



Reflecting on the last few months, it's hard not to focus on the challenges and uncertainty that have come with COVID-19. Mirabel's immediate reaction was concern for the children and carers – particularly for those grandparents, deemed most vulnerable to the virus, raising their grandchildren.

But once these worrying times have passed, the generosity, kindness and incredible community spirit that surround Mirabel is what I will remember the most.

Our phones have been ringing hot with supporters asking what they can do to help. Hampers, supplies and activities for the children have been dropped off on doorsteps. Online shopping vouchers were sent to pass on to families we couldn't reach. Our volunteers, with no activities to attend, offered to do whatever was needed and our

Education Program has received an unexpected and valuable boost as a result. We now have a team of volunteers helping children with online schooling, and supporters have donated innovative online programs including a daily exercise routine specifically designed for Mirabel carers and a before- and after-school program for primary school children.

If every cloud has a silver lining, then this has been ours. Above all, the ongoing resilience, gratitude and selflessness of the carers and their children is a reminder of exactly why these families are so special.

Stay safe and well and I look forward to seeing many of you when life returns to some normality.

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Jane Rowe - Founder/CEO

#### Sampson

Sampson is nine and attends the Mirabel Southern Boys Groups. Sampson has a lot of energy and suffers from ADHD, which can be a handful for his carers. His grandpa, Harry, reports that isolation has been a challenge. Recently Sampson, along with twelve other eight- to ten-year-old boys, called into the Southern Boys Group Zoom meeting. It was fantastic fun with charades, celebrity heads, a quiz and a treasure hunt that kept the boys busy and gave the grandparents a break. At one stage Sampson set up the iPad in his backyard and showed the other boys how he does a very impressive jump on his BMX. Through these groups Mirabel continues to keep connected to the children, as well as keeping them

connected to other kids with similar experiences, so they know they are not alone. Harry even found time to have a cup of tea!



#### Carers & kids online

So you think home schooling is hard? Spare a thought for our Mirabel carers and kids who are tackling home schooling with minimal resources. Because many Mirabel children live with elderly grandparents, home schooling for them presents some unique challenges. Kathleen, 78, cares for her ten-year-old grandson Harley and nine-year-old granddaughter Hope who are both home schooling. "I never thought I would need to be a teacher. All of the logins, passwords and computer programs – it's been a real challenge. When I went to school it was just books and pencils!"

Kathleen attended an online carer support group and Harley will be joining our upcoming tutoring

program – just some of the ways Mirabel is supporting families like Kathleen, Hope and Harley to navigate the difficulties facing our community right now.

### Keeping in contact with kids during COVID-19

It was deflating to learn that face-to-face contact with Mirabel children couldn't happen under COVID-19 restrictions. However, we've taken new challenges head on and developed innovative ways to keep in contact with families. I personally had a conversation with two young people about having youth group online and they screamed with excitement, saying that they couldn't wait to see their friends again.

Some children who I had believed were shy proved me seriously wrong and were extremely chatty when telling me about what they'd been doing! Most kids aren't having contact with anyone outside their families, so our online calls brighten their day. After a video call with

a Mirabel child, I received a text from their carer telling me that her granddaughter was in a much happier mood.

We now run multiple youth and children groups using Zoom, giving

them a safe space to keep in contact with their friends. One child said that out of everything he was missing during isolation, he missed his monthly Mirabel youth groups the most. Having online chats with the children really highlighted to me how special each and every one of the Mirabel children are. These children inspired me before this new online system of communicating, but they inspire me even more now.

Sophie – Mirabel's Youth & Children's Programs



#### **Deliveries**

Donated hampers and vouchers from Pinchapoo, Igniting Change, Suzi Carp, Andrew Castan, Emma Warwick and Lauriston Girls School – to name just a few – were distributed to Mirabel families in this time of need. It's such a generous gesture from members of the community and the overwhelming response from Mirabel families is how reassured they feel to be remembered in such a difficult time.



#### **Melbourne Ladies Lunch**

The fifth Mirabel Ladies Lunch in February was a great success thanks to the committee of Sally Crinis, Sophie Rice, Laura McLachlan and Sarah Gale. Special thanks goes to MC, Hamish

McLachlan, Mirabel young person Brandon for sharing his story, Mirabel Ambassador Lauren Phillips and everyone who donated silent auction prizes. Since the inaugural lunch in 2016, funds from the event have secured a home for Mirabel and supported countless young people.

# Hands up if you're sick of being a couch potato

Initiated by Lord Somers Camp & Power House, Mirabel is part of a stepathon fundraising initiative taking place on Sunday 21 June 2020. The event will support our community's most vulnerable in these difficult times.

Rock Around the World is a virtual marathon uniting Australians in the common goal of making their way around the length of the world (40,075km) in just 24 hours. What a great excuse to get off the couch, exercise and support a great cause at the same time!

This is not a typical fun-run. We are proud to be celebrating diversity of movement so you can step up (run, walk, jog), rock out (wriggle, dance, move) or roll on (wheelchair, cycle, skate). It would be great if you could recruit some friends and raise support for Mirabel. www.rockaroundtheworld.org.au



## Grassroots Sports Club and Sydney Ladies Lunch

Fundraising events for March and onwards had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This included the Sydney Ladies Lunch and Grassroots Sports Club AFL Lunch, which had more than 800 people set to attend. A huge thank you to the organising committees who put in so much work preparing for these events. Hopefully all our events will be back soon.

### Help support the Mirabel Foundation

Donate online at www.mirabelfoundation.org.au/donate

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