



Stories from the GBB

WINTER EDITION 2024

Knocking Out Barriers During Term 2

As we come into the cooler months, I find myself reflecting on the spirit of resilience and camaraderie that defines our community. It is truly heartening to witness how we come together, time and time again, to support one another through every season of life.

For staff and volunteers at The Girls & Boys Brigade, the excitement never stops! Children saw many big wins in the homework room last term, which you can read more about on page 3.

Our teens have been enjoying a weekly boxing program offered at PCYC and absolutely loving it. They also recently returned from an exciting camp to Katoomba, where they were able to spend time with young people from MYST, a service local to the Blue Mountains. Collaborating with other organisations has allowed us to use our resources most effectively while maximising our impact on young people and their families.

Speaking of families, several parents, grandparents, and carers gathered last term for an 8-week workshop, Bringing Up Great Teens. The program provided solidarity and strategies around some of today's tricky questions about caring for teens. Feedback from participants was glowing, and we are excited to see how this program helps foster closer family connections.

We can't forget about our alumni, who returned to our building this June for a special reunion event. It was inspiring to hear their memories as well as the impact the GBB had on the rest of their lives. I hope you feel encouraged reading the story on page 2 knowing that you are having the same impact on today's children.

Stefan Lamour-Jansson
Executive Officer





Celebrating Moments and Milestones

It can feel really strange to go from attending The Girls & Boys Brigade regularly, in some cases for over a decade, to suddenly not attending at all upon graduation. But recently, all alumni of The Girls & Boys Brigade were invited to return to the centre for a special reunion event.

The warm, welcoming atmosphere was all-encompassing as alumni trickled into the building, greeting each other in the familiar halls. While the program rooms have evolved significantly over the years, they still held echoes of the past.

Attendees reminisced about the old music room with its record player, where children used to take turns choosing their favourite tunes. Others recalled the day the centre got a television, allowing them to watch motion pictures for the first time. Recreation rooms with pool tables and table tennis were some of the most popular of their day, along with craft areas where pottery wheels once spun. And who could forget the Billy Karts that used to zip around the basement (and occasionally, the street)?

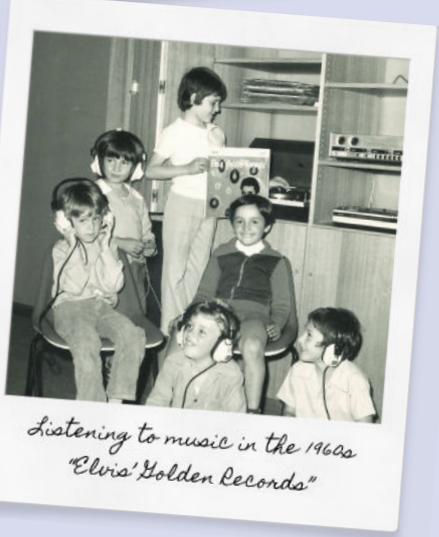
Alumni in attendance came to The Girls & Boys Brigade as early as 1967, with some even going on to work at the centre after graduating from high school. Back then, the job of supervising children could be daunting as there was only one staff member in charge at a time.

What's changed? It depends on who you ask. Child-to staff ratios have improved, and spaces have been redesigned to better serve today's needs. Many beloved staff members known to alumni have moved on or retired. Despite these changes, The Girls & Boys Brigade remains a safe place where young people can try new things, make friends, and enjoy childhood – thanks to generous people like you who help us along our way.

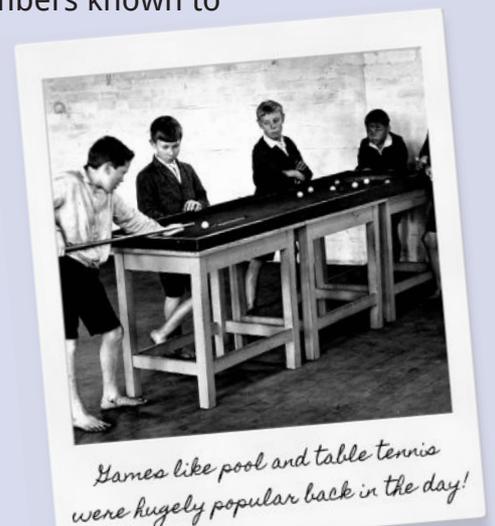
If you couldn't make it to the reunion but would like to stay informed about future events, please email info@girlsandboysbrigade.com.au to be added to our contact list.



*1998 Christmas Disco
25 years ago!*



*Listening to music in the 1960s
"Elvis' Golden Records"*



*Games like pool and table tennis
were hugely popular back in the day!*

From Quiet to Confident

How patience & persistence helped Kwame find his voice

When Kwame first came to The Girls & Boys Brigade, he was extremely shy. Trauma from his past made it difficult for Kwame to open up and trust others. But with time, patience, and consistent support, Kwame is now thriving and looks forward to each day at the centre.

Earlier this year, Kwame and his mother fled conflict in their home country to come to Australia. Unfortunately, this meant leaving some of their family behind.

After arriving, they were able to find crisis accommodation, but finding work was tough. Kwame's mother's professional credentials were not valid in Australia, and their family would have to start over with nothing – except the support of The Girls & Boys Brigade.

Kwame cautiously started attending the Children's Program, where he kept to himself. Some staff were not sure if Kwame could speak, as he was resistant to communicate or make eye contact. He ate alone, showing little interest in food offered to him.

"Each day, we tried offering new snacks to figure out what he might like. We changed our routine to better support him," said Miss Hannah. "He would only really talk if he really had to, but he started bonding with the kids without needing to say much."

Over time, Kwame became more and more comfortable at the centre – especially in the homework room. He would absorb book after book, and staff quickly discovered that he was not only verbal but extremely bright and eager to learn.

Sports, especially football, became another outlet for Kwame. Despite not growing up as a sporty child, having access to the basement has helped Kwame explore physical activities.

"I just think the GBB has given him a lot. Relationships, support systems, friends, peers, that one-to-one support. His mom has started to come volunteer, so they're experiencing that community connection," said Miss Hannah. "It's really inspiring to see."



Connections at Camp Katoomba

Forging friendships beyond city limits and comfort zones



The recent youth camp to Katoomba meant a lot to all the youth in attendance, but for two of them, it was a truly transformative experience.

As the crisp Friday morning unfolded, the bus filled with bags, food, and excited chatter. First stop: Aqua Golf in Penrith!

After “sinking” a few shots and refuelling (the children, not the bus) we refocused on driving, accompanied by pop hits from the 80s – a surprising choice by youth mostly born in the 2010s. Singing along made the drive go

by quickly, and before long, we had arrived at “home” for the next two days.

For siblings Elijah and Maya, attending camp was a big step. They’ve been going through a tough time recently and haven’t attended the GBB in a while. Mr. Bill really encouraged them to come, and was so pleased by how quickly they came out of their shell.

“They were just in the best spirits, laughing and cracking jokes the whole time,” said Mr. Bill.

The weekend itinerary focused on forging connections between youth from the GBB and MYST, a service local to the Blue Mountains. Games like pool, basketball, and hacky sack helped facilitate some great conversations and friendships, especially for Elijah and Maya.

This camp showed how valuable it is to provide young people with opportunities to make friends, explore new places, and try activities that they couldn’t otherwise afford. It’s so much more than just a fun weekend away – rather, it is a memory that youth cherish for the rest of their lives.

Save the Date!

GBB Golf Day

Thursday October 24 | 7:30 AM to 3:30 PM

Save the date for The Girls & Boys Brigade’s 11th Annual Golf Day at Manly Golf Club! Enjoy golf, food, friends, and exciting prizes at this must-attend event!

Tickets on sale now at girlsandboysbrigade.org.au



Find us on Facebook @TheGirlsBoysBrigadeSyd and Instagram @GirlsAndBoysBrigadeSyd

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