



11 March 2020

Neighbour Day – Every day Australians are building connections

Relationships Australia, the home of Neighbour Day, celebrates the role of all Australians in helping to tackle loneliness. Neighbour Day, the last Sunday in March, is a celebration of community and this year our annual Neighbour Day *Tell Us Your Story* competition was an opportunity to recognise Australians who have gone out of their way to create connections with their neighbours.

“Our theme for Neighbour Day 2020 is the importance of social connection. Australia is in the midst of a loneliness crisis and in 2020, with our Neighbour Day campaign, Relationships Australia is asking Australians to focus on the importance of belonging – to start people thinking about how they can put their energy into creating positive and meaningful social connections outside of their regular groups and relationships,” said Nick Tebbey, National Executive Officer for Relationships Australia.

“The winners of this year’s Tell Us Your Story competition showcase the myriad of ways people actually do this in real life both in their neighbourhoods and the wider community,” Mr Tebbey said.

This year’s national prize-winner from Queensland shared her story of feeling socially isolated as a new mother. After the birth of her second child and with no family nearby, she contacted a local aged care home to see whether they may be interested in her visiting with her small children. They were, and what followed is years of shared stories, laughter, games, and many wonderful surrogate grandparents and new friends. She wrote, “Although it is hard saying goodbye when the residents pass, it is comforting to know that hopefully we brought a few moments of joy to their lives. Overall it has been a thoroughly rewarding experience and has taught my daughters some invaluable skills and wonderful memories which I hope they will carry with them for the rest of their lives.”

Across the country, countless stories have emerged of everyday Australians making lasting connections with their communities. The NSW winner tells a story about a group which was started by five creative and enthusiastic women in order to bring their small regional community together in a fun and family-oriented way. They have created an atmosphere that encourages locals to socialise together. Reflecting on the story Mr Tebbey said, “This group has established many clever initiatives to create connections and provide support in a small regional community – especially when times get tough. The NSW Winner shows us how important social connection is for those in rural Australia, and provides inspiration for other communities to create their own support.”

The Victorian winner talks about how high fences need not be a barrier to knowing your neighbours. Times are changing and this story is about how one street formed a Facebook community to connect with each other both online and in real life. “From swapping plants from their gardens, to new mums talking online late at night, to sending out lost pet distress calls or supporting a neighbour when his house burned down, this group has become a lasting and meaningful connection for the residents of this lucky street, even if they don’t regularly see each other face to face,” Mr Tebbey said.

The Northern Territory winner describes a small yet important act of kindness she received from her neighbours after a relationship breakdown. This connection has grown over time into co-organising a Parkrun group with those same neighbours. She said, “It’s so nice to know neighbour strangers can become friends.”



“The South Australian winner highlights the power of partnerships and community leadership in fostering lasting social connections,” says Mr Tebbey. A South Australian aged care and retirement living organisation joined with the local council to launch a community hub, with a variety of activities including batch cooking, Tai Chi, art, knitting, community gardening, a Men’s group, English conversation for people from CALD communities, a swap shop and skills workshops. A community member said of the hub, “We come for the company and purpose. Just seeing another face is important when some days you don't see anyone else.”

The Tasmanian winner talks of her small town and how the locals address mental health and social isolation. Volunteers take turns to run their neighbourhood centre, which serves as a community hub to come for a chat and a cup of tea. They also run an information centre for tourists, a community garden and art, craft and language classes.

Finally, the Western Australian winner tells the story of the power of parties. After two years of living in his neighbourhood and not knowing his neighbours, this proactive neighbour decided to hold a neighbourhood Christmas Party. He knocked on more than 500 doors in 40+C heat and left invitations under every doormat. The party was a huge success and now there are neighbourhood parties throughout the year. He said, “I’ve learned a lot, met plenty of new friends but more importantly I’ve helped people connect where previously there would be no connection. Loneliness and isolation are big issues in society today and hopefully some of these connections will help some of my neighbours.”

Each state and territory winner has been awarded a \$100 prize, with the overall national winner taking home \$400.

“This Neighbour Day, we encourage all Australians to take inspiration from these stories, and to seek opportunities to connect with their neighbours, support each other and hopefully have some fun along the way” said Mr Tebbey.

For more information on Neighbour Day and how you can get involved, including free easy-to-use resources, including posters, selfie signs and calling cards, head to our website neighbourday.org.

You can also follow all the Neighbour Day action on our [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) accounts and [Verandah by Neighbour Day](#).

“The community you want starts at your front door.”™

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Relationships Australia is a leading provider of relationship support services for individuals, families and communities. We aim to support all people in Australia to achieve positive and respectful relationships. We are a community-based, not-for-profit Australian organisation with no religious affiliations.