



FUNDS IN COURT NEWSLETTER

SUPREME COURT
VICTORIA



To give a better understanding of the Senior Master's Office

AUGUST 2012

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Editor:
Nanna Relina
Editorial Assistant:
Carol Anderson

“EMBRACE”

Friday, 5 October 2012

5.30pm to 8.30pm

Due to the excellent response to our event in December 2010, and continuing interest, the Senior Master's Office will again be holding a special night of celebration called “Embrace” to showcase beneficiaries' talents.

The event will include:

Arts and craft

Singing

Music performances

If you would like to participate in the event, or attend to support our beneficiaries, please contact Nanna or Julie on 1300 039 390 before 14 September 2012.

Address: Ground Floor, 485 La Trobe Street,
Melbourne (next door to the Senior Master's Office)
Street parking and undercover parking are available
close to the venue
Refreshments will be provided.

Supreme Court Open Day

By Amanda Weeks and Sally Pacione

It was a rainy and cold autumn day in Melbourne for the annual Supreme Court Open Day as part of the Victorian Law Foundation's Law Week. We arrived early in the morning of Saturday 19 May 2012, to set up the table with our pamphlets, posters and DVD. We rugged up as best we could to fend off the cold autumn chill, while outside a line of people was waiting patiently to get into the Supreme Court to take a look behind the scenes at the way the Court operates.

There were quite a number of young people who were eager to attend a tour of the Supreme Court building, the library and the dungeons, and to listen to the Judges speak about their roles in and out of the Court room.

A barbeque was held in the forecourt of the County Court and the Magistrates' Court held mock trials for the public to experience.

There were approximately 2,500 people who walked through the Supreme Court and most people attending were very interested to know what the Senior Master's (Funds in Court) Office does. Many people had not heard of us before.

We were happy to tell them all about the wonderful work we do and how we try to assist our beneficiaries.

All in all, we had a great time waving the banner of the SMO, despite the arctic chill. Next year we plan to go bigger and better with show bags, free lollies and a heater to keep ourselves warm.



Sally Pacione and Amanda Weeks



'Success is a journey, not a destination'

By Toni Green (Emma Green's mother)

Confucius is credited with once saying - 'A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step'.

But what happens if the first step is not a step, but a stumble? Nearly 17 years ago, our daughter arrived into the world and began her journey, but her first step was a stumble rather than a step, courtesy of medical negligence.

17 years on, she is a wonderful young woman with a sense of humor, strong opinions, a self advocate whose goals include attending TAFE and university, and becoming an advocate for those who have no voice. She has had the opportunity to present at a number of conferences for those who use AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication – or methods other than speech to communicate) within Australia and overseas.

Has the journey to date been a breeze? No way! Is she a determined young woman? Absolutely.

Our daughter has severe Cerebral Palsy as a result of a lack of oxygen at birth.

Her first 4 1/2 weeks were spent in NICU and then Special Care in hospital.

Her next few years were manic with appointments, therapy, and a couple of nasty episodes of pneumonia (which eventually prompted us to move to a sunnier climate.) Her younger sister (and best friend) arrived, and life got busier.



Emma Green

Her early years centered around Conductive Education (CE), working on communication, and extra therapy to get her moving. Her week involved 150 kilometre round trips to Brisbane, 3-4 times a week to attend Xavier Special School which offered a CE program, and private CE sessions on Saturdays. Hospitalisations were frequent due to illness. School holidays were therapy free times when we went camping,

picnicking, to the cinema and doing what families do, because it was important to maintain our family life.

It was hard work, and totally worth it.

The year she turned 12 our daughter told us she was unhappy at her mainstream school and as a family we had to look for other options. She now attends a special school and loves it.

There are no tears on school days; she is a member of the student council and a respected member of her school community.

Along the way we have encountered numerous people who believed (and said) that our daughter would never be able to do anything. Instead of getting us down, that served to spur us on.

Sadly, to this day, there are those still for whom it will not matter how much she achieves in her life... for they see only the wheelchair and not the wonderful young woman within. They are the ones who miss out.

Along the way there have been tough decisions to make. Mainstream school vs. Special School, medical intervention vs. a wait and see approach to name a few.

As parents, we always endeavored to be 'pro-active' rather than 're-active'.

Now she is older, our daughter is more involved in these decisions. More and more we expect her to comment, feedback, think ahead and plan. She is learning to talk to her T/O and we plan to gradually wean ourselves out of the picture as she becomes more independent.

Our home is setup for wheelchair access, she has her own 'flatette' at one end of the house, and as she jokes in one of her presentations 'one day I will kick mum and dad and my sister out, because they don't need wheelchair access'....

We hope to see her live as independent a life as she can. Yes, she will need a lot of assistance everyday, but it is her dream, and one we support fully.

So what began as a stumble has become a success...



Because 'Success is a journey, not a destination'.

Beneficiary Focus Group

By Janine Brown and Julie Fredrickson (CLO Team)

The Beneficiary Focus Group held their yearly get together on Monday 19 March 2012. We had fourteen attendees including from interstate and country Victoria; they were enthusiastic participants and by all accounts a productive and enjoyable day was had by all. We were available throughout the day if needed and Janine also spent time with the participants in their group sessions.

Martina Smythe, SMO Strategic Human Resources Manager, facilitated this event. This year, the focus was the sharing of information and included presentations from Helena Ferreira of Echo Australia (contact number: (03) 9890 3088). Echo Australia is an employment service that specialises in assisting people with disability to explore career options. Kerry Flynn, Trust Officer, whom we consider our internal "Centrelink guru" presented a general overview of Centrelink entitlements. This was very well received and we thank Kerry for her contribution.

We were fortunate to secure the services of Jeff Neal, Consultant of One Step Education Network (contact number: 0408 589 734). Jeff specialises in iPad training and support. Jeff has been involved in the IT and Education Industry for many years and has already worked with some of our beneficiaries in relation to iPad training.

His presentation was exceptionally well received and the feedback was very positive.

It was terrific to see a number of SMO staff including Senior Management come along at lunch time to meet with participants. Staff and participants alike were provided with the opportunity to have a chat over lunch. Additionally, one of the participants, Stanley Newbury, celebrated his birthday the day before and he was surprised with a cake to mark the occasion.

Where to from now?

Apart from the sharing of information, we also sought feedback and suggestions from participants as to how we are delivering our service and what we can do better. All in all, the feedback in general was positive. Matters regarding what we could do better will in due course be addressed by the facilitator in conjunction with management of the SMO, with a view to continuing to listen to suggestions and ultimately to improve our service delivery further.

We plan to do it all again around the same time next year and would welcome further inquiries should you be interested in participating. These inquiries can be directed to either Janine or Julie on 1300 039 390. It's never too early to inquire!!!

Beneficiary Focus Group 19 March 2012



**Yeksan Altun and Elisa Dwyer,
Client Liaison Officer**



**Stanley Newbury, Sheridan Campbell
and Yeksan Altun**



Stanley's birthday cake



Chris Rotering and Jacqueline Slattery



**Ross McKay and Tony Flynn,
Senior Trust Officer**



**Kathryn Nelson, Rebecca Viney, Glenn
Thomas and Sheridan Campbell**

See more photos on page 16

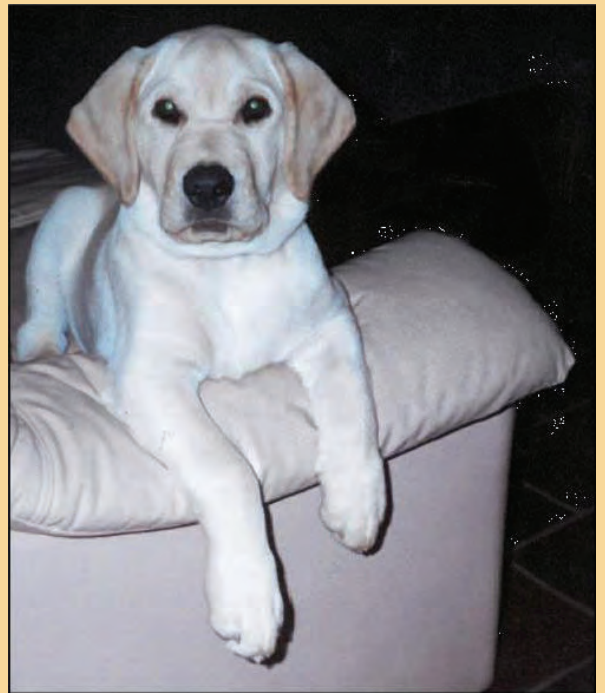
A Dog's Unconditional Love

By Dianne Farmer

Our Golden Labrador Beau, was in the car with me when the other car forgot to give way to my car. He apparently was in doggie shock and a Ranger had to find him. After 5 months in ABI at Epworth, I finally got home to see Beau. As dogs do when they are excited, he ran round and round with excitement. He had to be held back from jumping all over me. It was wonderful!

As the accident was local, when we went for a drive past the place where I was hit, I covered my eyes, as I didn't want to look. Beau was chained to his lead in the back seat every time he went anywhere with us. Just prior to reaching the accident site, he would stand in the back seat, and bark continuously until we had passed. It was as though he remembered the exact point of collision and was upset. This went on for about 2 years after I got home, but now he just sits and doesn't move.

My aim when I got out of Hospital was to walk Beau again. It took 12 months, but I eventually went on walks with Beau again. I had to be escorted, but now, 4 months later, I walked him on my own. My husband and friends feel that Beau is very protective of me now, and as I type this, he is by my side.



Beau

Our Labrador is now 10. He has been through our move from 1 ½ acres to a town block, seeing our children grow up and move out, going away with us and my accident. He stays by our side through thick and thin.

We even let this 40kg Labrador sleep on our bed at night with us. Sometimes, he takes too much room, but we laugh. I tell my husband that if he is uncomfortable, there is a lovely kennel outside that he can sleep in. Again he just laughs.

He loves us unconditionally.

My theory – treat a dog well if you are lucky enough to have one, and it will give you unconditional love all of its life.

Inside Out

By Ed Dimech

There is an old, I think, Greek saying that I believe perfectly described the Senior Master's Office, indeed, even, dare I say it, the Senior Master himself.

"From the outside looking in you could never understand it. From the inside looking out you could never explain it".

I had the privilege of being a Senior Trust Officer helping the Senior Master to advise and assist people who had a "legal disability" that meant that their funds had to be managed by the Senior Master's (Funds in Court) Office. How often was I asked, "what is this Senior Master's Office, or, more often, "who is this Senior Master"? "I bet that there is no such "thing" as the Senior Master and that he doesn't even exist and that you are just making him up as an excuse for me not to blame YOU for decisions that I might not like".

People just couldn't understand it. And how difficult was it for us to try to explain it?

How different it is now, with wonderful Newsletters being produced, showing the Senior Master smiling on the front page and events like "Beneficiary Focus Groups" and "Embrace" and having a dedicated SMO website, no less!! How much easier it must now be to "understand it" and to "explain it"?

In using that saying, I would also love to make a contribution on the effect that the SMO had on me personally, as I see so many inspiring stories of beneficiaries and their experiences in the Newsletter that has encouraged me to write a bit of my story and experience of the Senior Master and the SMO and its beneficiaries. Something like from being from both the "inside" and the "outside".



Ed Dimech

I had the privilege of being a Senior Trust Officer at the SMO for over 10 years before, in 2006, I was diagnosed with a fancy named thing called a "Nasopharyngeal Carcinoma". They said that it "could" have taken my life, but, it certainly took away my being able to continue being employed at the SMO.

When I received that "news" it came as quite a shock, as you would imagine. But, to very many people's surprise, it, somehow, did not have the demoralising effect on me that would normally be expected.

Why? Because I had seen dozens, even hundreds, of people who had, what I considered to be, much more severe burdens to bear than what I had been given. The very same beneficiaries of the SMO whom I had come to know and love over the years that I had been their Trust Officer.

It was an incredibly difficult journey, first overcoming the very powerful radiotherapy treatment that I received daily for 7 weeks, then trying to recuperate, having lost over 20% of my body weight and several times being close to the end.

And if that wasn't tough enough to bear, that "thing" called the GFC (no, not the Geelong Football Club, although they didn't help either, but that's another story) but Global Financial Crisis that hit all of us during my recovery stage. So, not only had I lost my job, lost 20% of my body, but, now, I lost most of my savings!!

Thankfully, I am now what they call a "cancer survivor". But, what kept me going? Yes, the love and encouragement that I received from the Senior Master and all the staff of the SMO. But, most importantly, the inspiration and strength that I had developed over the years from the beneficiaries of the SMO and their families.

That is something that I will never forget and that will keep me going even during the most difficult times.

So, keep smiling, life IS too short.

Send Us Your Stories and Suggestions

What kind of information would you like to see in future editions?

Do you have a story you would like to share?

Is there an Office procedure you would like explained?

Whatever it is, send your suggestion or contribution to:

**Funds in Court Newsletter
c/Senior Master's (Funds in
Court) Office
Supreme Court of Victoria
210 William Street, Melbourne,
VIC, 3000**

or email to:
smobag@supremecourt.vic.gov.au

The Global Corporate Challenge: Walking Towards a Healthier Future

By Reshma Shah

On 24 May 2012, a group of employees from the Senior Master's Office embarked on a 16 week initiative and joined the Global Corporate Challenge (GCC). The GCC is a world's largest corporate health initiative attempting to address health problems caused by working in inactive, desk-bound occupations. It aims to improve the health of participants, whilst at the same time, promoting team work and increasing productivity in the workplace.

Stepping up to the challenge from the Senior Master's Office are Linda Coviello, Graeme Morris, Kathy Murton, Nichola Pye, Reshma Shah, Rouba Urrutia, Liliana Varvarigos and Kerry Flynn.

Each of the participants will be attempting to take

at least 10,000 steps a day, for 16 weeks.

The team have already been working their pedometers hard and are off to a flying start, each averaging approximately 12,000 steps a day.

The participants have shown excellent enthusiasm for the challenge and have adopted new daily habits in an attempt to keep up their step counts. Regular team walks, weekend bike rides and lunchtime strolls are just some of the positive changes that have occurred since the GCC started.

At the time of writing challenging winter months lie ahead. By the time you read this, it will have been important for the team to stay motivated as they wrap up warm and walk towards a healthier future. Good luck to all and keep up the great effort!



New Faces of the SMO

Martina Smythe- Strategic Human Resources Manager



When the Senior Master was first appointed on 15 April 1983, he had four people assisting him. By 2011, the SMO had grown in terms of the amount of funds managed, the number of beneficiaries for whom the funds were managed, and the complexity and scope of the services provided to beneficiaries. Over 60 people now worked for the Senior Master, in a variety of roles, to assist him in providing the best possible service to beneficiaries.

An organisational review of the SMO by Nous Consulting in 2010 made a number of recommendations about the type of organisational structure the SMO needed to ensure it continued to provide the best possible service to beneficiaries. One of the recommendations was that the size of the office required the employment of a Human Resources [HR] professional.

Therefore, the Senior Master agreed to employ Martina Smythe as Strategic HR Manager to work closely with the senior management team to develop and add value to the efficiency and practices of the office.

As the SMO continues to grow and develop, the issues facing it to ensure ongoing service to the beneficiaries will continue to develop in complexity.

The benefits of a senior HR practitioner such as Martina, who can assist with the ongoing and everyday issues of managing the people who work at the Office, are immeasurable.

Martina has extensive experience in human resources, having previously worked for some of Australia's largest companies, such as IBM and Coles Myer, as well as working as a management consultant assisting organisations with organisational change.

On a personal level, Martina is a keen Essendon fan, has one husband, two wonderful children and two dogs. She is a modern-day renaissance woman whose interests include music (she is classically trained in piano and singing), travel, history, politics, antiques, anything Celtic, painting and costume design and musical theatre.

Amongst her vices, she is inordinately fond of shoes, clothes – particularly 1940s hats – and has a strange relationship with wine and chocolate, in both of which she tends to overindulge when stressed.

A final glimpse into Martina's unique way of approaching the world is that two of the "people" she admires are Jean Luc Picard and Buzz Lightyear!

Amanda Weeks

Legal Officer



Amanda commenced working at the SMO as a Legal Officer in January 2012, after having undertaken a work placement here in early 2011. She currently works with the payment out at 18 team, as well as working on other matters including debts, property and delays in payment into Court.

Making a positive difference by helping beneficiaries is the most rewarding part of Amanda's work. She also likes the friendly staff at the SMO and the good atmosphere in the office. Before joining us, Amanda was working at the Australian Government Solicitor's Office, largely conducting work on property matters.

One of Amanda's favourite hobbies is photography. Coming from a large family, her six nephews and nieces are the perfect subjects for her camera! She also enjoys reading books, watching movies and riding her bike.

Tim Wilkinson

Client Liaison Officer



Tim Wilkinson is the newest addition to our Client Liaison Team.

Tim has spent the last 37 years of his career working with Trust/Estate related matters with a particular focus in the last decade in working as an 'advocate' for Victorians with a legal disability. The particular focus of Tim's work has been to protect vulnerable Victorians from financial abuse.

Tim is a Senior Associate of the Financial Services Institute of Australasia and brings to the Senior Master's Office a wealth of experience within the trustee, financial services and disability sectors.

Tim formerly worked at the SMO way back in 1988 and happily states that “ while it has taken me a long time, it is great to be back home”.

“The working environment created within the SMO is quite exceptional and is evidenced by the extremely low turnover in staff.

A side benefit to that, of course, is the depth of experience that accrues within the teams.”

“The position of a Client Liaison Officer is one of the more satisfying roles I have engaged in over the many years.

The diversity in the SMO client base is enormous – each has a story to tell and the Court provides its staff time to listen. It is a unique environment that all members of management and staff have a common bond in providing the highest quality service and at minimal cost to the client.”

We welcome Tim (back) to the Senior Master's Office.

Overseas Exchange to San Francisco, USA **By Angela Darlington**

In 2012 I took part in a competitive overseas student exchange program with UC Berkeley, organised through the Flinders University International Office, which completed the last 6 units of my Bachelor of Arts degree. I received a scholarship from the university, which allowed me to take part in an internship program in San Francisco, USA.

There was a lot of paperwork to enter the internship program, including the visa, which took two months to finalise. This was my first time overseas, and it was both an interesting and rewarding learning experience. Twelve students, including me, from Adelaide and Melbourne universities were each given a scholarship, which covered accommodation and group tours while we were in San Francisco. It was thanks to my family and the Senior Master's Office that I was able to

participate in this program, as both assisted me with funding.

Our host, Devon, met me and other Australian students at the airport in San Francisco when we arrived on January 12.

This city has many bridges, skyscrapers and six lane highways. The San Francisco program went from January 18 to February 24, 2012. During the day, the San Francisco weather was warm and sunny, but at night it was very cold! Walking around Berkeley, in California, where I shared a student apartment, there was a thick fog in the mornings and in the evenings.

I chose to work for a publishing company, being an English major at university, and was placed with Wiley, one of the world's biggest publishers.

I worked on the 12th floor in the heart of San Francisco.

I was trained in different aspects of publishing and

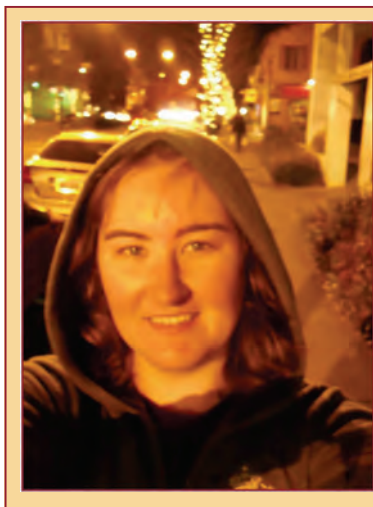
given many tasks to complete, including marketing, editorial, letter writing, research, and assisting editors with the acquisition of material. I found my American colleagues to be very supportive and friendly. I also attended a lot of meetings and undertook informational interviews with my colleagues at Wiley.

I did a number of tours in San Francisco with the student group, including Santa Cruz, Japantown, Golden Gate Bridge, Fisherman's Wharf, Napa Valley and the cable cars. I also went on a few tours on my own, including the Yosemite Mountains in California, where I got to see spectacular natural sights, snow, deer and squirrels, and 8,000ft mountains.

I also did a tour of Monterey, a beautiful beach town, and also couldn't go past Alcatraz Island, which gave me an interesting insight into America's dark history.

On my return home I stopped over in Auckland, New Zealand, for a week and saw the geysers and volcanic area of Rotorua with local people, which were amazing! I arrived back home to Adelaide, Australia, on March 12, where I caught up with family and friends during the week, and settled back into the warm weather. I received my parchment at Flinders University and attended the April graduation ceremony.

This was a wonderful way to complete my Bachelor of Arts degree, and I look forward to the enhanced career opportunities in the future.



Angela Darlington



IDEAS FOR SMO CHRISTMAS CARDS

We are looking for 10
designs for the SMO
Christmas cards.

If you are interested in
submitting your design,
please e-mail Nanna on
smo@supremecourt.vic.gov.au
before Friday,
2 November 2012.

Beneficiary Focus Group - 19 March 2012



Yeksan Altun and Stanley Newbury



**Rebecca Viney and
Tim Wilkinson,
Client Liaison Officer**



**Kathryn Nelson
and Miranda Bain, Strategic Advisor**