

Self-help cancer course comes to Dandenong

LIKE many people in the Greater Dandenong area, Cr Maria Sampey's family has been touched by the horrors of a life-changing diagnosis to a family member.

Cr Sampey turned to cancer survivor and therapist Dr Ian Gawler's tapes to help her cope with her son's struggle with leukaemia.

She is imploring others to take advantage of the Gawler Foundation's discount cancer healing programs to be run in the city.

The foundation's 12-week Living Well program is being offered in Dandenong to health-care cardholders for \$35.

"Back in 1980 when our three-year-old son Paul was diagnosed with leukaemia, his [Dr Gawler's] tapes helped me to cope with what we were going through," Cr Sampey said.

"I think this is absolutely fantastic that Ian Gawler would like to branch out to Greater Dandenong.

"I know that we have people that have been diagnosed with cancer in our city who are not financially well off and who would like to know what else there is available that might enhance the cancer treatment that they are undergoing."

Gawler Foundation therapist Robyn Jones said the Dandenong program would be based on principles of self-help and self-empowerment.

"It covers elements like looking at the foods we eat, and meditation, which has been acknowledged as one of the best anti-stress techniques.

"We talk about healthy emotions and pain management, and talk about the causes of cancer."



Finding peace: Maria Sampey and Robyn Jones are encouraging health-care cardholders to take advantage of a cancer program. **Picture:** Ted Kloszynski

In 1974, Dr Gawler developed bone cancer in his right leg, which was amputated at the hip. The following year, the cancer spread to his pelvis and chest and he was told he had only weeks to live.

After an intense regime of research, meditation and diet, he has marked 30 years of being cancer-free.

The program will run from May 25-August 17 at the Heritage Hill Museum and Historic Garden, 66 McCrae Street, Dandenong. The foundation is running another program at Springvale council chambers from September 28. Bookings: Gawler Foundation, 5967 1730 or www.gawler.org

Pratt a 'full-on' helper

By Michael Randall

THE late Richard Pratt was a man who "exhibited enormous passion in everything he did", says a former chairman of Visy Cares Centre in Dandenong.

Former City of Springvale mayor Peter McCall was on the board for eight years and had numerous meetings with the Visy Industries tycoon, who died last week aged 74 after a battle with prostate cancer.

Mr McCall said Mr Pratt was the catalyst for the Visy Cares Centre, which had served the city's youth for more than 10 years.

"Richard knew we needed something for our youth in Dandenong.

"He poured in about \$400,000, the State Government did the same, the council put in about \$200,000 and donated the land. They got the rest through a fund-raiser and the Visy Cares Centre was born."

One of his fondest memories of Mr Pratt was of a fund-raiser at his Kew mansion Raheen, where the "cardboard king" poured an extra \$50,000 into the centre.

"On a number of occasions, Richard and Jeanne made their home Raheen available for fund-raising activities supporting the Visy Cares Centre.



Lasting legacy: Richard Pratt at the official opening of the Visy Cares Centre in 2003. **Picture:** Joseph Mastroianni

"I still remember him asking me about Dandenong and how the Visy Cares Centre was doing — he was running a multibillion-dollar business and still wanted to know what was happening out this way.

"Later in the fund-raiser, he

sang *What a Wonderful World* in his baritone voice and dedicated it to the Visy Cares Centre.

"He said to the people at Raheen, 'Peter tells me times are tough and there's another \$50,000 in the till to help

'Whether it was supporting footy, the arts, the battlers, the Aboriginal community, his family, he poured everything into it.'

Peter McCall

you through hard times'.

"That's the sort of bloke he was."

Staff at Visy Board's factory in Greens Road, Dandenong, joined others at the company's Australasian sites in observing a minute's silence at 11am on Thursday to coincide with Mr Pratt's funeral service.

Mr McCall, who runs Dandenong-based security firm Coastcom Security, said everything Mr Pratt touched was "full on".

"Whether it was supporting footy, the arts, the battlers, the Aboriginal community, his family, he poured everything into it.

"Youth was right up the front. He embraced the Visy Cares Centre with passion and he was unrelenting."

The Visy Cares Centre is located near the Greater Dandenong Council offices and Dandenong Market.



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