

National Families Week

We all want to see our kids succeed and Greater Shepparton is a prime place to facilitate this. With a strong network of active community and business volunteers, an extensive network of preschool and school communities through to a growing regional economy offering opportunities of work experience, part time and full-time work and diverse career pathways.

Ideally families provide a number of things –

For babies and toddlers their basic needs are met, they are supported to reach their developmental milestones. Kids are ready to start school having a rich vocabulary because they are engaged in conversation and have books read to them; they regularly attend school to be able to gain the most from the experience, they feel connected to the school community and their learning needs are met. These children transition well to secondary school and have a trusted adult in their life and are able to build their resilience to tackle life's curve balls. They are actively engaged with extracurricular activities and are supported to explore career pathways. Once kids finish school they either successfully find work or undertake further study.

The Lighthouse Project has been instrumental in building a movement of volunteers to support our kids to success. To date we have attracted over 450 generous and warm community and business people who are utilising their skills and connections to create better outcomes for our kids, so they can thrive.

Fundamentally it's about connecting kids within our community. To provide them with access and equity to opportunities so they can reach their full potential and thrive.

Practically - this looks like active retired teachers and warm, grandmotherly figures supporting the Conversations with Kids program at Gowrie Street to build the junior school kid's vocabulary and literacy. Many businesses support the primary schools with teams of readers and homework clubs. The Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, like many businesses have maintained a strong and active support of Wilmot Road Primary School Learning Club over the last five years. We have business people joining kids in Mooroopna for the SEAT (Sit, Eat and Talk) program to share lunch and have conversations about their careers, aspirations, hobbies and interests. There are community groups like Shepparton Central Rotary Club and individuals supporting life skills programs where Year 5-6 kids explore our city's attractions – Motor Museum, SAM, Victoria Park Lake and participate in activities like yabbing and camp oven cooking.

Many schools – both primary and secondary are linking with our industries through tours of businesses and organisations (such as Gouge drycleaning, Jefthomson and Goulburn Valley Water) to understand what those businesses do in the region, the career pathways to get work and career options. We also have other businesses like WB Hunter and Foott Waste who provide tours of their facilities where students connect with the real world and understand issues such as Work Place Health and Safety in real world context, rather than just a teacher talking about it in a classroom.

And then there are industries who showcase the variety of jobs where there are skills shortages – we've had GV Health showcase the 400 odd jobs that will be needed when the re-build is complete; the Law Court showcase the variety of positions that support the Magistrates Court; and the transport industry highlighting the many entry points into the industry.

And looking to the future Lighthouse is supporting Mooroopna Park Primary Scholl to provide healthy meals to all kids at the school by connecting with local businesses to provide food ingredients; we are partnering with GV Pregnancy Support and local community groups to establish

the Family Haven in Mooroopna and helping the kids at Gowrie Street to Dream Big, exploring their career aspirations.

The Greater Shepparton community has the will, strength and resources to see all the kids of the community thrive. It's an exciting place to raise our children.

If you would like to know more please contact Fiona Smolenaars at Lighthouse 58 219 962.