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*Melbourne East Disability Advocacy promotes and protects the rights and interests of people who have an intellectual disability.*

## Greetings friends of MEDA...

Dear Friends of MEDA,

Happy New Year and Gong Xi Fa Cai! May the new Lunar Year of the Monkey bring happiness and prosperity to you all. Our lovely President Kate is somewhere relaxing on a cruise, so I am excited to be given the opportunity to write this newsletter as her deputy.

It is incredible to think we are already in March for 2016. In January, COM met for a strategic planning day, where we outlined key objectives for the year. I have to say without doubt it is one of the most rewarding and satisfying experiences to be with likeminded people in the development of new ideas and strategies to take MEDA forward. The COM is intrinsically motivated to seek the best for our consumers and I feel our planning day helped shape our activities to be inclusive of our consumers and volunteers alike.

One of the key areas of focus for us is to increase our fundraising efforts. To kick start it our COM will be selling some delicious Cadbury chocolates. I am sure one or two boxes will make their way to the MEDA offices, so if you happen to be nearby pop in and treat yourself for Easter. We are also developing our social calendar with some major events this year to celebrate the wonderful achievements of our community.



**This year marks the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of MEDA's inception!** Look out for the invitations to help us celebrate as we would love to have you all join us.

Until next time Kate decides to take holiday...

Mary Appleby Vice President

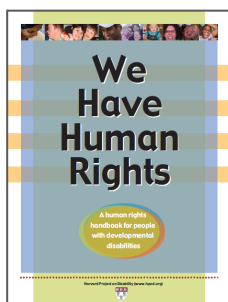
## Citizen Advocacy Partnership Updates

We are in the process of matching Elbert and Eddie, Asel and Lee, Ali and Sharyn, Marina and Carola and Rose and Annette. We look forward to finalising these matches and welcoming them to the Citizen Advocacy program and family.

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## MEDA Program Manager's Update

Since MEDA's last Newsletter in November 2015 we have received advice from the Assistant Minister for Social Services that a 12 month extension to grant agreements for all National Disability Advocacy Programs to June 30th 2017 has been approved. This will provide some reassurance and stability for advocacy services whilst preparing for NDIS .

MEDA continues to focus on the provision of our individual and Volunteer Citizen Advocacy Programs. Since July 2015 MEDA has been supporting 68 consumers and addressing 161 advocacy issues with independent living support, accommodation and service access being the top 3 advocacy Issues. MEDA is currently supporting the match of 5 new volunteer citizen advocates whilst continuing to support our current citizen advocate partnerships. Already 2016 has been a busy year responding to key policy and discussion papers, meeting and networking with other service providers and responding to grants and partnership opportunities. At MEDA we are always striving to get ideas and feedback from our consumers. We are trialing a consumer focused feedback question checking that after each contact with someone that we find out if "we have helped you today?".

This year MEDA will also be busy preparing for our 3 year external audit, an important measure for ensuring we meet the National Standards for Disability Services.

2016 will also be an exciting year of fundraising and celebrations with MEDA reaching a 35 year milestone.



At a time we may celebrate we also acknowledge the loss of some friends of MEDA including the passing of Artie Golestos. Artie, you will be missed. (see Arties' Tribute p3)

Jan Mallow Program Manager

## Short Term Citizen Advocacy Program Pilot

As MEDA continues to attract a diverse range of volunteers and has existing volunteers wanting to extend their involvement with MEDA we are looking to explore the engagement of short term citizen advocacy volunteers to contribute to some short term advocacy issues with consumers.

For any further information about this program and role contact Jan 9877 7990

## Tribute to Artie Golestos

I first met Artie in April 1989. We met through the Inner East Citizen Advocacy program, now known as MEDA, where a volunteer advocate is matched with a person who needs an advocate. At that time Artie was living at Kew Cottages in a large unit with probably about 40 or 50 other residents. She had no family contact and therefore really needed someone to be able to support her and advocate for her.

Artie and I would arrange to meet on weekends. I remember I would call her up and the unit staff would bring her to the telephone. At first she really had no idea of what to do with a telephone. I guess it's sad but true but she had never had any one call her up. She might say hello and then she would disappear. In later years you couldn't get her off the telephone there was always some thing more to say. Usually some thing like "I bring my clothes to your house", meaning I'm coming to visit! Or "Who's party coming?" It's remarkable how situations can disable people more than their actual disability. I remember learning to use the telephone when I was a primary schooler; mostly to say thank you to an Auntie for a birthday present. Artie didn't have those normal life experiences which left her totally alienated to simple daily living activities that I took for granted. Using money, shopping, using a telephone, making choices about all manner of things were all new and confusing to Artie.

In the early 1990's when deinstitutionalisation was implemented I advocated for Artie to move out of Kew with two of her friends. Artie was one of the first to move from Kew Cottages and it was such a positive life changing experience for her. At first a little daunting but Artie soon shone brighter than ever. For the first time Artie could buy personal items that reflected her emerging personality. Her bedroom furniture was tasteful and contemporary, a far cry from the very plain bed and clothes drawers that she use to have.

Artie loved shopping and she bought handbags and purses (because now she did have money to put into a purse). She could have nice clothes and Artie loved the colour red so many of her clothes were red and her individual style was apparent .....she didn't have to dress the same as every body else. Artie developed an interest in photography and loved to take photos at social outings and enjoyed looking through her many photo albums.

Artie and I spent time together out in the community, shopping, visiting people, going out for lunches. These times were good for spending time together to build rapport but also for observing how she was going or what she may need.

Over the years Artie had great opportunities for many holidays, participating in regular activities and she would often come and stay at my house especially over Christmas time, spending many Christmases with my family. Through these connections Artie was embraced as part of my family.

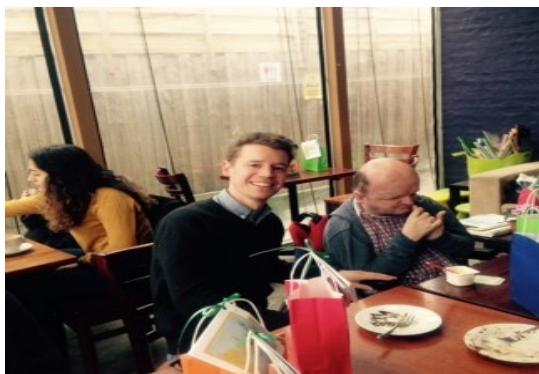
Artie's health deteriorated in the last two years but I was always kept in the loop by her house staff members who understood the importance of the role of an advocate. Sadly Artie passed away just a few days short of her 58<sup>th</sup> birthday.

I knew Artie for almost 27 years. I will miss her dearly. In many ways I feel quite lost as the role of advocate and friend that I had with her has now finished. Julie



## 2015 End of year function

A change in venue for the end of year break up was held late last year. The local coffee shop was where we all shared coffee/milkshakes and cake whilst enjoying one another's company. Although a smaller number of people attended it was a great morning relaxing in the local community.



## March Citizen Advocacy Partnership Event

MEDA would like to invite all of our Citizen Advocate partners and Consumer Group members to a social dinner out .

**When :** Tuesday 15th March

**Time:** 6.30pm

**Venue:** Peppers on Fire—43 Mahoneys Rd, Forest Hill  
Combined Sri-Lankan and Western menu.

**RSVP:** Friday 12th March





## Disability Rights Advocacy Training

In partnership with VALID we are proud to offer a Disability Rights Advocacy Training workshop aimed at people seeking to develop their understanding and effectiveness in advocacy.

This is available for our existing and prospective Volunteer Citizen Advocates.

When : Tuesday 19th April

Time : 6.30pm



Venue: MEDA's office at Whitehorse Community Resource Centre, Level 1  
Conference room, 79 Mahoneys Rd, Forest Hill 3131

RSVP: 12th April. Phone 9877 7990

## MEDA Consumer Group Update & Invite

MEDA's amazing consumer group commenced again in February 2016. MEDA's consumer group is an important group that provides ideas for organizational improvement whilst discussing current disability sector issues.

Our current members include Carolyn, Andrew, Jim and Kathleen.

We invite and welcome new members to join us in having the opportunity to have a say about MEDA, to hear about and contribute to the Disability sector developments and to meet new friends.

Consumer Group member: - Carolyn. Carolyn has been serving as a consumer group member for a number of years and is our longest standing Committee of Management member. Carolyn provides valuable feedback and thoughts to improve MEDA's service to consumers. Carolyn attends a local day program and is a valuable volunteer at a local child care centre. Thanks Carolyn for your time and ideas on the Consumer Group.



## 2016 Celebrations & Fundraising

### **MEDA's Inaugural Volunteers' Awards Night**

During or around National Volunteer week (11th—17th May) MEDA is planning to celebrate with an Awards Night acknowledging and honouring all of our volunteers. Invitations will be circulated when we secure a venue.

### **MEDA's 35th Anniversary Gala Night**

A night to celebrate MEDA's 35th year milestone. To share the rich history and exciting future of MEDA amongst friends, family, supporters and community. Proposed for a date in September.

## Be a part of MEDA

### **Become a Member**

Do you know you can be a member of MEDA?

Membership enables individuals to vote, to receive updates and supports MEDA's purpose.

Membership is \$20 individual, \$5 concession and \$30 for an organization.

### **Follow MEDA on Facebook**

Follow MEDA on Facebook. Like our MEDA Facebook page. Join in on the conversation that we are starting to build.

### **MEDA's Newsletter**

If at any stage you are wanting to receive this newsletter by email or you are no longer wanting to receive this newsletter please let us know.

#### **Contact Details:**

Please don't hesitate to call or email us if you have any questions or comments about this newsletter. We welcome your contributions. If you do not wish to receive this newsletter, please contact us.

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