

Volunteering with CDCH

CDCH promotes children's safety and wellbeing, and commits to protecting children from abuse. As an employer of staff and volunteers, we value diversity and respect all people including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; lesbian, gay bisexual, transgender and intersex people; people with a disability and culturally and linguistically diverse people.

We are committed to providing adequate insurance cover for volunteers whilst carrying out their volunteer roles.

For more information, contact the Youth Mentoring Coordinator on 5479 1000 or visit our website www.cdchcastlemaine.com.au

The Youth Mentoring Program is supported by CDCH in partnership with Castlemaine Secondary College and Mount Alexander Shire Council. It is funded by the Victorian Government's *Engage!* program.



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Printed August 2017

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Mount Alexander
Youth Mentoring Program

MOUNT ALEXANDER YOUTH MENTORING PROGRAM



Do you have a genuine interest in young people?

Have you ever considered becoming a mentor for a young person? The Mount Alexander Youth Mentoring Program matches young people aged between 12 and 25 one-on-one with a volunteer adult mentor.

Why become a mentor for young people?

Adolescence is a challenging stage of life: *'You are all at odds and out of sorts. You are alone in a way that you never were in your childhood...your sense of belonging becomes seriously confused,'* (Andrew Fuller).

Research proves that mentoring can make a real difference in a young person's life. It builds the relational wealth of a young person, and the more quality relationships a young person has in their life, the more their resilience, self-esteem and confidence grows. Strong relationships serve as a buffer against risks young people may be exposed to and improves their ability to make better choices for themselves.

As a volunteer mentor, you have the opportunity to expand your social networks by really getting to know a young person, and experience the richness of seeing things from a different generational perspective.

What's involved?

After the initial screening and training, mentors are then matched one-on-one with a young person who is willing and keen to have a mentor in their life. The mentor and young person arrange to meet up regularly (an hour a week or two hours a fortnight) and do whatever it is they

are both interested in doing together.

Alternatively mentors can opt to work with a small, handpicked group of young students at the Castlemaine Secondary College during school hours. These activities could involve gardening, doing crafts, or tutoring.

We encourage mentors to commit to their young person for 12 months. Our volunteers have a code of conduct to guide ethical practice, and the young people have their own code of conduct too.

What support can mentors expect?

While there are many rewards to be gained from mentoring and volunteering generally, there can also be some challenges. CDCH recognises a responsibility to support our mentors for their own wellbeing, and to ensure the best experience for the young person.

Apart from the initial training, we also offer regular supervision, and facilitate gatherings with the other mentors to share and learn from one another. Additional training in topics such as *Alcohol and Other Drugs, A Strengths-Based Approach to Mentoring, and Mental Health and Wellbeing* are also offered. We regularly evaluate the program to ensure it is having a positive impact on the young people and providing a meaningful and well-supported volunteering role.

What does the training involve

The program coordinator delivers a free one-day training session which is based on the mentoring training module developed by the Youth Affairs Council Victoria. Participants learn about the role of a mentor, how to establish and build trust, reflect on personal boundaries and explore issues of confidentiality. They also learn the stages of adolescent development, and about issues affecting young people in our community. They will also hear from a volunteer who has had some mentoring

experience already.

What sort of activities do we do together?

We encourage mentoring involvement in no- or low-cost activities. In the early stages of the mentoring relationship we suggest doing activities which help to develop rapport such as going out for coffee, or going for a walk in the local area. Bushwalking, bike-riding, going to art galleries or festivals, visiting the Mondo Lounge, enjoying music, doing crafts, cooking or building things are all great activities.

About the young people

We receive referrals from our own programs such as Family Services, but young people are also referred by the school and other agencies working with youth. The young person might be facing some personal challenges in their life such as difficulties at school, family instability, trouble with their peers or they may have a mild disability which makes it difficult for them to engage fully in life. Some of the young people come from backgrounds of poverty. Our mentors understand how this impacts on their opportunities in life.

To match you up, we take into account your personalities and the sort of interests and hobbies you both have in common, as well as the aspirations of the young person.

What qualities would make me suitable?

If you would like to be a positive influence in a young person's life, and are also willing to be influenced by a young person, we'd love to hear from you! Young people (like the rest of us) have the right to be taken seriously and respond best to adults who would prefer to support rather than judge them.

We encourage men and women from all ages and backgrounds but essentially we need volunteers who are reliable, responsible and compassionate.