

WHEN BRIDGING THE AGE DIVIDE IS CHILD'S PLAY

The young have joined the young-at-heart at Mercy Place Warrnambool, with students aged three to four from the Good Start Kinder Preschool visiting the local aged care home once a month as part of an intergenerational program.

In a program designed to benefit participants young and old, the students sing songs, play games and share activities with residents at the home's memory support unit.

Mercy Place Warrnambool Service Manager Helen Farnsworth said intergenerational activities promote respect, acceptance and social inclusion, and give residents the opportunity to connect with younger members of the community.

"Our residents love this program; it brings them great pleasure. They have many great stories and life experiences to share, and the joy of sharing with children inspires a new level of engagement that carries over to their daily activities," Mrs Farnsworth said.

"There's plenty of big smiles from both the children and the residents when the activities begin. Despite a significant age gap of often more than 90 years, our residents have formed great bonds and friendships with their younger counterparts. The experience is part of a strong intergenerational ethos we aim to foster within the home, connecting residents to a younger generation often of similar age to their grandchildren."

The intergenerational program, which has been underway since June 2017, also has a positive effect on the children, providing them opportunities to engage with and perform for a generation with whom they may otherwise have limited contact.

"These intergenerational experiences also help in developing the children's social, emotional, cognitive and language skills," Mrs Farnsworth said. "We are always looking for ways to make our activities more innovative and connect with the Warrnambool community."

Mercy Place Warrnambool is a facility run by Mercy Health, a ministry of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea (ISMAPNG).



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