

# KEEN

## *Kenney*

*Local resident Sue Kenney and her team of hardworking helpers are known for peeling vegetables, stirring pots all in the name of charity.*

Living Care retirement village resident, Sue Kenney, cooks to raise money for KYDS, a free confidential counselling and support service for adolescents and their families in Northern Sydney

Since 2013, residents of Living Care's Forestville retirement village have raised over \$4,000 for KYDS, a free confidential counselling and support service for adolescents and their families in Northern Sydney.

Like many people, Sue has experienced the impact of mental illness on family, first hand. Finding it difficult to find relevant support for her family, Sue heard about KYDS through her local church, C3, who also sponsors the charity.

"As a grandparent, it is heartbreaking to watch a grandchild suffer the impact of living with someone with a mental illness," Sue says.

"I was grappling with the problems of trying to maintain a relationship but realizing that it is the youngsters who must be protected. It was a personally challenging time."

"I believe we must take responsibility for younger people to ensure their voice is heard, no matter the cost. It's encouraging to hear of Rosie Batty's work and the appointment of the new Victorian Minister, the Hon. Fiona Richardson and her own heartbreaking personal story.

"There is always a cost to the individual who tells their story, and even then, the pain doesn't go away. However, the outcome is that truth always wins through and brings with it, healing."

The psychologists at KYDS worked closely with Sue's grandchild over a number of years and helped him through a very difficult time. For that, she will be forever thankful."

Sue really wanted to give back to the organisation that helped her family.

Thinking back on some of the great dinner parties she used to host in the 1970's and 80's, Sue did what she knew best and rolled up her sleeves and started cooking.

"I remember back in the '70's we used to have fabulous dinner parties where we would spend all day preparing a feast for our friends - savoury crepes, pate, beef wellington, chocolate mousse, etc!"

"I might be a little older, and the meals not as fancy, but it is the same concept - food brings people together.

"And I can tell you, cooking dinner for 15 people with one domestic oven and four hotplates is a challenge within itself."

Not a bad effort for a group of amateur chefs over the age of 70. After the first dinner, a number of other residents came up to Sue and asked how they could help her prepare the meals and keep the tradition going. Three years later, numbers are still strong, and it is a dinner they all look forward to each month.

"Our Village has 32 one bedroom villas and most residents no longer do much cooking let alone do Australia's favourite - a roast with the full monty!"

"One of the joys of living in a close-knit community is the ability to get together easily.

"The dinners we put on each month provide an opportunity for share a meal, have a chat and a laugh. These regular dinners keep us healthy socially and emotionally," says Sue.

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**“One of the joys of living in a close-knit community is the ability to get together easily.”**



Sue Kenney, front right, with April's lunch guests from Living Care's Forestville retirement village. L-R: Riina Kao, Dora Ray, Pat Kieran, Jen Ferguson, Irima Kirk, Lottie Dickinson and Sue

KYDS Business Manager, Felicity McDonnell, is overwhelmed by the local community's support of what they do.

“We work with a lot of distressed young people who are dealing with very confronting and difficult issues on a daily basis.

With no ongoing state or federal government funding, KYDS relies purely on our local community.

“Without the support of people like Sue Kenney, we wouldn't exist,” said Ms McDonnell.

Sue is so passionate about her charity work, that she is keen to speak to other retirement villages in Sydney about holding similar dinners to raise funds for KYDS and lift the profile of mental health.

“It's not only about raising money for charity. The dinners enhance the sense of community within our Village at Forestville, and make us feel like we are not only doing something for ourselves, but supporting those who help others whose cries could remain unheard.”

Loyal to the cause, Sue and her friends have hosted over 29 dinners to date, and don't look to be hanging up their pots and pans anytime soon. **NL**



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