23 March 2019

Harmony Day 2019, Cotton Tree Park, Maroochydore

Report by Gillian Duffy

To celebrate Harmony Day,

the Sunshine Coast Council organised Voices of Harmony at Cotton Tree Park, Maroochydore. It was a truly multicultural event with singing, dancing, drumming, stalls and a fashion show, all representing countries from around the globe.

Our Pacific Island neighbours were strongly represented with Fijian and Hawaiian dancing, Tongan singers and stalls selling handicrafts from Papua New Guinea.

SCRAN had a stall which looked bright and inviting, with the SCRAN banner and W2M prayer flags. The stall had plenty of customers, including children who were encouraged to take part in a poster-making competition to explain what Harmony Day means in words and pictures. There were 29 entries overall – not all from children – and these added to the stall decorations as the day went on.

Thanks to Mandula (AI), Andrea (Buddies) and Linda (Nambour Community Centre) for judging the posters. The winners were:

- Sadie age 5 in the under 7 category won the book "Room on our Rock" (Ada age 5 and Oakley age 4 were runners up)
- ~ Tayah age 10 in the under 12 category won the book "The extraordinary life of Malala Yousafzai" (runner up Gypsey age 8)

We decided not to award any other prizes as there were no entries in the 12 - 17 categories and the adults, frankly, didn't try hard enough! The remaining prizes will be kept for future events or raffles. Thanks to W2M, Gillian and Buddies for donating the prizes, which have posted to the winners.

Some of the outcomes of the event were:

- ~ 50 signatures on the Refugee Welcome Zone petition
- ~ 29 signatures on the Community Sponsorship Program petition
- ~ 12 sign-ups for Buddies Bulletin
- ~ 1 new Buddies membership

There were a number of other positive interactions:



- ~ we had a chat with the Police Commissioner
- several people who would like to be host families (not necessarily in April) and will follow-up via Buddies contact details
- ~ some people from Maryborough took several CSP petitions to get signatures
- ~ several people expressed interest in joining NWR or W2M and attending other events

Angela, who took on the busy middle shift, commented afterwards "I have nothing but positive thoughts about the day. I was struck by a lovely, festive, joyous and also thoughtful vibe when talking with people, both at our stall and also around the place. All the people I spoke with during my shift were interested to know more about refugees and people seeking asylum and supportive of the petitions".

Dee and Paul were also in choirs singing at the event and a few Buddies dropped by the stall to offer moral support. All in all a productive, if exhausting day. Thanks to everyone who was able to contribute, but particularly Diana, Angela, Dee, Peter, Janine, Len, Paul, Jason, Mandula, Nina, Andrea, James.