

Happy new face in Toowong at Spiritus St John's Home

Jill Worrell has a very positive outlook on life and her work.

She has just taken up the role of Manager of Spiritus St John's Home for Aged Men in suburban Toowong. Along with its skilful group of staff, St John's has sixty-one low and high care residents and offers specialised care for men with dementia and mental health issues. Part of her 'getting to know you schedule' has been connecting with both staff and clients, learning their complex and individual needs, hearing their stories and bringing fresh ideas to the mix of life-enhancing activities and daily routines at St John's.

Her passion for her work is clear. She said

"It takes special people to care for these wonderful men, many of whom have had quite tough lives and have faced extraordinary challenges. I'm here to ensure our residents have the most satisfaction and joy while they are here living with us. It's their home and friendly companionship and good nutrition are part of daily life " she adds *"due to the excellent choice and variety of food which is available, all of which is prepared on the premises. Food makes everyone happy. I have a real 'thing' about the provision of good food and the helpings here are very generous. I particularly like the muffins!"* she quipped.

Jill has an extensive background in the provision of care, particularly in south-east Queensland. Originally a 'country girl', she grew up on a sugar cane farm and trained in her home state. She later completed her midwifery studies in Sydney and worked in coronary care and surgery before building on her expertise within the aged care community. She brings this wealth of experience to her role, along with her creative side. An enthusiastic amateur musician, Jill plays piano and is a choral singer.

"I hope to add some additional creative and musical outings to our activities at St John's. Many people would enjoy an afternoon matinee or a concert and quite a few residents would appreciate some 'traditional' male pursuits such as tools and woodworking and checking over new models of cars and motorbikes."

She is also involved in making some changes to the current building including a coat of fresh paint, some new construction and some improvements made with the assistance of environmental dementia care specialists.

There are other things which have brought a spring to Jill's step.

"St John's staff are a talented and varied group, full of talent, good ideas and fun. All dressed appropriately for recent Australia Day celebrations and prepared a special smorgasbord for lunch instead of the usual barbecue fare. Soon we'll be 'greening up' for St Patrick's Day."

She is delighted to find amongst her staff and volunteers a young man who offers his musical services to clients. Despite his comparative youth, this seventeen-year-old will continue his voluntary work (he especially enjoys music therapy with dementia and very withdrawn clients) at St John's this year, even though he will have a heavy study load when he begins lectures for a Science/Law degree. She said

"He's remarkable. The men love him! That's the nature of the place. You can feel the love."

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