

## **HeartKids VIC Annual Report**

### **Management and Administration**

A significant milestone in 2010 was HeartKids Victoria's 20<sup>th</sup> birthday. Celebrations included a lunch between founding and early committee members and some of the initial heart children who have now grown into adults. Further celebrations were held in October in conjunction with the Annual General Meeting where a new Board was appointed. Our thanks go to all those serving on the previous Board for their efforts in chaperoning HeartKids and advancing our cause during their tenure.

On the 7th December Terry Hopkins commenced as the new State Manager. Terry brings with him leadership qualities, energy and commercial skills gained from a successful career in executive management both domestically and internationally that will be important for us as we move into 2011 and beyond. We also opened a new head office at 55 Flemington Road, North Melbourne as a base for our management and commercial activities and in support of the Support Office located at the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH).

### **Membership**

Our membership grew by over 20% during the year to a total of 1109 members. We conducted a detailed membership survey at the end of 2010 and while members rated awareness and advocacy as valuable activities, and research of some importance, it is clear that their overwhelming opinion is that our most important function is the provision of support. The improvement of facilities at the hospital is also seen as an important goal for us. We have proactively built these priorities into our working plans for 2011 and beyond.

### **Support**

Our Support program has been the core function and focus for us. Last year in Victoria between the RCH and MonashHeart (MH) our children were subject to over 900 cardiac surgeries, 10,500 echocardiograms, 7,200 cardiac MRIs and around 600 cardiac catheter procedures. About 9,400 children were treated as cardiac outpatients. These high numbers, supported by our survey results, have led to us employing two new part-time Family Support Coordinators (FSCs) to increase our in-hospital support capability. Our new FSCs will cover two weekdays and one weekend day at the RCH working with our full-time Support Manager. We have also introduced uniforms for our on-ward support staff.

The support team now comprises our Support Manager (Tracy Stanley), two Family Support Coordinators (Sherrie McDonald and Amy Heafield), a Membership & Newsletter Coordinator (Margaret Patullo) and a Support Event Coordinator (Lynette McCoullough). The team have built a very

strong relationship with the RCH staff and continue to work closely with them. They are building a rapport with the MH staff and we now have agreement to introduce a support presence at MH for the first time and are actively formalising the details. They also liaise closely with the interstate HeartKids support teams to seamlessly support the hundreds of interstate families that travel to the RCH for surgery.

The team coordinate a complex and challenging program of scheduled and ad-hoc activities and events covering both in-hospital and external support and successfully engage many community-minded organizations such as Kiwanis to source funding and donations. The program includes organising events such as the Mother's Day pamper experience in the Hospital and Project Dovetail's Kids Day Out where two of our HeartKids families were invited to fly to Queensland for the day to meet the Gold Coast Suns AFL team and visit Dreamworld.

It is the scheduled activities in the hospital that remain most important to the children and their families, from simply being available for supportive and explanatory conversations through to the weekly morning tea which provides valuable support for in-patient families giving them the opportunity to take a break and share their experiences. It is held in our Family Lounge which we maintain as a much-needed sanctuary for the families, allowing them to relax away from the bedside.

Communicating with our members is another key focus and we do this through our quarterly newsletter, monthly E-News and Facebook.

### **Awareness**

We ran a very successful awareness campaign through February targeting television, radio print and social media featuring our ambassador Glenn Archer as the focus of the campaign. We ran advertisements on a number of television and radio stations and the Herald Sun ran a front page article on Glenn. Local newspapers also ran stories featuring many of our families. We had Entertainment Reporter Angela Bishop appear on Channel 10's *The Circle* talking about her experience as a heart kid mum. We featured a different heart child every day on Facebook together with statistics and inspirational quotes. A special donut decorating event was conducted in the Children's Garden at the RCH involving some HeartKids Ambassadors and ten young heart children to promote HeartKids Awareness Day with donuts generously donated by Donut King a member of one of our national sponsors, Retail Food Group. The event was captured on film by Storm TV. We also distributed "We support HeartKids" car window stickers with our Summer newsletter. Our efforts were rewarded with a 42% increase in visits to our website over the corresponding month last year and an

unprecedented surge in visits to our Facebook page.

## **Fundraising**

### **Community Partners**

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the wonderful ongoing support of Kiwanis. They held several events for us over the last 12 months, Candlebark Farm Family Camp, Box Hill Miniature Trains Day, Myuna Farm Day, Deniliquin Family Camp and KidsTown Picnic as well as donating \$22,000 towards equipment at the RCH.

Melbourne Storm continue to be wonderful supporters regularly visiting the cardiac ward to meet patients and families. They included us in some fantastic events as well. Like the 'Points for Purpose' match which not only raised \$10,500 for HeartKids but also included 400 tickets for heart children and their families to attend the match. They also hosted thirty of our heart children to share in some Christmas fun with some of their stars where the children enjoyed lunch and a round of ten-pin bowling as well as a special visit from Santa.

In May the Northern Districts Rotary clubs ran the HeartKids Spectacular for the fifth year. The event was hosted by Coxy with his band providing the entertainment. Auctions were held, together with a number of novelty fundraising activities raising a total of \$38,500.

### **Individuals**

Special thanks to Josh Sharp and all who participated in 'Sharpie's Charity Challenge'. The challenge this year was to scale the 1000 steps in the Dandenong Ranges National Park ten times. The proceeds of \$14,000 from this year's event, combined with money raised last year, have been used to buy a Cooling Blanket for the Intensive Care Unit at the RCH.

We had many other amazing individual efforts by committed HeartKids families and friends such as Ben Ferguson who hosted a golf day, Julie Hoffman who performed 1000 Burpees, and many others whose efforts we appreciate so much.

### **Events**

In July 55 people ran for HeartKids in the 'Run Melbourne' fun run, raising \$15,762. An amazing \$9490 of that was raised by 'Team Grimbo's' who ran in memory of their heart angel, Portia, with special t-shirts marking her 40 precious days of life.

The Queen of Hearts Lunch, held on 3 August as part of the HeartKids Victoria 20th Anniversary celebrations, lived up to its name winning over many hearts to the HeartKids cause. More than 320 people including his Excellency, Professor David de Kretser AC, Governor of Victoria, and Mrs Jan de Kretser, attended the lunch at Melbourne's Docklands, to hear about the personal and

professional side of childhood heart disease. Guests were treated to a number of entertainment and fundraising activities as well as an address from Karina McCormack shedding light on the enormous toll that CHD takes on a HeartKids family and Dr Lara Shekerdeman, the Director of PICU at the RCH, on the work of the unit. The Governor also presented certificates to several HeartKids Ambassadors, some founding members of HeartKids Victoria and other long-term contributors in recognition of their ongoing support for the organisation.

Our Cuppa for HeartKids campaign, which was run during August and September, was a success raising over \$15,000. These events not only provided much needed funds for HeartKids but also raised community awareness about childhood heart disease.

Our Christmas Party was again well attended despite the miserable weather. Families enjoyed a fun day out at the zoo with entertainment and a visit from Santa.

HeartKids Tasmania were also active with the Muscle Car and Bike Show proving a great success. It was held on a beautiful Tassie day in February with more than 400 cars and bikes on display, including cars from Queensland, NSW and Victoria. Nearly 5000 adults and children passed through the gates during the day. A great success with over \$8,000 raised to help Tassie families who have to travel to Melbourne for treatment.

### **Summary**

The 2010/11 financial year has been a very strong one for HeartKids Vic with a number of important initiatives completed and new ones underway in line with our strategic plan. We will continue to press forward making support the primary focus of our activities and are looking to increase the formal dialogue with our members and expand our support services as well as increasing the awareness of HeartKids in the community. We will be challenged by the move to the new RCH and our expansion to MH but with the team we have now put together we are confident we can continue to deliver great support to all our HeartKids and their families.

**Gary Karatjas**  
**Chairman HeartKids Victoria**