

# What it takes to be a good mum

STORY: ASHLEY PORTER

It's Mother's Day on Sunday, May 8, and we spoke to six ladies about 'what makes a good mum'. They should have a good idea having shared more than 400 years of motherhood, emerged from challenges and being immensely proud of the 23 children, 48 grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren between them.

Introducing Ann Leigh, Rosalie Jennings and Margaret Drummond from Resthaven Port Elliot, and Dorothy Wheatland, Rae Thompson and Yvonne Davies from ACH West Park, Goolwa.

They believe more than anything that love and understanding is important, and as much as we make a fuss of Mother's Day and they appreciate why it is special, to them it is 'just another day'.

There isn't a day they don't think about their family, and taking in the difficulty for their children visiting on the day because of COVID precautions they prefer a weekly or even an occasional phone call than a Mother's Day card or gift.

"A mother's day is every day," they say. They each feel privileged to be a mum, and share compassion for those who have wanted to be a mum but couldn't, or have out-lived a child.

Like every other special day for some it also brings sad moments of reflection, including Rae, whose two adopted Aboriginal children, a boy and a girl, died aged 50.



Pictured (from left) Dorothy Wheatland, Rae Thompson and Yvonne Davies at the ACH West Park residential care home, Goolwa.



There was consensus that being a mother comes naturally, and while something may not seem 'the right way' to others it has always been about trying to be the best mum they can.

Most of all, our ladies – the youngest is 88 and the oldest 94 – share the growing belief that Mother's Day has long been far too commercialised. As Dorothy said: "You always think of your mother on Mother's Day, what she has done for you. It's about that, not the presents."

In fact, Anna Maria Jarvis (1864-1948), who founded Mother's Day in the United States as a means of honouring her mother, Ann Reeves Jarvis (1832-1905), an activist and humanitarian during the American Civil War (1861-1865), became so disenchanted with the growing commercialisation of the observation that she asked U.S. Congress to have Mother's Day rescinded.

Mother's Day was first celebrated in the Andrews Methodist Church in Grafton, West Virginia, USA in 1909, three years after Ann Reeves Jarvis died, and when her daughter handed out hundreds of white

carnations, her mother's favourite flower, to the mothers who attended the now annual commemoration became commercialised.

It seems no coincidence that Hallmark Cards was founded in the US a year later. Mother's Day became a West Virginia state holiday, and in 1914 it was designated a national holiday by President Woodrow Wilson.

Anna Maria's negative opinion of these commercial forces was evident in her contemporary commentary: "A printed card means nothing except that you are too lazy to write to the woman who has done more for you than anyone in the world."

Australia is among 95 countries that commemorates Mother's Day on the second Sunday in May because it was the closest Sunday to the passing of Ann Reeves Jarvis.

What started here in 1910 with honouring our mums with special church services turned into a tradition of giving gifts in 1924 when Sydney woman Janet Heyden was inspired to collect charitable gifts for lonely, old mothers in Newington Hospital who had lost husbands and sons during WW1.

As Anna Maria put it, Mother's Day is 'a day to honour the best mother who ever lived, yours'. And honouring a mum-like figure in your life is also a wonderful thing.

As our dear six ladies suggested, 'just start with love and care and it's amazing how the rest follows'.

And what do they believe makes a good mum?...

Continued P8

# People



Pictured (from left) Ann Leigh, Rosalie Jennings, Margaret Drummond.

From P7

**Ann Leigh, 88. Mother of five, five grandchildren, five great-grandchildren:**

“

It's so beautiful to be a mother. Being a mum comes naturally.

We all make mistakes and you have to allow your children to learn by theirs... I think they get the basics when they are brought up. If you teach them when they are little they know.

I like to think I have taught them honesty and to love other people. You reap what you sew.

As mothers we are all different. I was the fourth of 13 children. My father was an alcoholic so it was tough for mum. She had

a bad heart from rheumatic fever when she was young, so my sister Molly and I were mothers to the children. We loved them all.

You hear of a brother and a sister not getting on, but we all loved each other.

I think poverty is a good teacher. We lived in the pawn shop... I'd take an old pram full of things into the shop on a Monday and on the Friday she had to redeem it so she would take my father's pants and shoes.”

**Rosalie Jennings, 92. Mother of three, five grandchildren, one great-grand child:**

“

Patience is the main thing. You have to try to explain yourself about what is required. No kids would be kids if they

didn't break out everything now and again, but on the whole it is your way of life too; the way you live.

They do things as bit differently to what we would have done, but everything seems to work out all right. When they are kids you've got to teach them the rules a bit.

I like to think I have brought the children up with good moral. I thought education was very important too, making sure they were getting into something whether they be home on a property or doing something else; whatever. It was important to give them, not guidance, but ideas about what could be happening.

I think Mother's Day is all commercialised. It is much nicer to get a telephone call once a week or whenever.”

**SAVE YOUR WATER!**

**TRADITIONAL & ECO TANKS - GALVANIZED & AQUAPLANE STEEL  
RAINWATER TANKS & RAISED VEGGIE BEDS  
WE CLEAN, LINE, REPAIR AND RE-ROOF TANKS**

**8556 8544**

38 Sandmine Road, Mount Compass  
info@compasstanks.com.au  
www.compasstanks.com.au

**Compass Tanks**



**A good mum:** has bad days & great days & normal days & overwhelming days & perfect days & trying days & supermum days & just being a mum days & a whole lot of love & real & crazy motherhood days. [findingjoy.net](http://findingjoy.net)

Margaret Drummond,  
94. Mother of two, four grandchildren, three great-grandchildren.

“

I have got no idea what it takes to be a good mum... if we taught them what our mothers taught them you are going back a generation and we would be taught by our grandmother all the time. I don't remember much what my mother taught me at all apart from not to come home dirty.

We read *Dr Spock* and how not to favour your children too much. I lived isolated on a farm at Wirrega, a tiny place between Keith and Bordertown so my daughter was my little friend.

I always told my children they could tell me any story they liked, but at the end of the day when they looked into the mirror they had to be honest to that person they saw – that's the one they had to be honest to.

The Anglican church has Mothering Sunday in lent... we were told that Mother's Day was every day; there is no special day for it.

My mother and I wrote to each other every week for 28 years, and I knew her better than my sisters who lived down the street. My mother would fall asleep writing and there would be a scribbled line across the paper at the end. That told me more than six words ever could.”

Dorothy Wheatland, 94.  
Mother of three; four grandchildren.

“

My son died, aged 35, and I think about him almost every, not just Mother's Day. My dad left us and my mother had all the responsibility at a young age. She was so good; she worked and looked after us girls. The thing that she taught me most was caring for other people. Kindness is so important as a mother... caring for others. My husband also died young (aged 38).

It was a challenge as a mother, of course, but I have always loved every moment My children and their families live in Tasmania and Victoria, and they are all happy. As a mother that's all you can ask for.”

Rae Thompson, 90, mother of four including two adopted, four grandchildren, four great grandchildren.

“

Love makes a good mother. Being Christians, that is what love is all about. We all make mistakes, and a small part of being a mother is helping your children learn from them. Being there always, particularly when they need some extra help or love. Helping them to make good decisions.

My husband and I decided that we had enough love for others so we adopted two Aboriginal children. We were fortunate to have enough financial backing to be able to give them a good education and a good start in life.”

Yvonne Davies, 93. Mother of six, 16 grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren.

“

Love is the greatest part of being a mother, and having fun with them is also so important. Encouraging and being there for them also helps.

We were on a farm at Woodside and it was a good environment; doing things like climbing trees was good for them.

I think being a mum comes naturally. You're there to help them through life; being there when they are sick or need help.

My mother did the best she could for us children, and I like to think I have done the best for mine.

My husband and I had six children, and we lost one when he was 32. They have all been loved, and they have been there for us. If we had a problem we could talk to them also, and I think that is special.” 🌈

# FLEURIEU LANDSCAPE GARDEN SUPPLIES

See Darren & Sue



- \* Sand & Metal \* Bark & Mulch
- \* Pebbles \* Loams \* Gravel
- \* Compost \* Artificial turf
- \* Retaining blocks
- \* Sleepers \* Premix & Cement



**FLEURIEU STONE  
PAVERS**

FACTORY DIRECT PAVERS  
Large format / Concrete paving slabs  
EXTENSIVE RANGE OF  
SIZES & COLOURS



**30-32 MAUDE ST,  
VICTOR HARBOR  
8552 7366**

Mon-Fri 8.30am-4.30pm; Sat 8.30am-3pm. Closed Sun & public hols

e: [fleurieulandscape@bigpond.com](mailto:fleurieulandscape@bigpond.com)

[fleurieulandscape.com.au](http://fleurieulandscape.com.au)

FREE loan trailers &  
prompt deliveries!