
APRIL 2021
For immediate release

Intergenerational program provides ageless connection

An intergenerational program aiming to create meaningful relationships and real experiences for aged care residents has been trialled.

The pilot of 'Child Care in Aged Care', a first of its kind in South Australia, took place at ACH Group's Milpara residential care home from March to April, and brought residents, children at a child care centre, and university Occupational Therapy students together virtually.

The program supported by Office for Ageing Well, SA Health forms part of *South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025*, and is inspired by the popular ABC TV show 'Old People's Home for 4 Year Olds'.

ACH Group CEO Frank Weits said the five-week pilot program was very successful with the creation of new, meaningful relationships one of the many benefits experienced by residents.

"The relationships and social connections created through chatting, singing and participating in activities with the children can be beneficial to residents' social and emotional wellbeing," he said.

"There was also the opportunity for residents to pass on their knowledge and revisit past hobbies by taking part in activities within the program, which included potting plants and cake decoration.

"On many occasions after the session ended residents were already planning what they could share with the children next time."

Milpara resident Bessie Dickins said she really enjoyed the sessions.

"It gives us a chance to understand how children are growing up, which is so different to the way we grew up and it's really, really interesting to see how things are evolving," she said.

"My favourite part is being involved with the children. I've also enjoyed the art activities because I am really interested in art. I have dabbled in art for many years, and it gives me purpose.

"I would like to see more programs like this, I think it helps us to relax a little bit and remember what we used to be able to do – we can tend to forget sometimes."

While inspired by the popular ABC TV show, the program is a first in South Australia as it was co-designed, held virtually and based on contemporary best-practices around intergenerational connections.

Occupational Therapy students from UniSA co-designed the weekly sessions, with input sought from Milpara's staff and residents, and staff and children from the TafeSA City West Child Care Centre on what they would like to do in the sessions.

Each session was then purposely planned and structured by the university students with children and residents engaging in virtual activities including sharing stories, singing, and playing games. Every week there was a different theme such as the garden, cooking, drama, and sport.

Findings from the trial will contribute to the current body of knowledge on how aged care providers and other organisations can promote meaningful intergenerational connections, and how these can bring important benefits to people of all ages.

The trial is made possible thanks to a strong partnership between ACH Group, the Office for Ageing Well, SA Health, TAFE SA's City West Child Care Centre, and the University of South Australia.

It was initially planned to run in face-to-face sessions, however due to COVID-19 the trial is taking place virtually.

About ACH Group

ACH Group is a not-for-profit aged care organisation that has been offering services to support good lives for older people in South Australia since 1952.

As well as accommodation options across Adelaide, the Fleurieu Peninsula and East Melbourne, the group offers a range of health, wellbeing, respite, and support services, help at home and social activities.

Our 1700 specialist staff and hundreds of volunteers share the belief that older people should be valued and respected, connected to their communities and in control of their lives.

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