology
Trainer*

Jikany has delivered training in Information Technology at SLAC since 2009. Jikany holds tertiary qualifications in Information Technology and is a qualified Trainer and Assessor. He has a unique combination of IT expertise and professional skills in community engagement. Jikany is a very popular trainer at SLAC and is respected by all students regardless of age, gender and cultural background.



Jenifer Poudret
*Business Administration
and Community Services*

SLAC team and students are very fortunate to have Jenifer on board. Jenifer holds qualifications in community services and business accounting; she is a qualified Trainer and Assessor. Jenifer generously shares her knowledge acquired over many years of professional experience in the community sector. Students who complete Jenifer's classes always give great feedback and feel more confident in their work and social life.



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