



Providing Heartstrength
to Adult Survivors of
Childhood Sexual Abuse

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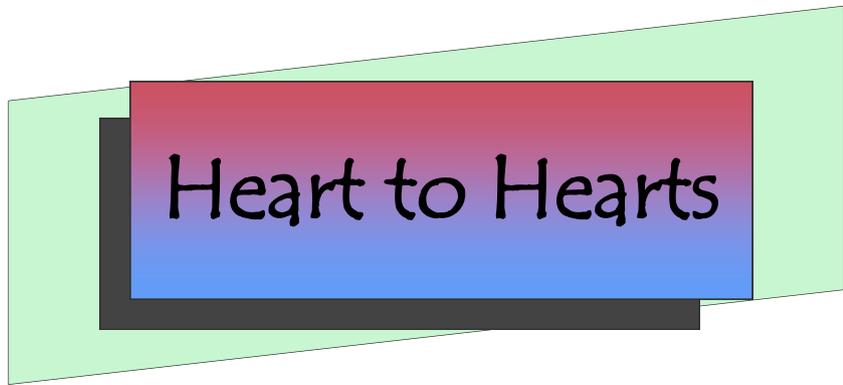
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Issue 45

Autumn 2018

A Message from our CEO...

Welcome to our Autumn edition. It is with much joy that I announce that HFH was successful in our application for the *Strong and Resilient Communities* Grant from the Federal Government. This means that we will receive \$150,000 per year for the next three years. How wonderful is that? You may have seen the article in the Northern Star or watched the report on NBN 9 and Prime 7. It was a lot of fun working with Kevin Hogan to deliver that news! A heartfelt thank you to Kevin for his enormous support of the work of HFH.

We are very relieved, excited and looking forward to continuing to bring group therapy programs for adult survivors and provide seminars and support to family and friends as well as professionals in the community.

However, this grant covers about half of our budget so we cannot rest just yet. We need to continue to advocate for other sources of financial support in order to provide quality service delivery, and expand our programs. Last week we attended a meeting with the NSW Government in Sydney to discuss State government support. We are awaiting an outcome of that meeting.

I would like to say a big thank you to a special donor who wishes to remain anonymous for their large financial contribution towards our therapy program.

Congratulations to our Group 39 *Silver Possums* who have taken the brave and courageous steps to undertake the 18 week group therapy program with Heidi and Kim as the group facilitators.

Thank you also to our wonderful volunteer for transforming our gardens.

We have a new finance office Manager, Carolyn and we are happy to have her on our team.

And last but not least we wish HFH a very Happy and Lucky 13th Birthday for the 19th of April. Happy birthday, dear friend! I know you will have a great day and even better year.

We will celebrate in quiet reflection and gratitude for our good fortunes past, present and future.

★HAPPY★
BIRTHDAY!

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A Survivor's Story

When HFH called me and asked me to write this letter I was absolutely delighted to do so. This is because my attending the HFH program has completely altered my life for the better.

When I first heard about HFH I was hesitant. I definitely knew that I'd lived a very tough life and survived; however, I still was living under the misguided misconception that what had happened to me as a child wasn't that bad. I thought that other people had had it worse, and I didn't want to speak badly of the perpetrator or to make trouble. What I didn't know then was that many of my belief systems had been carefully put into place to maintain my silence.

It was a brave thing I did committing to the 18 week program. For the first time in my life it was OK to say that I was assaulted as a child. No one judged me for it, it was quite the opposite. The five other women in my group knew exactly what I was talking about-they had been there. We were finally safe to talk about what had happened to us, how we felt, how the experience of childhood sexual assault had influenced our belief systems, our thinking, our decision making processes; our lives. The terrible secrets were exposed and we finally had permission to be angry, to laugh, to cry and to heal.

The staff at HFH are outstanding women. Their dedication, support, care and love gave me the strength to get through the tough times and begin to have the courage to heal. My life had not been easy. I was an abused child who went on to experience a life which included domestic violence, sex work and drug addiction. I had been drug and alcohol free for a number of years, but it was not until I attended HFH that I began to join up the dots. The whole picture finally fell into place and became very clear to me.

A few months after completing the group a remarkable thing started to happen. I began for the first time in my life to feel genuinely happy for no apparent reason and people started to remark on how I looked different. In fact everywhere I went and every person I met who knew me commented on it. They said I looked "lighter, happier, different somehow". I began to feel different, to dress differently and to start identifying the things I really enjoyed and did them. I am 63 years and for the first time in my life I want to be more social. I was given many gifts at HFH. The one that has lately cropped up has been a desire to be of service; to offer the hand of experience and support when needed; to be there for someone else.

I don't know if there are words to express the gratitude I feel for the staff and HFH. It brings tears to my eyes to think about it. I often drive past there, and it's almost a spiritual feeling like there is this one drop of goodness in the world. It is so rare and extraordinary. Every effort must be made in the future to insure that HFH never becomes extinct. M

From the heart of survivors...

Reaching out asking for support and committing to an 18 week program was a huge step for me. The lovely nurturing supportive team at Heartfelt House helped me to start the journey.

Having a platform where I am Seen, Heard, Accepted and Supported is a massive blessing for me in my life. A place where I felt I belong and sharing my life within a group of women is very powerful. As the program is finishing I feel more grounded in my body, more capable in everyday living, more aware and stronger with my being. I have gained a lot of helpful knowledge for myself and tools to help me along the way.

I entered the program tangled up in my past which had incredibly negative impacts upon my life. I am now however leaving a much more ground, present, aware and integrated woman who is strong, confident and with many more tools in my toolbox for personal and professional use. The knowledge and growth that I have experienced through completing this program has been profound and will continue to positively influence my life, relationships, business, community and society as a whole.

Dear Valued Friend, Thanks for the love and support you have given me and my group over the past eighteen weeks while I was doing the course at Heart Felt House. The beautiful slices and biscuits were yummy, the flower arrangements and the ambiance of the candles made it a relaxing and soothing environment to be in. It all made us feel welcomed, valued, nurtured and loved. It is a great job you're doing for us all. Thank you.

**BELIEVE IN
YOURSELF.**



Today you are **YOU**,
that is **TRUER** than true.
There is **NO ONE** alive
who is **YOUER** than **YOU!**
~ Dr. Seuss

From the heart of survivors...

Dear Kind and Generous Bakers,

It's so difficult to express how much your food and cards meant. Each week when I entered the kitchen I would look at the beautiful food and read the card... and cry. They were tears of gratitude. As someone who has lived through anorexia, the significance of these gestures of kindness was enormous. The message I received through your scrumptious food was 'Here, nourish your body. You are *worth* being fed. You are *worth* something. I *care*.' To know that people care enough to take the time to cook and send words of encouragement was deeply moving.

Thank you, thank you, thank you, for your generosity and thoughtfulness. As I ate each tasty morsel, I pictured someone in their kitchen, preparing the food that was soon to be placed on the table at Heartfelt House. As I read the kind words on the cards it gave me strength when I needed it most, just as the delicious food did.

Since I took the course 'Taking the First Steps' it has taught me to recognise the areas I was having trouble with and has helped me to rebuild my life.

It has helped me to build strong relationships and strengthened my ability to parent along with my work skills and studying.

I would like to say that I have found the program tremendously helpful. It has been the first time in my life (and I'm nearly seventy) that I have felt totally understood. I have felt able to allow myself to communicate to the group and facilitators as I have never done before. I felt safe, supported and cared for throughout the program. The facilitators are to be commended for both their knowledge and their continuous support and care. Before attending the program, it would be fair to say, that my life was moving from one wreck and disaster to another. I was constantly depressed and anxious. My relationships with all people were fraught with problems caused by many aspects of my sexual abuse trauma. The degree of depression I experienced had often affected my ability to work...in the past. I am now retired. The sexual and physical mental and emotional abuse I received affected my marriage which ended in divorce. I then supported my four children as a sole parent for many years. Since working my way through the program there have been many difficulties. It has been a great challenge to myself and the others who also attended my group. Now coming to the end of the program I feel quite different to the woman who came here four months ago. I am much calmer, more mentally and emotionally stable, more able to work/study (I'm studying art) and my relationships with others have improved. I'm still a bit timid with others but I am slowly becoming more able to trust others. My relationships with others have improved considerably. My relationship with my partner, which has been filled with constant problems and fights for nine years, has now stabilised and we have settled into a happier life together.

Something to Share with You**My Anchor**

The anchor for me has been, and still is, a symbol of my faith and of hope and strength throughout my life. I was taunted during my primary and high school years, to the point where I believed there was something wrong with me, and that I was never good enough or deserving enough of being happy with who I was. Helping to hold steadfast my boat in the open waters of life, the anchor continuously reminds me we all have an inner strength that is not so easily swept away.

As I went on to study visual arts, my art took on an oceanic theme, to help me visualise the rough times and assist in navigating the unpredictable emotions that came with my circumstances. The song 'Anchor' by American singer Mindy Gledhill was what helped start my journey in self-healing. I discovered that I too am a vessel, and that with the breathe of my Creator behind my sails, steering me in the direction of self-confidence, I was able to courageously recognise my own self-worth and self-respect.

Giving myself the permission to open up to other people who genuinely love me for me, has opened up the opportunity for me to love myself for who I am as a young woman. I now feel worthy and deserving of the love of those nearest and dearest to me, and more importantly my own self-love. I know that, no matter how rough the seas, nor how big the sweep of its waves, there is always cause to hope, for we are the captains of our own ships, and we sail, heads held high with compass in hand, into the beautiful unknown horizon that is called life. M.



A Facilitator Story

My name is Kim Coulson, I have the privilege of working as a group facilitator for HFH. I say privilege because that is what it feels like to work with a vibrant, experienced and caring team of people who support each other with an understanding of the true value of working as a team. My role allows me to work with many amazing women who participate in the group, they inspire me with their strength, courage and willingness to take a sometimes difficult but thoroughly rewarding journey, watching them grow throughout the sessions and build in confidence is an amazing journey to be part of.

I would encourage others if given the opportunity to work for HFH to take it. When you work with people who are passionate about what they do, it inspires you to strive for excellence. For me working at HFH doesn't feel like work at all, I can't wait to get there and love every facet of my job.

SELF CARE IDEAS

S Stand back: Remove yourself from the stressful situation.

T Take a deep breath: Count to 5, and think about the choice that's best for you.

R Relax: Do something that relaxes you- take a bath, read a book, listen to music, etc.

E Exercise: Get that stressful energy out in a way that works for you.

S Sleep, take a nap or just rest up for awhile

S Speak: Talk to someone about it and share your emotions.

Board Report

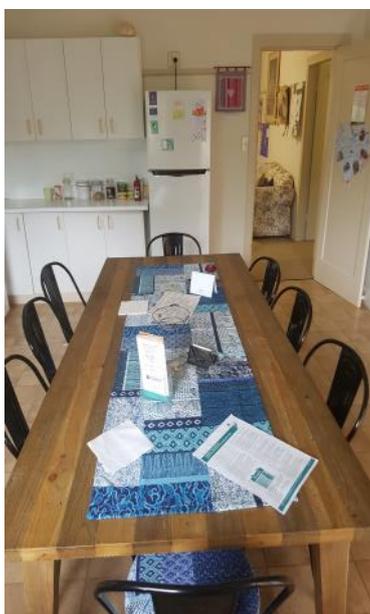
President's Report

Little did I know when I volunteered to be a part of the Heartfelt House Board in 2007 that ten years later I would still be here and now I act as the Chairperson. It has been an honour and privilege to work with such dedicated people who share the commitment to support Adults Sexually Abused as Children on their recovery journey.

In that ten years I have seen many changes on the Board, with facilitators, co-ordinators and even in the way our groups operate. What has remained the same is the dedication of the volunteers who help ensure that the service delivered at HFH is full of compassion and Heart-strength.

In the last week we have finally heard that our application for continued funding from the Federal Government has been successful and we have been recognised for the outstanding work we have been doing. 1050 applications were received requesting funding and only 53 were successful. 3 more years of funding doesn't mean we rest on our laurels, it means that behind the scenes the HFH Board members continue to work to generate interest in HFH, forge new collaboration and source new areas of funding to support the important work that HFH does.

In just a few weeks HFH will turn 13 years old. Over that time our service has evolved to become more professional, more accountable and be recognised as the gold standard of care for AAAC. I am enormously grateful to my fellow Board members who volunteer their time to ensure this organisation runs smoothly and continues to offer the support that survivors need. I recognise that without the amazing efforts of our CEO Kate and Program Development Co-ordinator Heidi, HFH would cease to operate. I am so blessed to be working with such dedicated and inspiring women. The ongoing success of HFH rest with them and I feel we are in safe hands.



New Room Group Furniture

Thanks to a grant we received last year from the Northern Rivers Community Fund (NRCF) we were able to buy for the group room; new couches, a coffee table, a rug, a bookcase and facilitator chairs! Plus a table and chairs for the group kitchen! A special thank you to Amart-Ballina for a much-appreciated discount, free assembly and delivery.

Also a heartfelt thank you to Eoin Johnston for the purchase of a new fridge and Sam Thomson from Harvey Norman. What a wonderful gift!



Thank you

Far North Coast Softball Association

Eoin Johnston

Sam Thompson

Fuji Xerox Lismore

100 Hearts

Private Donations

Sonia and Friends

Anglican Parish of Ballina

Amart Ballina

Dion from Jim's Moving

