



Australian T.O.S. Links

August 2009

At this half-way point in our year's activities, I trust that all is going well with implementing your plans. In this issue of the newsletter, as well as sharing news from within the TOS, we look at further ways of being involved in service activities within our local communities. Most of our local TOS groups are small in number of members although big in commitment. It therefore often makes sense to partner with other community groups that share our aims of reducing suffering. You'll find lots of ideas for doing this towards the end of this newsletter.

Progress with national activities

New TOS brochure

Many thanks go to our National Council members who coordinated the gathering of feedback on our new TOS brochure and the logo to be used on TOS in Australia publications. While some members preferred the original rose design, most preferred one or other of the two modern designs. The dove design was slightly more popular than the lotus design and so will be used on our webpages when they are redesigned later this year. The new brochure will be printed in two versions so that we have some with the dove design and others with the lotus design. Copies of the new brochure have been sent to all TOS groups with this newsletter.

Finalisation of our National Constitution

Thank you to those groups who have sent their comments on the suggested revisions to our National Constitution. We are now in the final stages of the revision process, so if you have not yet sent your feedback, please do so as soon as possible.

The timeline for completing the revision is:

October 2009

The National Council considers the input from local TOS groups and members and finalises the revised Constitution in readiness to have it voted on at the National TOS AGM.

November – December 2009

Notification of changes to the National Constitution go to TOS members.

January 1010

Motion at AGM of the TOS in Australia re changes to the National Constitution.

Focusing on selfless service to all life

What's in this newsletter

- Progress with national activities
- TS in Australia Convention 2010
- Generous donation from Maple-Brown Abbott
- Update on our national projects
- National TOS contact details
- International TOS news
- News from our WA TOS group
- What's new on our Australian TOS web-pages
- Good news story
- Serving in our communities by partnering with other groups

TS in Australia Convention 2010

Divine Wisdom in Art, Science and Philosophy is the topic of the TS in Australia convention from 16 to 23 January 2010 at the Australian Maritime College, Launceston, Tasmania. We hold our TOS in Australia AGM during the convention. This provides an opportunity to meet other TOS workers, share service ideas and contribute to national planning. I'm looking forward to chatting with all of you who can get to this gathering in Launceston.

Generous donation from Maple-Brown Abbott

Despite the difficult financial environment of the past year, Maple-Brown Abbott Limited once again has generously supported the work of the TOS. This company is the investment manager for the Theosophical Society in Australia. We are very grateful that they have been able to make a donation to the International TOS work this year. They have asked that their donation of \$6 000 be distributed for the following work in 2009:

- \$2 000 for the TOS in Pakistan's Educational Sponsorship Program
- \$2 000 for the SEE Vision Project coordinated by the TOS in Chennai, India
- \$2 000 for AIDS welfare programs through the TOS in Nairobi, Kenya

These amounts have been transferred to the recipient international groups with the donations from Australian TOS groups and individuals.

Update on our national projects

Many, many thanks for your fundraising efforts and personal donations to our two major national projects in 2009.



- On your behalf we have transferred \$5 400 to the TOS in Pakistan to fund four literacy home schools for children and young women who would otherwise not have access to literacy teaching.
- You have donated \$2 910 for the SEE Project to provide spectacles and cataract operations for the needy in Chennai.
- In addition to these national projects we have transferred your donations to the Educational Sponsorship Program in Pakistan, to the Animal Hospital and Women's Welfare Centre on the Adyar Estate, and to the Golden Link College in the Philippines. This last donation will be matched by a donation from the Kern Foundation in the USA.

National TOS contact details in 2009

Contact for donations

Ms Janice Scarabottolo
National TOS Treasurer
PO Box 7418
FISHER ACT 2611

Please send donations to the National Projects and other activities of international TOS groups to the National Treasurer. By amalgamating our donations into one or two electronic funds transfers a year to each international project, we can save several hundred dollars annually. Each individual or group donor is recognised in the email we send to the international project group confirming the funds transfer. Please make cheques out to the *Theosophical Order of Service in Australia*.

Contact for newsletter

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You are invited to send news items, photographs, ideas and comments that might be of interest to fellow TOS members. I would welcome your contributions to our national newsletter. The third edition in 2009 is published in December.

International TOS news

The **Golden Link School** in the Philippines has recently changed its name to the Golden Link College. This is an outstandingly successful project of the Philippines TOS aimed at providing an education for the most needy and helping them break the cycle of poverty and dependency. It began as an early education centre that grew into a primary school, then added a secondary school and is about to offer an accredited college level program. From preschool to college, children and young people can engage in an educational program inspired by theosophical principles. You'll find more information on the International TOS website at: <http://international.theoservice.org>

If you or your TOS group are considering supporting the Golden Link College in the Philippines, you still have time for your donation to benefit from the Kern Foundation's generosity. They have offered up to US\$20,000 to match donations to the Golden Link School in 2009. You'll find detailed information on the International TOS website.

Look out for the **International electronic newsletter**, published approximately every two months. If you have not received an emailed copy of *in-touch.online* and would like to be put on the email list, send a blank message to tos.intouch@gmail.com with '**Subscribe TOS e-newsletter**' in the subject line.

News from our WA TOS group

Members of the Western Australian TOS group based in Perth are having an energetic year supporting a number of projects while promoting the first object of the Theosophical Society. Their service work is also building their group's sense of fellowship and unity.

Once again they've been raising funds for the TOS Pakistan Home School Project and the Golden Link College in the Philippines. They have also been raising funds to supply birthing kits to women in Afghanistan.. It is amazing that such a simple kit saves lives, but the statistics show that 2,000 birthing kits will save approximately 130 mothers' lives. In this activity they have been partnering with SAWA (Support Association for the Women in Afghanistan).



WA TOS members who sold donated books at the Mt Helena Women's Spirituality and Fun weekend.

Another of their projects is focused on a local Aboriginal women's refuge. On Theosophical Society meeting nights, volunteers busily knit squares to make beautiful blankets for the women.



From L to R, Gailene Wester, the TOS coordinator; Vicky Barker, the TOS secretary and Renae Jonas, a TOS member.

Gailene Wester making the donation at the Women's Refuge.



What's new on our Australian TOS web-pages

We have several new postings on our web-pages:

- Links to community service organisations
- Link to Peace Day celebration ideas
- Link to information about products that do not use animal testing.
- Link to information on the Golden Link College in the Philippines

Visit our pages at www.austheos.org.au/tos/ and you'll find links to this new material in the left hand column.

Good news story

Recently *Animals Australia* reported that Woolworths had decided to reduce the number of cage egg s on their shelves. They now challenge the other supermarket chains, particularly Coles and IGA, to demonstrate that they too care about the welfare of laying hens.

Many overseas supermarkets no longer sell any cage eggs and supermarkets in the UK such as Marks & Spencer and Sainsbury's have played a major role in increasing the market share of free range eggs to over 50% of all UK egg sales.

The battery cage is now being phased out in Europe, and will be totally banned by 2012. We need to keep the education campaign going in Australia until we have the same enlightened laws and policies.

Serving in our communities by partnering with other groups

Partnering with established community organisations makes good sense for small groups like ours, provided that their aims and ways of working are consistent with the values that underpin the TOS. We need to be confident that their funding comes from ethical sources, that they act in ways that are respectful of other people's rights and that the services they offer are not conditional upon taking up a particular set of beliefs.

Frequently, established groups have already created networks to identify current areas of need and sources of funding and to coordinate action. They have developed communication strategies at a political level and they have often formed coalitions with other groups with similar aims and are open to further partnerships. At the local level of social welfare, their size has usually enabled them to set up refuges, kitchens, etc.

When you partner with other organisations make sure to let them know that you are working with them as a group of TOS volunteers.

So let's look at some possible partnerships related to our TOS areas of service.

United Nations related activities

The United Nations was built on spiritual principles and universal values such as peace, human rights, human dignity and worth, justice, respect, good neighbourliness, freedom, respect for nature and shared responsibility. TOS groups will therefore find that many UN designated International Days provide opportunities for promoting the theosophical principles

underpinning TOS work as well as networking with similar community groups in supporting relevant UN activities.

Over the next two months we have:

September 8: International Literacy Day

September 10: World Suicide Prevention Day

On average, almost 3,000 people worldwide commit suicide daily.

Suicide Prevention Australia is a non-profit, non-government organisation working as a public health advocate in suicide prevention. There is a link from our TOS web-pages to their website.

September 15: International Day of Democracy

September 21: International Day of Peace

See ideas below.

October 1: International Day of Older Persons

What an excellent opportunity this would be to recognise the contribution of older members of the TOS to our organisation and the community.

October 2: International Day of Non-Violence (Gandhi's birthday) *See Peace Day ideas below.*

October 6: World Habitat Day

Consider supporting activities with local environment groups.

October 9: World Sight Day

A worldwide initiative aims to eliminate avoidable blindness by the year 2020. About 37 million people worldwide are blind and 124 million people have poor vision. Three-quarters of cases of blindness are treatable or preventable. Without intervention, the number of people who are blind will increase to 75 million by 2020.

Wouldn't this be an excellent opportunity to promote our National TOS Project, SEE, that provides free sight screening, spectacles and cataract operations to the poor in Chennai!

October 10: World Mental Health Day

See 'Teaching Kids to Relax' ideas below.

October 17: International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

October 24: United Nations Day

October 24-30: Disarmament Week

November 16: International Day for Tolerance

November 20: Universal Children's Day

See ideas below.

November 25: International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

The Australian Government has sponsored a project entitled, 'Violence against women – Australia says NO!'. You can find information about the project report and organisations working in this area, on their website at <http://www.australiasaysno.gov.au/index.htm>

Peace ideas

In the August 2008 National newsletter, you'll see several pages of ideas for celebrating the International Day of Peace. These include a beautiful peace prayer for the world, suggestions about personal action to promote peace, a guide to starting a Peace Club,



information about participating in the Pinwheels for Peace Project and ideas for planning your own Peace Day event.

You'll find a link to these suggestions on our TOS web-pages.

A commitment to peace

Marguerite Smithwhite wrote the following 'promise' for children, but I think the words are appropriate for all of us. While reciting this commitment, each person lights a candle for peace, sending a continuous belt of light around the world.

As a child of the Universe

I sincerely promise that I shall do my best

To be like a lighted candle:

To put light where there is darkness,

To give warmth where it is cold;

To do something each day that will be beautiful,

To make peace in myself and in others.

And if I fail, I shall not give up,

I shall try again;

And when I succeed my heart will be full

Of Light and Love, of Peace, Joy and Hope.

May Peace Prevail on Earth!

Teaching kids to relax

Have you ever considered promoting the benefits for children of relaxed mindfulness or offering workshops for members' families on this topic?

Experts at Duke University, in Durham, N.C., recommend mindfulness, which is a technique borrowed from meditation, to help children deal with the many academic and social pressures in their lives.

When adults are stressed, they often turn to smoking or alcohol or food to pacify emotions. We need to teach kids how to handle stress in a healthy way," said Dr. Michelle Bailey, a paediatrician at Duke Integrative Medicine, in an August 2009 news release from the university.

Mindfulness encourages children to live in the moment and not fret as much about future events, Bailey said. In addition, practising meditative techniques can help children sleep better, reduce anxiety and stay more focused.

The following exercises can help young practitioners achieve a level of mindfulness:

Mindful breathing: Ask the child to take time in the morning and evening to pay attention to his or her breathing for 20 inhales and exhales. Steady breathing has a calming effect on the body.

Mindful walking: After dinner, take a walk and pay attention to all the sights, sounds and colours. Encourage the child to use this technique on the playground and at school.

Mindful listening: At the dinner table, ring a bell or play a note on a musical instrument to capture the family's attention, then give each person a turn to speak about their day while the rest of the family gives their full attention, to encourage active listening.

To get the best results, Bailey suggests that families go to an accredited, mindfulness-based, stress-reduction program.



"Mindfulness helps kids recognise their thoughts, reconnect with their emotions and understand how that impacts their behaviour," Bailey said in the news release. "Ultimately, if we can heighten awareness of our thoughts, we can modify our emotions and that changes behaviour."

Social welfare and justice

Many partnership possibilities connected with social welfare and justice will involve us in volunteer activities. Volunteers are regarded as playing a crucial role in the well-being of our national community.

According to the most recent Australian statistics:

- the total annual hours volunteered was 713 million
- the median annual number of hours volunteered was 56hrs.

For a listing of organisations working in the community and social services sector, go to the Australian Government website: <http://www.community.gov.au>

The following website provides a search capacity for thousands of volunteer opportunities: <http://jobsearch.gov.au/volunteer/default.aspx>

Animal welfare

Several organisations work in this area in Australia and are an excellent source of information on current campaigns and projects to educate the community. *Animals Australia* has not only campaign information on their website (www.animalsaustralia.org) but also information on vegetarianism and living a cruelty free lifestyle.

Another organisation you could work with or refer to for information is *Humane Society International* at www.hsi.org.au

We also of course have our local animal refuges that are always looking for supporters and hands-on volunteers.

Environment

Our major Australian environmental organisations like *Australian Conservation Foundation* (website: <http://www.acfonline.org.au>) and *WWF*

(<http://www.wwf.org.au>) have news, scientific information, updates on government policies and information about campaigns and email petitions. They also have interactive tools that enable you, for instance, to calculate your environmental footprint.

Don't forget partnership possibilities with your local Council and community environmental groups with an interest in such things as tree-planting and caring for creeks and coastal areas.

A thought to share

When you volunteer to clean the kitchen or scrub the pots, if you practise as a bodhisattva, you will have great joy and happiness while doing so. But if you have the feeling, 'I am doing a lot, and others are not contributing their fair share', you will suffer, because your practice is based on form ...

Thich Nhat Hanh, Cultivating the Mind of Love

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours in service

Carolyn