

**Edition 28, October 2012 – January 2013**

## CEO's Message

**January 2013**

Welcome back to a new year with Menslink! I was very fortunate to have a month off over Christmas; most of which I spent down in the mountains with my girls (daughters, partner and my eighty-three year old mum). Very refreshing and a welcome change from the heat back in Canberra.

This year has had a cracker start already, as those of you involved with the PMs XI game will be able to confirm. For those who don't know, Cricket ACT and First Bloke Tim Mathieson selected Menslink as the match day charity for the game. This was a tremendous honour for us, as it's probably the first time a local charity has been selected for such an important gig. All credit goes to the Menslink team and ex-CEO Glenn Cullen in particular for getting us over the line. The match was probably the biggest awareness campaign Menslink has ever undertaken. We had radio and TV coverage on all the major local networks and I got to give a speech about Menslink and what we do in front of the Prime Minister and over a hundred selected guests.

More importantly, over a hundred volunteers got together on the day and went out to the crowd handing out over four thousand thundersticks and Menslink information cards. We all had an awesome time and more people than ever before have heard of Menslink and the great work we do. Politicians from all sides (both Federal and local) also got on board collecting money (we raised over \$4,000 for our programs!) and raising awareness. Federal Member Andrew Leigh gave a great interview on WIN News about Menslink. I think I need to watch out for my job if he keeps it up!

As a result of all the good work from the Menslink crew, more Canberrans than ever know about Menslink and the great work you all do. Even in the last few days we've had a few young men and their mums approach us and a whole bunch of potential mentors wanting to join up. Good thing the boys are running three intakes this year...

On another note, Ben and I are spending a full day out with the Raiders' football team tomorrow, filming for our "Silence is Deadly" campaign. We're be trying to encourage more young blokes to come and talk about hassles in their life - whether it is bullying, relationship problems, school or even work issues. Too many young

blokes – and even us adults – suffer in silence because we're embarrassed to talk about our problems. I know I was. However, it's perfectly natural and normal to have problems at some time in your life - and you can get through tough times faster and better if you talk your hassles over with someone who can help. A mentor. A counsellor. A youth worker. The Raiders go and see a physio when they get injured on the field. They also go and see a counsellor if stuff happens in their lives. That's why they're a successful team.



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Anyway I hope you all had a relaxing time over the Christmas and New Year break and I look forward to catching up with you through the year. Happy February!

### **Office Update**

Apologies for this newsletter coming out a bit later than usual – we've had a very busy time lately so get yourself a cuppa, make yourself comfy and read all about it:

Those of you who have been in to the Menslink office in the last month or two will have noticed a distinct change in the atmosphere of the place - definitely a change for the better! After a whole lot of organising, juggling, moving furniture and disruption to the everyday workings of the place, we now have an office that looks great!

The ancient carpet in the upstairs offices and hallway has been ripped up and replaced by much better carpet, kindly donated by Just Better Care, thanks to mentor Fergus Nelson. Feels great under foot when the shoes slip of on a hot summer's day! Bunnings donated a whole pile of floating timber-style flooring as well. This was laid in the kitchen/waiting room area and in the photocopy room, giving the area a much lighter, airier feel and look... and smell! We'd like to thank David Chittick from Harvey Norman Fyshwick, who arranged the laying

of the floorboards, and also Lemon's carpets, who worked hard to get the carpet down in a day so that we could get back to normal as quickly as possible.

We had a bit more disruption when we discovered that a heap of wiring for the computer and phone systems had to be re-done but eventually things settled down... just in time for the Christmas/New Year break! We hope you all had a cheery festive season and hope to see you soon!

### **LinkUp Laser Zone**

KAPOW!

We had our September Link Up in October, wow zow wow, just to confuse ya.

On a beautiful spring evening a few of us met up out at Zone 3 in Belconnen for an evening of zap 'em up Laser Tag. The friendly staff kindly explained the rules of the game to those of us who had no idea what we were doing. Those that did know what they were doing, well... they just yawned and said "just get on with it."

So we did get on with it. We loaded up the weapons, charged into the laser pit and started firing at whatever moved. It was a heap o' fun knowing that if you got shot, it's

OK, you'll be right to keep going, no harm done.

It was pretty cool stalking around, looking for targets to shoot and having a bit of a laugh. And it was good to see that the old guys could match it with the young dudes. Chris Murphy won the first game, but I'm proud to say that Ben Wise, one of us old dudes, scored the most in the second game. So it's one-all between the young'uns and old'uns.

After we finished zapping away, a few of us went down the road and dined at a Turkish Restaurant. It's hidden away a bit, but it is very good. We had a lovely Turkish feast and a damn fine chat. Very, very enjoyable to say the least.

### **LinkUp Trivia Night**

A Trivial Link-up

A Menslink record was broken in October when 30 dudes showed up for a Thursday night link-up. And what a great way to welcome our ten new matches, almost all of whom were present on the night. The latest intake has attracted a great bunch of blokes, young & not-so-young, and we're looking forward to hangin' out at future events.

Centrally located in Curtin, the St. James Uniting Church was the scene for what was to be a hotly-contested trivia challenge.

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And with the pizzas (supplied by Curtin Milk Bar) ferociously devoured, quizmaster Gaz wasted no time in kicking off the brain-strainers. Questions covered all things trivial, from the names of Britney Spears' ex-husbands right through to whether cockroaches continue living after decapitation (they do). And on a sidenote, it was truly alarming just how many contestants could recall pi to 4 decimal places.

Intermittent "spot challenges" proved popular, with respective winners taking home edible prizes, while a paper-aeroplane challenge tested everyone's origami skills. The team of Jack & Michael won this comfortably, with their plane being the only one to defy gravity for more than millisecond.

There were many highlights during the night which we won't re-live here. But the undoubted lowlight was the final challenge; a Gangnam Style impersonation which produced some of the most dreadful dancing ever seen in a church. For the record, Chris N. got the nod for least-worst impersonation of the night.

Overall the team proving to have the largest amount of truly useless knowledge was the partnership of Alex M. & Rob. Their thrilling 1-point victory won them each a \$35 JB Hi-fi voucher. Well done gents! And of

course, thanks to all those who made the Menslink trivia night a lot of fun - look forward to doing it again sometime.

### Spring Camp

Twenty-five of Menslink's finest ambassadors went coastal in late November for the annual Summer Camp. It quickly became obvious that the weather gods were smiling as we were treated to two-and-a-half days of sun-drenched bliss.

The "campers" arrived in spits and spurts over the course of Friday evening. I say "campers" because we weren't exactly roughing it. You see Menslink brains-trust had decided to abandon the tent-accommodation of previous camps in favour of the comparatively-luxurious dorm-style lodgings that exist at ANU's Kioloa facility. Don't say we don't look after you.

By dinner time everyone scheduled to attend had appeared, with the exception of a nameless party of three who apparently took the scenic route to the South Coast. To be fair, the Kioloa camp ground isn't the easiest place in the world to find, but when we were still a few short on the head count at 9pm there were a few worried faces getting around. They eventually did show up, wondering what all the fuss was about! But it was their loss

as they missed out on a very tasty spag-bol dinner kindly whipped up by Dave & Shuni.

Before bedtime the young blokes burned off some energy with a pretty spirited game of spotlight while the older blokes chose to instead chew the fat, conserving their energy for the big day ahead. But there was still some drama to come that night with the local Kioloa ticks seemingly taking exception to our presence. Young Jakob (neck) was the first to be munched on, soon followed by Ben (armpit) and Harbs (groin - ouch). No-one really seemed to know exactly how to get these stubborn little critters out, but eventually Shane AKA "The Terminator" took the bull by the horns. Having managed to locate some tick-removing tweezers, Shane rather deftly removed the rather vile insects. Rather you than I Shano.

The combined amount of sleep achieved in the young dudes' dorm that night could probably be measured in seconds, evidenced by the fact that some of them literally had to be pried out of their beds in the morning. The sea was calling our names, and after a quick brekky we piled into a convoy of cars headed for Barling's Beach where kayaks awaited.

It was a real spectacle that morning and the surface of the water was mirror-like as we paddled out in

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pairs. It wasn't long before some of us came a croppa; in particular the kayak of Michigan & Sam seemed to have a lot of trouble staying upright.

From there it was on to Broulee where we downed some pizzas for lunch before surf-school was in session. And if you think surfing looks tough, that's because it is. The struggles commenced before we were even given a board, as evidenced by the difficulty many of us had getting into our wetsuits. How they found one to fit Mongo we'll never know. And it only got tougher from there, although many of the first timers managed to stand up, albeit fleetingly. Good on those who did give the surfing a crack; despite the difficulty factor it was a lot of fun indeed. It was however a little disappointing to see many of the young guys sit out the surfing... their loss.

Back at Kioloa a game of Ultimate Frisbee had broken out while others spent their free time having a well-earned afternoon nap. It wasn't long until the BBQ was cranking and Luke single-handedly cooked enough meat to feed a small army. Top stuff Luke, that sort of initiative will get you a long way in life.

Soon after our dinner had settled it was time for that great Menslink tradition – the roaring campfire! And it was a beauty too. The bags of marshmallows soon disappeared,

with many of the young blokes learning the hard way not to overcook them, watching in dismay as their marshmallow slid off the stick into the glowing coals.

Another (more recent) Menslink camp tradition has been the appearance of a guest speaker to deliver a bit of a yarn at the campfire. At the winter camp in July this role was performed admirably by footy legend Clyde Rathbone. This time around we were lucky enough to acquire the services of author and Menslink supporter, Shane Horsburgh. Shane has crammed an incredible amount of life's experience into his 40-or-so years on earth and it was enthralling to have him share it with us. But above all else it was the candour in which he spoke of his own personal battles which was most impressive. There was something almost reassuring to learn that a big, strong, successful guy like Shane experienced the same kind of battles us mere mortals go through. Shane's book is called "Fighting Blind"- read it! Allen & Unwin publishers have been kind enough to donate a copy to Menslink so if you'd like to borrow it, let us know.

We were all a little inspired after Shane spoke and not a single person left their seat at the campfire. We thought it'd be a great opportunity to talk about why we were all here and what we hoped to get out of

mentoring, young and old alike. It was really touching to hear everyone's stories, and comforting to look at the faces around the fire and realise that we're not travelling this road alone. It was getting towards the end of a loooooong day but plenty of us chose to stay at the fire under the spectacular Milky Way for a few more hours.

After the obligatory clean-up on Sunday morning, sadly it was time to hit the road, but not before some of us made a final stop-off at Maccas in Bateman's Bay to use some of the vouchers kindly donated by Gungahlin Maccas. Lastly, thanks to all of the mentors who donated their cars, petrol and time to come to the coast with us. You're a pretty awesome bunch of dudes.

## **LinkUp Movie Night**

Gran Torino (spoiler alert!!)

Twenty-five or so fellas braved sweatbox conditions at Menslink HQ in the middle of summer for the screening of Clint Eastwood's "Gran Torino". Despite the mild discomfort everyone had a good night.

Choosing a flick that can be enjoyed by both a 13 & 68 year-olds alike is not a simple task. But Office Manager Fiona seemingly found one which fitted the bill in Gran Torino (otherwise known as Dirty Harry VI).

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Gran Torino is the story of a rather jaded old war vet, Walt. Walt likes to spend his free time sitting on his porch downing tinnies of beer while being generally unpleasant to his immigrant neighbours. But hidden beneath this harsh exterior is a heart of gold, a heart that eventually ceases beating at the climax of the film when he's turned into swiss cheese by some Asian gangsters. It's probably an understatement to say that Walt really took one for the team.

Despite the amazingly crappy acting of lead character Thao, Gran Torino was pretty solid entertainment. I hope the movie stimulated some good conversation in the car rides home.

In a rare occurrence Pizzas were the food of choice, but we mixed it up this time, getting Turkish style instead of Dominos. Sometimes it's worth paying a few extra bucks to support local business.

At the conclusion of the movie we had a bit of a quiz session, and those who had paid attention were

rewarded with various prizes. Now either you lot are a perceptive bunch or I just made the questions too easy because it seems just about everyone nailed a response, except poor ole Michigan who was kicking himself when he found out which U.S State the movie was set in.

Thanks to all of you for a great night. See you all on February 16 for the annual Sailing link-up on Lake Burley Griffin. Can't wait!

## **Menslink Christmas BBQ 2012**

8<sup>th</sup> December 2012 Cotter Bend

What a great turn-out we had to Menslink's 2012 Chrissy BBQ! It was a glorious summer's day out at the Cotter, and we wouldn't have wanted to be anywhere else. It was great to be able to meet the extended families of those in the Menslink community, and great also to see some of the younger & braver

crowd bravely having a bit of a paddle in the river. The Chrissy BBQ is our way of saying thanks to the families of the fine men who volunteer their time to be Menslink mentors.

The following people were awarded certificates on the day:

**Summer Camp award** (to the young blokes who really challenged themselves): Chris, Jakob and Luke

**Richard Shanahan award** (for going above and beyond): Shane Wilkinson, Audi Miniotas, Brett Jeanroy

**Friends of Menslink** (mentors): Denis Sargent, Scott Cassidy, John Russell, Matt Dippl, Peter Graham, Jason Waddell, Jud Hampson, Tim McNevin

**Friends of Menslink** (mentees): Connor, Omar, Dylan, Connor, Tim, Scott, Kodie