

# 25 Years Young



**ANNIVERSARY MAGAZINE**  
**A QUARTER OF A CENTURY HELPING**  
**PEOPLE LIVE WELL WITH CANCER**



# FOUNDING BLOOMHILL

Bloomhill Cancer Care was founded in 1997 by oncology and palliative care nurse Margaret Gargan. It was originally the Palliative Care Centre for the Living and based in Eumundi.

Diagnosed with cancer in 1987, Margaret ('Margie') found limited support in the community to assist her and her family through her cancer experience. Subsequent to her successful treatment and recovery, she embarked upon establishing a cancer centre that would focus on quality of life and living, with a focus on supporting the whole family.

The Buderim property on Ballinger Rd where Bloomhill is now located was purchased in 1991 by the late John White. A self-made successful businessman, Irish-born John had bought the property for his wife Lyn Pfeiffer, an avid gardener whom he had said "needed somewhere to dig in the dirt".

John was Lyn's second husband, and she loved and admired him deeply. He often shared stories of adventure and mischief during childhood in Northern Ireland, Lyn said. John had named the property after an English estate, "Bloomhill", which bordered his childhood family home in Ireland. It was a place that held many memories, where he and his cousin Bobby had poached ducks and rabbits.

John was sadly diagnosed with lung cancer a few years after he and Lyn fell in love and he died in September 1996.

Lyn had been working in welfare when she met Margie Gargan, who she described as a "visionary".

"Her 'facilitating no regrets' program was inspirational," Lyn said.

Margie had established a palliative care centre with a difference in Eumundi: Palliative Care Centre for



# DATIONS OF OMHILL

the Living. It was the first iteration of a vision Margie had conceived 10 years prior, when working as the head of a cancer ward at Prince Charles Hospital in Brisbane.

Margie had been diagnosed with breast cancer in 1987, when her two daughters were 13 and 10 years old. She observed that children's needs were left out, by conventional medical approaches to cancer treatment, and through her work at Prince Charles Hospital she had set up a family room to allow families to be together when a loved one was dying. It was unique and very successful, as were other initiatives that followed, but she felt it wasn't enough. She wanted to combine all

complementary cancer care then became known as Bloomhill Cancer Help, and later Bloomhill Cancer Care.

In 2006 Lyn sold the property to Bloomhill Property Trust for the price her late husband John had initially paid for it, in the early 1990s. A very generous gesture!

Initially providing massage and counselling services with a team of volunteers, Bloomhill has since evolved to become one of Australia's leading community based cancer care centres. It now provides a nurse-led model, supporting individuals using evidenced-based therapies with a strong emphasis on the benefits

 The original purpose of the organisation was to facilitate “no regrets” for people with cancer.

the lessons she'd learned, through working in hospitals and also in hospice-in-the-home scenarios.

She was determined for the new organisation to be self-funded, so they didn't have to “dance to the Government's tune”, she said. It would have op-shops that would enable it to run without government funding.

The original purpose of the organisation was to facilitate “no regrets” for people with cancer.

“By the time they died, or got well, they had to work through all the issues, so they would have no regrets. So, they went through a healthy grieving process,” Margie said.

In 1999, Lyn offered the use of the property named Bloomhill to establish a cancer care centre inspired and guided by Margie, who founded and directed the organisation for six years.

This nurse-led model of

of exercise, diet, mental health and lifestyle intervention strategies.

Lyn still volunteers today at Bloomhill in the garden. Margie now resides in the Blue Mountains and has become involved with the Cancer Wellness Centre, which modelled its service on Bloomhill's in the early 2000's.

Numerous supporters were instrumental in the foundation and early years of Bloomhill: too many to mention here! However please read on for reflections from some standout figures including our tireless long-serving champion, Patron Raelene Boyle and former CEO Mervat Quirke whose deeply empathetic and professional standards saw Bloomhill gain a new level of trust and respect in the community. Thank you to the many hundreds of staff and volunteers involved, at every turn in the organisation's proud history.

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# 'THE TRUTH IS, IT CAN HAPPEN TO ANYONE'

## HOW OUR PATRON RAELENE FOUND BLOOMHILL CANCER CARE

When former Olympic athlete Raelene Boyle was diagnosed with cancer in 1996, she had retired from sport and was enjoying the beginning of a "simpler life".

"I had let go of the responsibility of fame and I was just moving forward as a normal person on the street," Raelene said. "I was shattered when I was told I had breast cancer."

As a 17-year-old, Raelene represented Australia at the Olympics in Mexico City 1968, claiming silver in the 200m; placing fourth in the 100m, and setting world junior records in both distances. Her world records took 12 years and eight years respectively, to be broken. She went on to collect three gold medals at the 1970 Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh.

"I didn't think that [cancer] could happen to me - I was still my racing weight, I was healthy," Raelene said. "The truth is, it can happen to anyone."

Raelene has been Bloomhill Cancer Care's patron for 25 years, first coming across the charity after moving to the Sunshine Coast, when founder Margaret Gargan invited her to get involved. "Bloomhill at the time was living on the smell of an oily rag," Raelene said. "It was full of volunteers, people donating their time."

"Marg dreamt of growing it into a great community place where

people could go who needed help, after they were diagnosed with cancer, and it would be a place where families could go as well. A place away from mainstream hospital care – somewhere they could have a massage and a chat and relax in a comfortable setting that wasn't threatening at all."

Bloomhill grew into that vision and flourished. It is now one of Australia's leading centres for community based integrative oncology, where people of all ages receive personalised support through any stage of their cancer journey: diagnosis to treatment and beyond.

Raelene was herself very unwell with breast cancer at the time she found Bloomhill and the need for such a community-based facility resonated with her.

"I was not long introduced to the cancer world myself, but it was very hard to find somewhere where people would understand you, where you could speak openly without terrifying your friends and family."

"Those close to you are often in a state of confusion and try to do things to help that don't always help...Bloomhill was an escape, and plays such an important role for people."

### EVOLUTION OF BLOOMHILL

Bloomhill's path as an organisation had not always been clear or linear,



with many approaches for support trialled over the years. But its purpose was always to fill gaps in mainstream oncology, giving people diagnosed with cancer and their families support they needed and wanted.

Care of the individual who was unwell, and the family around that individual, was central to Bloomhill's vision.

"That was exactly what was missing," Raelene said.

The organisation evolved over time alongside advances in science.

"We have professional nurses working with our clients, but you're not walking into a clinical setting. You're walking into a warm, clean, comfortable place where you can sit down on a couch and have a talk," Raelene said.

On behalf of around 1200 clients Bloomhill supports every year, we thank you Raelene for your enormous contribution to Bloomhill Cancer Care.





Board Chair Michael Wise, CEO Christopher John and Administrative Officer Beth Aldrich met with Bloomhill's original landowner Lyn Pfeiffer and former President Bob Brennan earlier this year.

# BETH'S 21 YEAR MILESTONE BRINGS BACK MEMORIES

Like many Bloomhill staff members Beth Aldrich started as a volunteer in reception. A year later a paid position became available in administration. Over the last 20 years Beth has held several positions and worked in many areas of Bloomhill including Admin, IT and Finance.

"It was 20 years as an employee I did about a year's volunteering previous to that so my association

As someone present in the early days Beth knew the importance of holding onto these memories, she said. As well as a box full of photos, newsletters and other mementos she has her own memories of the early days of Bloomhill.

"Margie was passionate about the newsletters," Beth said. "We printed hundreds of copies - they were her way of getting word out and acknowledging people's

her, and say 'I've had an idea'. Then it was all hands on deck. It always worked, she had a vision for how she was going to fund it. It was incredible."

One of Beth's memories is connected to the growing issue of transporting and storing donated goods.

"Originally it was just one guy with a ute. I remember following him down Nicklin Way, it reminded me of the Beverley Hillbillies, the ute overflowing with goods. The ute progressed to a van and then a truck.

"I feel very lucky I got to be involved in that part of Bloomhill, while Margie was there.

"I remember a client had an after-hours emergency. Margie dropped Christmas lunch with the family got in the car picked him up and took him to hospital. She put everyone else first."

Bloomhill would like to say a special "thank you" to Beth for her service over the years. We are truly grateful.

**"...20 years as an employee I did about a year's volunteering previous to that so my association with Bloomhill started 21 years ago. Not sure where that time went!"**

with Bloomhill started 21 years ago. Not sure where that time went!" Beth said.

Beth now works in the People, Policy & Property Office and is also the custodian of a box of precious Bloomhill memorabilia including the newsletters published by founder Margie Gargan during the Bloomhill's first years.

support." Bloomhill continues this tradition in recent years with the monthly Bloomhill News email update, which goes to more than 4,000 supporters. You can subscribe at [www.bloomhill.com.au](http://www.bloomhill.com.au).

Beth spoke about Margie's visions for moving ahead.

"She would walk through the front door, a long coat billowing behind





# GARDEN — OF — HOPE

## WHY BLOOMHILL'S ORIGINAL OWNER STILL ADORES ITS GARDENS

**BY NICKY MOFFAT**

Having lost two husbands to cancer Lyn Pfeiffer knows the human cost of the disease.

It was one of the reasons she was glad the property where she once lived was now home to a leading community based cancer support centre.

Lyn said she understood how hard it would be for anyone to have no support at that time of diagnosis. She knew that several people who came to Bloomhill at present didn't have anyone at home to support them.

"Bloomhill is incredibly important to these people," she said.

Lyn sold the property 'Bloomhill' after its owner, the late John White, died of lung cancer in 1997 and left it to her.

He was an Irish born property developer, and his generosity helped enable the Cancer Care Centre to become established.

"Founder Margaret Gargan was a visionary and gathered a team of devoted volunteers, too many to mention," Lyn said.

"Their efforts as well as the many Committee members over the ensuing years were tremendous.

"Donors in the community, many of whom are still here, have all allowed Bloomhill to evolve and grow since then, and Bloomhill now has a really strong clinical base in the medical field.

"It has become a most welcoming place and sometimes when I am in the garden I hear and see women in groups laughing, chatting and supporting each other. I know it is a good place for them to be and that is what it was meant to be."

Lyn recalled living at Bloomhill in late 1997 but leaving to spend several weeks over Christmas with her daughter and family in Kakadu.

Knowing the property couldn't be left unattended, she advertised for a gardener, and was amazed to discover the man behind its beautiful garden applied for the role.

"When Kate Adena brought her father Felix along, I thought he would believe it too much for one man to look after. But he said, 'I know - I designed it!'. An amazing coincidence!"

"Felix was an incredible landscaper and had built the rotunda now used as the gym. He kept the gardens beautifully – he was very precise about the upkeep.

"On one occasion after he left to live at Narrabundah, the magnificent Buddha belly Bamboo he had planted at the side entrance had grown so huge it was blocking the pathway and we had to ask Peter Shadforth to excavate it for us.... which he kindly did. From then on we escorted Felix via the front entrance as he would have been so devastated at its demise."

Lyn's favourite place is the garden at Bloomhill and she is very grateful for the team of dedicated gardeners who have worked for many years and who are constantly creating wonderful innovations of beauty, guided by Vanessa and Richard Harvey.

In March this year Lyn lost her much loved husband of 20 years, Gordon.

"He had a difficult journey of three years with cancer ...was very stoic and was grateful to have help with lymphoedema therapy, seeing Debbie Myers at Bloomhill," Lyn said.

"It is unlikely that any of the original teams would ever have imagined the size of the organisation now or that it would help more than a thousand people every year.

"Raelene and Judy's continuing support over all these years, through the highs and lows, is remarkable and has been so invaluable to the authenticity of Bloomhill's mantra. Not to mention the financial help in providing the ongoing operation of Bloomhill."

Lyn has volunteered in Bloomhill's gardens since it opened and continued to enjoy making a contribution to their upkeep when she can.

"It's an absolute honour and brings me much joy," she said.





# Q&A WITH MERVAT QUIRKE

## **When did you find Bloomhill?**

In 2005 my husband Steve was diagnosed with brain cancer; I was a mum of five children and working full-time for another charity. In searching for support during his cancer journey, we sought out Bloomhill. Steve and I were beneficiaries of many services including care coordination, counselling, therapies, workshops, educational sessions and transport, each of which provided wonderful support and comfort and helped in so many ways. When Steve passed away, and in the period after his passing, my five young children and I used Bloomhill's bereavement services to help us through a very difficult time.

Through my own personal journey, I knew how Bloomhill can and does make an incredible difference to the lives of people impacted by cancer and I wanted to continue to strive to use my personal experience, my knowledge and skills as an executive, to build the resources and capacity of an organisation that I truly believed in. In 2009 I joined the Bloomhill Committee and commenced a fundraising journey for the new extension, and in 2011 I applied for the General Manager position and was awarded the role. This role

transitioned into a CEO role for seven years and still remains a role that I was very honoured to hold.

## **How did you approach your role at Bloomhill?**

My first-hand understanding of the realities, emotions and challenges that a Bloomhill client may face drove me passionately to ensure that we were making a positive difference in the lives of people touched by cancer. We continued to look for new ways to address the myriad of challenges cancer brings to people's lives.

I was also driven to use my skills as an executive and in community partnerships to ensure the sustainability of Bloomhill as a service cancer patients and their families could count on into the future. Bloomhill is vital to our community.

What I am most proud of is the staff and 500+ volunteers – the lifeblood of Bloomhill. These supportive, skilled people are what underpinned our operations, supporting Bloomhill in all areas, from the op shops to client care services, fundraising to administration, enabling Bloomhill to provide a far greater range of services and support than we would otherwise have been

able to provide. We also had a beautiful workplace culture that was essentially the character of Bloomhill – the sum of its values, goals and attitudes, and how each of its components interacted. I believe these are still the key ingredients of Bloomhill's success.

## **What were Bloomhill's greatest strengths in that period?**

Many people are in some ways touched by cancer; the incidences of both cancer diagnoses and cancer survivorship are rising, and thus there is always increasing need to provide support to people when they need it most.

Whilst the clinical domain focuses on treating the cancer itself, Bloomhill Cancer Care helps the person with cancer to better understand their circumstances. It provides support and complementary care for the 'whole person' and their families for the challenges that lie ahead. The primary benefits of Bloomhill Cancer Care are around a better quality of life and better outcomes for people experiencing a diagnosis. Bloomhill is a safety net – it is always there when the experience of cancer becomes overwhelming. It is impossible to overstate the importance of this to people impacted by cancer.



# AN ORGANISATION BUILT ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS



Trish Wilson was Bloomhill's Clinical Services Lead from February 2016 until October 2021.

She oversaw a period of significant expansion in client numbers and services, at a time of growing emphasis on survivorship due to improvements in treatments which see people live longer with cancer.

While her aims were based on a foundation of many years work in loss and grief and her training as a nurse and counsellor, for Trish it was also important to honour Bloomhill's history.

"An amazing organisation that had been built on the shoulders of giants - everyone who comes leaves their mark for the next generation."

Trish focused on building a strong clinical team first.

"It was evident Bloomhill was becoming more recognised for its holistic approach to care, with more people accessing services," she said. "With the new hospital being built, we reached out to build a strong connection with the hospital's oncology department, knowing that would increase referrals."

"We recruited an additional nurse and were also able to increase the hours of the exercise physiologist. Dietetics and psychology had been minimal, so we recruited a specialist oncology psychologist and we



approached the local university to set up a student led dietetic clinic. Everything evolved. As referrals increased our staff grew – from one psychologist once a fortnight, we had four psychologists and a counsellor covering five days. Psychological support is one of the bigger needs for cancer patients and we always bulk billed so there was no out of pocket cost."

Trish said setting up the Cancer Survivorship Clinic was a significant milestone.

"Improvements in treatment mean people are living with advanced disease longer. We also set up and ran the eight-week mindfulness cancer recovery program. This started in collaboration with the counselling students from USC, and over time we offered it twice a year facilitated by our counsellor."

Trish's approach to clinical services was that people living with cancer need individualised, personalised health care that treats the whole person.

"The aim was to ensure that each person was seen and heard, that they were provided support at one of most difficult times of their lives and we acknowledged the experience extended beyond them to their family. Our philosophy of care was, 'Come as you are'. What can we do for you?"

Also important to Trish was that all services had a strong evidence base.

"We set up the Clinical Advisory

Group: a group of health professionals and academics from the community who met quarterly to ensure decisions made in the clinical services were medically sound, relevant to the community and had a good evidence base."

Her final major achievement last year saw Bloomhill achieve Australian Health Care Standards (AHCS) EQUIP6 certification.

Trish sees Bloomhill's greatest strength as its link to the community.

"Bloomhill is such a trusted organisation by people with cancer on the Coast," she said. "Its reputation has been built by many over a long time, so when people received a diagnosis of cancer, they would seek us out, or friends or colleagues would recommend a visit to Bloomhill."

"Also unique is the holistic approach to care. People's physical, psychological, spiritual, emotional and occupational wellbeing is considered and this care is extended to the family. Amazingly most is provided at little or no cost, which is unheard of in most places in Australia or even overseas."

And then there's the environment, Trish said, "To have such a beautiful place where the community feels so at home and so welcome - the environment creates healing. And so too does the amazing work done by our volunteers. The connection to the community is an important part of what is offered."



## TAKE A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE WITH OP SHOP CURATOR AND CANCER SURVIVOR

# ELAINE FUNCH



### BY JAN RICHARDS

Bloomhill has been lucky to attract many volunteers who have stayed for years and in some cases two decades!

Beerwah Op shop team member Elaine Funch has volunteered with Bloomhill for 20 years, setting up four op shops, managing them and volunteering in them.

Elaine's love affair with Bloomhill started in the Buderim op shop as a volunteer. She ended up second-in-charge.

"I've managed every shop, or given it a make-over, except Maroochydhore," she told volunteer journalist Jan Richards.

Elaine and husband Trevor "put together" Maleny, Cooroy, Brightwater, Tewantin and Beerwah op shops, where she currently volunteers with Nicole Croft.

Elaine says in the early days then CEO Mervat Quirke, "rather liked the way I changed around Buderim and asked me if I'd put together a new shop. I got paid for a-day-and-a-half to put a new shop together. I used Buderim as a template.

"When the time came Richard would go and set it up how I wanted the shelving and change rooms. I would get all the gear and display it. Nic would price the clothes etc."

When the shops were set up, she and Trevor worked in each shop for about six months.

"Trevor trained all the volunteers on the counter and I would be out the back pricing, sorting, washing, ironing..." Elaine said.

She and Trevor are both cancer survivors.

"Bloomhill's been really good for us. It keeps me active, keeps my mind alert. I'm a person who worked all my life. I can't stay home every day, I'd be a nutcase."

### Rapid op shop growth

Elaine says the op shops "went big pretty quick" and she did a "stint on committee, more or less to be a spokesperson for the shop managers".

She laments that both the quantity and quality of donations has dropped with today's disposable clothing culture, "people wear it and throw it", and that so much is sold on Marketplace rather than being donated."

She recalls in the early days at Buderim "it was mindboggling the stuff that used to come in, clothing, collectibles".

"We were really lucky having Ria and Frank Morello. Frank used to price bric-a-brac, he knows collectables and jewellery and he would look out for furniture we could use as fixtures.

"When we first started Ross had a ute and he used to pick up donations. We didn't have a warehouse and as we got more and more stuff we thought where are we going to put it? A volunteer,

Gwen, lived alone and had a double garage and no car, she said 'you can use that'. It was funny the neighbours wondering who this young man was coming into her house all the time."

### Mystery and excitement with each donation

Elaine still has the same sense of excitement opening a new bag of donations.

"You never know what you're going to open up," she said. "I've found the most amazing things. Things worth a lot of money have been auctioned. Two thousand dollars was found in two coats in the warehouse. Russell went into the police, and people came out of the woodwork to claim it, but no one could prove it was theirs."

As far as odd things that have been found among donations Elaine recalls a set of false teeth and a couple of urns with someone's ashes.

"Op shopping is the place to shop for the unexpected treasure, especially items that have been well looked after, loved and cared for and are given to us because family members don't want them, but the astute op shopper will recognise a bargain of good quality that they couldn't get elsewhere."

I say, "It sounds like you've enjoyed it."

"I have."

And I can tell she still does.







# Blooming good

## Centre helps people to survive cancer

JUST as it was intended by its founder Margaret Gargan, Bloomhill Cancer Help has become a very special place. Aesthetically, it is beautiful, nestled within four hectares of picturesque forest.

However, its real special value is in the service it provides to the community - in a real time of need.

For a decade, Bloomhill has assisted many people diagnosed with cancer, and now it is celebrating its tenth anniversary and its achievements as an organisation.

"It's become a lot busier as a lot more people have become aware of us within the community and within the professional community," Bloomhill manager of care Anne Braaten-Pow said.

"We have people from the day of diagnosis, right through their treatment, and after their treatment."

"A lot of people have difficulty re-establishing themselves after treatment and are coming to us at that stage."

"Things change for them and the people around them and things can become difficult in surviving the survival."

The key role of Bloomhill Cancer Help is to offer immediate emotional and practical care and support for any person facing cancer or other life-threatening illness.

This support extends to include family members and friends, from the time of diagnosis.

Bloomhill is self-funded and



BEAUTIFUL PLACE TO BE: Members of Bloomhill's Friday art group are looking forward to the tenth anniversary celebrations.

welcomes donations and financial support.

"Because of the increased numbers of clients, we're in need of more funding - we're always looking for business sponsors and other sponsors," Ms Braaten-Pow said.

Meanwhile, 10th anniversary activities start next Thursday, beginning with a motivational morning tea with guest speaker Clive Duffy talking about spirituality and being "connected to your heart".

To book phone Bloomhill on 5445 5794.

Also on Thursday an afternoon tea will be held for the professional community to get to

know Bloomhill, and the 200 medical centres on the Coast have been invited.

Friday, November 3 is an open afternoon from 1pm to 4pm.

"That's open to anyone who wants to learn about Bloomhill to visit and see what a beautiful place it is," Ms Braaten-Pow said.

From 5.30pm to 7.30pm a cocktail party is open to the community and the guest of honour is Margaret Gargan.

Cost is \$20 and anyone who would like to attend should RSVP to Bloomhill by today.

Next Saturday the celebrations are capped off with a birthday party open to all Bloomhill

**Bloomhill services:** counselling, patient and carer support groups, a men's forum, special support for children, meditation, relaxation, and mindfulness groups, monthly motivational morning tea with inspirational guest speakers, volunteers to support patients and carers and to provide respite care and transport, complementary therapies such as reiki and massage, weekly art groups, physical exercise and yoga groups.

clients, volunteer staff, and friends. Those attending are asked to bring their own drinks and a plate to share.

# Bloomhill says thanks

...have their skills and experience matched to a task or role

Her husband had passed away, she was long retired from her nursing career and needed to fill her spare time.

"It just feels very good giving them my time and I've made many friends," Marian said. "I'll be doing it as long as I can."

Bloomhill Cancer Help supports people living with cancer and their families with a variety of services.

It has more than 400 volunteers working in areas such as the Bloomhill op shops, fundraising, gardening, administration, housekeeping, transport, and event management.

Bloomhill vice-president Jenny Carroll said volunteers were an integral part of the Bloomhill model.

"Eighty percent of income comes in from the op shops and \$8c in every dollar then goes to providing client services," Jenny said.

Anybody wanting to volunteer has an interview with the volunteer coordinator who matches skills and expertise with a role in the organisation.

Last Saturday, volunteers with five and 10 years service received certificates of recognition. Each volunteer was also given a plant cutting from the Bloomhill grounds.



HELPING HANDS: Volunteers with five and 10 years experience, including Maureen Clark and Marion Silver, are recognised with certificates on Saturday.

# Bloomhill hosts awareness week

Cancer support service proves a godsend for families



Anger are delighted with Bloomhill Cancer Help Centre.

only that, they want the community to be aware of the Bloomhill Centre - a community supporters raising a pay off the property at

the community. Bloomhill, with a free sausage sizzle and education forum.

■ Tuesday, 11am to 2pm, brunch at Bloomhill. Cost \$10. Bookings essential.

■ Wednesday, 10am to noon, free Bridg's Jewellery presentation. Bookings essential.

■ Wednesday, 6.30pm, Wine and Roses dinner and entertainment at Bloomhill. Entry is \$35. Bookings essential.

■ Thursday, 10am to 3pm, Bloomhill open day sausage sizzle and open day exhibition.

■ Friday, 10am, Official opening at Bloomhill. Free admission, refreshments. Bookings essential.

■ Friday, 8.30am, fundraising day at Buderim Bowls Club.

■ Saturday 10am to 3pm, Plant a seed for Bloomhill Self Esteem and Art Therapy, \$60 with BYO lunch.

■ Saturday, 6.30pm, Wine and Rose dinner at Noosa Valley Winery.

■ Sunday, 2pm, Wine tasting garden party, \$20. Phone 5445 5714.

# Buderim Chronicle

incorporating Buderim Weekly

Wednesday, September 15

Win tickets to Wall Street Page 44

Tessa makes the cut for Games Page 3

Garage sale for refuge Page 11

# Bloomhill race day's putting fun into fashion

By GAIL LAMER

If you ever needed an excuse to get together with friends and have a good time - this is it.

With the 10th annual Bloomhill Race Day fast approaching, now is the perfect time to round up your friends, pick out your race day finery and buy tickets for this fabulous fundraising event to be held on Sunday, September 22.

This year's Spring Race Day will be held at Corbould Park Racecourse in Caloundra and racers will enjoy a day filled with fashion, fun and a full race schedule.

Holly Tripp and Georgia Burke said the Bloomhill Race Day was definitely on their calendar.

The girls, both psychology students at the University of the Sunshine Coast, were excited about going to the event and planned that they could raise funds for the work of Bloomhill at the same time.

Bloomhill Cancer Help charity offers support to those affected by cancer and their families throughout the Sunshine Coast. With a dedicated team of staff and hundreds of volunteers, they provide a range of services and complimentary therapies including respite care, transport to appointments, massage and counselling.

Bloomhill's Race Day coordinator,

Gail Lamer said they relied on events like the Race Day, to continue providing their valuable services.

Businesses are encouraged to book a table for their staff.

On the day's menu are delicious lunches in the Function Room and Champagne Gardens. Entry into the Champagne Gardens and Members area is only \$55 per person and includes a buffet lunch.

Tickets to the Favourites Room are \$60 per person or \$800 for a table of 10 and include a delicious lunch, champagne on arrival and panoramic views of the racecourse.

Numbers are limited so snap up your tickets now to ensure you don't miss out on your chance to win great prizes, bid in the memorabilia auction and be a part of the Fashion on the Fields.

It is not too late for local businesses to become sponsors and donate auction or raffle items for the event and support this worthy cause.

Funds raised at the event will be matched by a donation from the Sporting Chance Foundation.

For information or to buy tickets, call Gail or Beth at the Bloomhill Cancer Help Centre on 5445 5794.

Holly and Georgia are dressed by The Lily House, who are a business supporter of the Bloomhill event.



Holly Tripp and Georgia Burke put their most fashionable foot forward for the Bloomhill race day.

# Olympic effort fight cancer

Centre attracts support from star athlete

required. The group mans a 24-hour telephone helpline.

Olympic silver medalist and Buderim resident Raelene Boyle, a breast and ovarian cancer survivor, has long recognised the invaluable community work done by Bloomhill.

Ms Boyle, who celebrated her 50th birthday at Melbourne's Crown Casino last Friday, has been the patron of Bloomhill for the past year.

Ms Boyle was honoured by a capacity crowd, including Prime Minister John Howard, for her sporting achievements and her work in raising public awareness of breast cancer.

The event raised a reported \$200,000 for the Breast Cancer Network. Sunshine Coast residents will also have a chance to

celebrate the dual Olympian's birthday and help raise money for Bloomhill Cancer Help Centre next month.

"Having Raelene as our patron has been invaluable," Ms Edwards said.

"She's a great example of someone who has been diagnosed with cancer and survived. She's an incredible source of inspiration and encouragement. We're incredibly lucky and grateful to have her as patron."

Ms Boyle's birthday function will be held at Earth Bistro Wine Bar at Mooloolaba on Friday, July 27.

Proceeds will go towards running costs of Bloomhill.

For details phone 5445 5794.



# THERAPIST'S 15-YEAR LOVE AFFAIR WITH BLOOMHILL STARTED WITH VOLUNTEER ROLE

Volunteers have played a crucial role at Bloomhill since its inception. Volunteers do everything from working in the op shops and Montville Marketplace, to fundraising, maintaining our centre or gardens, working in our jewellery team and client transport service.

Lead Therapist Debbie Myers' love affair with Bloomhill started as a volunteer receptionist in 2007.

One night she had a dream about a hill of blooms, and the next morning saw an advert in the local newspaper for volunteer drivers at Bloomhill. She phoned then volunteer coordinator Alex Bert, but the driver positions were all taken so she started on reception.

"I probably got more out of reception because I could sit and talk to clients - or not talk. The non-saying of things can tell so much more about how people feel," Debbie said. "I would see people come in looking beaten then go and have treatment and walk out looking like new people.

"This place transforms people. So

rosters so they had Fridays off - and Debbie had a day to volunteer.

Debbie says when she hears volunteers say they've lost their enthusiasm she gets them to remember why they chose to be here to begin with.

"I sit down with them and ask them why they volunteered? We do it to help people feel better. I always hold on to that."

So how did Debbie, who had never considered a career in hands-on therapy, go from volunteer receptionist to lead therapist?

"I guess being at Bloomhill put me in touch with things I had been scared of doing before. I realised the value of being able to touch people and touch their lives. When I started massage therapy I felt it added a depth of feeling in my life."

Her studies began with a Diploma in Remedial Massage followed by specialist lymphatic drainage. Then, to get the best training possible, in 2016 Debbie went to America to learn the latest in hands-on lymphatic therapy.

which she says will take her lymphoedema career to the next level.

"I'm very excited to always be aiming higher to provide the best possible care," she said. "I have seen amazing outcomes for cancer patients through the nurse-led model at Bloomhill Cancer Care. I love everything that Bloomhill stands for, in addition to everything that Bloomhill provides to cancer patients on the Coast."

Debbie said Bloomhill would not be the symbol and sanctuary of strength through adversity that it's become, without the tireless work of volunteers.

"Every volunteer gives something of themselves to Bloomhill, even those who are not at the Centre," Debbie Myers reflected. "And that becomes part of the fabric of this beautiful place."

 "I could sit and talk to clients - or not talk. The non-saying of things can tell so much more about how people feel"

many people say, 'when I drive down the driveway I feel as though the world disappears'. We add value to peoples' lives and there is always feedback from clients on how valuable Bloomhill is."

From her first days volunteering Debbie saw that Bloomhill effortlessly changed people.

"I wanted to be part of that," she said.

Before she came to Bloomhill, Debbie worked with her husband in their metal fabrication shop. She made room in their workforce

"I have the most amazingly fulfilling job. I arrive to a beautiful building, on an idyllic peace-producing property and see a steady stream of wonderful people. They teach me every day to value life and living - don't let small things get you down and always strive to live your best life. Bloomhill has given me more than I could ever give it."

Debbie is working towards completing a Degree in Nursing Science with USC

