

Just a Few Stories of Impact

TIME TO LISTEN

After a boys' program being run by the chaplain, the school principal stopped a child returning to class and said, 'You look happy'. He replied, 'I just learnt that I really need to start listening to people.'

OVERCOMING ABSENTEEISM

A grade six boy who had not been to school for over six months transferred to our school. As the chaplain, I spent many lunchtimes playing basketball with him as he had no one to hang out with and was being bullied by other children.

Through this encouragement, and building positive relationship, I have seen him regularly attending school. He has also come out of his shell, and is much more positive about life.

A SAFE PERSON

I started to spend time with a young boy who finds it hard to engage in school. After a few weeks, his level of engagement improved.

The young boy already has a case worker with DHHS. One day I was asked to sit in on a meeting with DHHS staff members who were interviewing this student.

Half way through the interview, they asked the boy who he felt most comfortable to talk with. He went from having a distressed serious look to a sweet smile on his face. He looked at me (the chaplain) and giving me a fist-bump, told the case worker that I was his safe person.

MAKING LEARNING A PRIORITY

This year we applied for a number of young carer bursaries that give students \$3000 over the course of the following school year to stay connected to education while they have family caring responsibilities.

One young boy was caring for a parent undergoing cancer treatment as well as grandparents, who also had care needs. In addition, a sibling with behavioural needs meant that consistent learning was a real challenge for this student. Through this grant, we were able to support the student's learning needs.

COPE KEYRINGS

Many students have trouble managing their anger. They are angry at people; they are angry when things don't turn out as expected; they are angry about how they feel. With such students, I help them to make 'cope keyrings' as a small memory tool.

In creating these keyrings, we come up with strategies to help them through situations where they need to process their anger in a safe way, for example: take deep breaths, walk away, read a book, talk to an adult or squeeze a stress ball.

Parents and teachers tell me that the keyrings have been effective in helping such students deal with their anger in a safe way.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

I caught up with a student whose parents had recently divorced. The teacher told me she had seen a noticeable positive difference in the student since she has been coming to see me. The teacher explained that the student was often downcast, introverted and sad, but since she had been seeing me, the student was happy, positive and engaged in class.

The teacher went on to encourage me saying, 'Whatever you're doing, keep doing it, as you're making a positive difference in her life.'

HELPING WITH LIFE'S CHANGES

When a six-year-old boy's parents separated, it was a lot to process. The boy's mother was in a new relationship with a man who wasn't 'dad' and Mum was now expecting a baby with her new partner.

Raymond* spent time with the chaplain and together they chatted about how things had changed in his family. Feeling safe to talk about his thoughts and feelings, Raymond began making regular appointments with the chaplain. Today, Raymond is more noticeably settled and comfortable within his family settings, Appointments with the chaplain are less about Raymond's 'problems' and more about what he is enjoying within his family, and wider circle of life.

BREAKING THE NEWS

One school mother approached me as the chaplain seeking advice on how to break the news to her children about their father's impending operation for cancer. I offered to meet with the mother and children together to share the news with gentleness and compassion. I also supported the Mum with a behaviour plan for one of her children to keep him focused in the classroom, which included incentives such as stickers for improved behaviour at school. This plan worked well in achieving a more engaged and settled child at school and at home.

PARTNERING FOR COMMUNITIES

I am a great believer in service partnerships.

This term, a sole parent group has been able to meet, due to the generosity of a group of local churches. This parent group gives invaluable support to some of our single parent families. Six separated parents impacted by family violence were able to share this experience with trusted confidantes, which has assisted their healing and recovery. The parents participating in the support group also indicated that this is the one thing that they look forward to each week.

I was also able to secure funding from another sponsor. This enabled disadvantaged students to attend their school holiday camp, which they thoroughly enjoyed.



Every day, Chaplains make a difference in their school communities.