

Buddies meeting, 26 March 2017

Chairperson: Thorsten Kels, note-taker: Penny Rivlin

Apologies: D'Arcy Buick, Fergus FitzGerald, Pat Isaacs, Libby Morrison, Margaret Norman, Dee Williams, Diane Woolley
Thorsten welcomed 'old' and new Buddies and introduced this month's speaker Malik to update us on his life.

Guest speaker

Malik came from Afghanistan 9 years ago aged 14, to join his brother. Abdul had come out by boat in 1999 and was in detention when he met Buddies members, the Foleys. Eventually Abdul got out of detention and set about the task of bringing his only brother to Australia - supported by his now wife Meg Foley and her parents - and by a Buddies fundraiser. Malik spent 6 months at Milpera State High School learning English, then joined Sienna College in Sippy Downs, where John Foley taught at the time. He found it difficult at first but ended up doing well. He went on to study civil engineering at USC and is due to graduate this year.

He is now a proud Australian and a surf life saver at Alexandra Headlands SLSC. He is also a member of the Sunshine Coast Moslem community, which has been using a Kawana community centre for Friday prayers for many years. The community has grown and they are in the process of applying to build a mosque - he is surprised that there have been protests when they have been worshipping in Kawana for years. His stance is that there are closed and open-minded people in every community and that we should look for the good, not the bad in people. Mentioning that the Koran says we are all from different tribes and to learn from each other, he added that the Imam of Australia and the local Imam have raised their voice to confirm that ISIS followers are not Islamic, or Moslem - they are terrorists. The Koran says to kill one innocent person is to kill humanity.

Afghanistan has suffered 37 years of war, due to the British, the Russians and the Americans who seek to use the country for its mineral wealth and its strategic position. There are many tribal groups within Afghanistan, but he identifies as just Afghani.

Malik has found that Sunshine Coast folk don't discriminate, although he does get comments and looks when he chooses to wear his traditional Afghani clothes rather than his shorts (or his SLSC uniform). He is happy to discuss his faith and his philosophy on life.

He revealed that he is now married to a Tajik lady with four children. This young man has lived a full and amazing life already. We wish him well in his future and his career.

Finance

Audrey Raymond submitted the finance report. Income was \$1170, bringing the total balance to \$6710.

She spoke of the urgent need to donate to legal groups assisting asylum seekers with their applications for protection visas. The meeting agreed to donate \$5000 to Salvos Legal.

Audrey is resigning her positions in Buddies at the end of May and has requested that other Buddies volunteer for the following:

- 1) Contact phone number on the website (Jenny Hughes volunteered)
- 2) Finance group (consisting of four members)
- 3) Arrange speakers for the monthly meetings

Patrick Buick gave a vote of thanks to Audrey for her many contributions over the years.

Learn English Holiday

As this LEH is over Easter holidays, there will be families, not just single students! Many different nationalities are coming to improve their English.

Kayla Szumer has been offered a free bus from St John's College to collect the families from Brisbane. Yokki Rother has made an eye-catching sign for Kayla to hold up at Roma St Station. Kendall Snowden mentioned that enough money had already been raised to cover the costs of the LEH week without dipping into Buddies funds.

Kayla asked for help from people who could assist taking some of the 'students' from their homestay to or from St John's College in Nambour when their hosts are unable to. She also extended a welcome to anyone who would like to join in as teacher support between 9am and 2:30pm (except Thursday).

Margaret Norris is coordinating the teachers and requests if volunteers have children /grand children they can come along and interact with the group of children whose parents are in class. Some of the students at St John's College are kindly coming along to help .

Concert

Kayla has also organised another wonderful musical fundraiser ... a Beethoven and Brahms quartet ... at the United Church in Caloundra on Sunday 30 April. Kendall requested raffle items. Margaret Landbeck mlandbeck@bigpond.com requested sweet or savoury items for afternoon tea and helpers at the door and to serve tea. Bring friends and come along to enjoy!

BRASS

Margaret L. occasionally attends BRASS (Brisbane Refugee and Asylum Seeker Service) meetings in Brisbane as a representative of Buddies, along with many other concerned groups. They are also asking for urgent donations to assist the processing of the protection visas. Should anyone wish to donate, they are encouraged to do so at www.brassnetwork.org as funding is desperately needed.

15 year celebration

Carmel Dobson confirmed this was to be held on Saturday 6 May at Kawana Waters Hotel, Nicklin Way. She will need indication of numbers. She also requested any memorabilia from the last 15 years be brought along to show. This is not a fund raiser.

Future events

A Gala Dinner with guest speaker and raffles has been suggested. In October there will be another Walk Together. The Sunshine Coast Multicultural group has asked what Buddies is doing for Refugee Week June 18-24. Carmel suggested a forum as a possibility, but acknowledged a tight time frame to get organised and publicised in time. If you have any other suggestions, please contact Carmel cmaryd@hotmail.com

Other Business

Stephanie Akers thanked Buddies members for their support with the Mulberry project in Toowoomba which raised over \$7000 - enough to buy a trailer to bring the food produce to market and some lights for the night market.

Next meeting

Sunday 23 April, Chairperson: Margie Cosgrove margesther@hotmail.com, note-taker: Neroli Dobson