

# Working at Beaufort and Skipton Health Service

Recently we took an opportunity to interview two staff members to gain some insight into what it's like to work at Beaufort and Skipton Health Service.

Here is an excerpt from Rhonda Cowell, working in the leisure and lifestyle area, and Sandy Briody who is the co-ordinator of the day centre men's club and "Out and About" group.



Above: Sandy Briody

## Sandy Briody

**Tell us about yourself Sandy?**

I grew up in Melbourne and did my nursing training before moving to Ballarat in 1986 and starting work at Queen Elizabeth Geriatric Centre. I met my husband and now have three amazing children and live locally, in the Bradvale area.

**What has been your role at Beaufort and Skipton Health Service?** I started at BSHS in 2000 as an Enrolled Nurse, later becoming an assistant at the Day Centre. After some further training, I progressed to co-ordinator of the day centre men's club and ran "Out and About" group.

**Do you enjoy your work?**

Aged care has always been an interest of mine. It keeps me motivated and I love finding ways to help people feel important and cared for. I really love my work.

**What does a day at Beaufort and Skipton Health Service look like?**

A few years ago there was a regular means breakfast in Skipton, but it folded. I still saw the need for these types of activities, so I reintroduced it during Men's Health Week. I am always looking for this type of activity. I even organise a netball game using balloons at the day centre. It may seem an unusual activity for the elderly, but it involves much laughter and enjoyment. We make sure there is always music at the day centre with visiting entertainers often a part of our program.

**What other activities/work are you involved in?**

Another initiative we have introduced at the day centre is the "Biggest Morning Tea". It's growing each year and the community really get involved and we raise some valuable funds for the Cancer Council. We also organise regular day excursions and recently this involved a day trip to Geelong, with fun had by all.

**What is the most important and rewarding aspect of your work at BSHS?**

It's comforting and rewarding to know that we are giving people and community an opportunity to be involved with our health service. It's so important that people benefit from the programs we offer. It's also very rewarding when you see a smile on people's faces when they are just thoroughly enjoying their involvement in the program of the day.

**How would someone else describe you?**

I think people might say I'm loved and perhaps

have spent too long doing what I do, but they would probably also describe me as kind hearted and bubbly. I certainly try to be.

**What would you say to someone wanting to get involved in your type of work?**

In this type of work you always have times where you feel like you've helped someone or you've made some laugh. It's always a very rewarding feeling.



Above: Rhonda Cowell pictured with Olga Hains

## Rhonda Cowell

**Tell us about yourself Rhonda?**

I have been a Leisure and Lifestyle Co-Ordinator for the last 10 years. I have been married to my husband for 25 years and am the proud mother of two sons and live locally in Beaufort.

**What has been your role at Beaufort and Skipton Health Service?**

I started out in a shared role as a Leisure and Lifestyle Co-Ordinator and continue in this role today.

**Do you enjoy your work?**

I have always enjoyed working with people in their senior years. I think they are interesting and I love listening to their many stories and adventures. I love to make them smile.

**What does a day at Beaufort and Skipton Health Service look like?**

I often find myself facing the challenge of considering each person and what they enjoy, what they are interested in and just what makes them tick. Then I find, invest, seek out activities, projects or excursions that I can do to help our people feel engaged. I like to get them involved in activities that they would do themselves, on a daily basis. It's a challenge each day, but I really love the challenge.

**What other activities/work are you involved in?**

I have really enjoyed, over the last two years, starting to work with teachers and students from the Beaufort Secondary College. Bridget Franc from the Beaufort Secondary School has been an outstanding advocate for a program where students are able to have "one on one" time with our residents. This activity has been proved to be so valuable for our residents and also the students. Some of the activities have involved students reminiscing with our residents, to then creating picture books that depict their life and times. The students have also organised activities and games which have been thoroughly enjoyed by all. We also organise beauty care, quiz groups, light exercise times, concerts, shopping, just to name a few. Sometimes it's "hard to fit it all in".

**What is the most important and rewarding aspect of your work at BSHS?**

I believe our residents still have a life to live,

they are still relevant and important. I find it so rewarding to use my time and talents to provide them with a variety of activities that include things they would have been involved in prior to residing with us at BSHS, ranging from the daily chores of life, to some external activities. I think it's so important to give people an opportunity to develop friendships or continue old ones, or to provide companionship to those who have lost that in their lives. I just want to be a part of making someone feel happy.

**How would someone else describe you?**

I hope people see me as caring and respectful. That's what I want to be. I have been told that I have empathy for residents, taking time to learn about them and understand who they are.

**What would you say to someone wanting to get involved in your type of work?**

I would encourage anyone who has thought about being employed in this industry to give it a go. It really is rewarding.

## The day his life changed



Christian Ashby

**Resident podiatrist, Christian Ashby, has a story about a day that was to change his life.**

It was to be a change that extended well beyond the podiatry services he provides for Beaufort and Skipton Health Service.

Christian has been working with us for the past 10 years and as busy as he is, he is still often surprised by the fact that many residents are not aware that the podiatry service is offered at the health service.

Christian offers his expertise through the Beaufort Medical Practice through either doctor referral or self-referral. He is generally available three days a week at Beaufort from 8:30am – 5:30pm, with podiatrist, Karen Ashby, available to see patients at the Skipton Medical Practice, two days a week, Tuesday and Thursdays, 8.30am – 5pm.

Many people know Christian for his expert work and advice in his chosen area.

However many more know him for another set of circumstances that was to indeed change his life significantly and permanently. His medical knowledge was now going to be called upon on a daily basis and for his own desperate need.

On Good Friday, March 2016 in the early hours of the morning, Christian set out on his regular lap of Lake Wendouree in Ballarat on his bike, as he did most days.

This day was going to be life changing. Coming the other way was a driver who would hit Christian head-on and then flee the scene.

Left on the road with catastrophic and life-threatening injuries, a desperate emergency air lift to ICU in a Melbourne major trauma centre was to ensue, with his life hanging in the balance.

Christian was placed in a coma for three weeks and then remained in specialist care for over five months, undergoing 14 surgeries in an attempt to rebuild his badly broken body. After

months of rehabilitation, Christian was finally discharged but faced ongoing rehabilitation that was certainly going to extend for an unknown period.

Christian's injuries and the associated trauma was a massive ordeal in itself to overcome but it was only part of the challenge that he was to face.

First, he had the confronting and emotional reality of facing Court hearings and presenting victim impact statements against the offender. While important to ensure justice was served, it also brought the reality and horror of the trauma back with every word expressed.

Then, as difficult as this was and with the added pain of every step physically taken, there was one further challenge that was equally or even more daunting. This was the fact that the incident and subsequent legal actions had attracted significant publicity.

Christian soon realized that now there was an opportunity that went beyond his own personal misfortune, but one that could help to raise awareness and change the fortunes of the many others who face the issue of bike safety on our roads on a daily basis.

Today Christian's strength and personal testimony is helping to pave the way to see improved road safety for riders and bring a greater awareness to the effects of hit/run incidents, for all involved.

After some years now, a meeting with Christian still highlights the reality of the effects of that fateful day, however his courage, fortitude and dedication to his trade has led him back to his work as a podiatrist for the Beaufort and Skipton Health Service and all involved are proud to have him back.

Christian, if asked, will tell of how indebted to the health service he is for giving him the continued opportunity to resume his role with them.

"It could have been easy for them to offer my job to someone else, because it was totally unknown as to what work capacity I could offer them. They showed and continue to show commitment, patience and empathy towards me and my family. It is such a fantastic place to work and it's an absolute honour to work and be amongst the community of Beaufort and Skipton", Christian stated.

Now, in spite of his experience, or perhaps because of, Christian's hands work with a renewed and greater sense of empathy for the people he dedicates his medical care toward.

The podiatry service at Beaufort and Skipton is an area of allied health dedicated to the diagnosis, treatment, prevention, and management of medical conditions and injuries of the foot, ankle and lower limb. It covers a broad range of conditions which can be treated in many and varied ways. If you would like to know more about the services offered by podiatrists, Christian and Karen Ashby, or the Beaufort and Skipton Health Service, please call the medical practices at Beaufort on 5349 1610 or Skipton on 5340 2271.