

# Mary's News *today*



## *Reaching the margins*

### SPRING 2024

Read how:

- Your support is bringing the power of "horse healing" to the Kimberley
- You are helping to continue the legacy of the Josephite Sisters in Timor-Leste
- Thanks to you, Merewai is thriving...

MARY MACKILLOP  
*today*



Welcome to the Spring 2024 edition of Mary's News Today where you can read about the impact of your kind partnership.

Through compassionate supporters like you, we raised over \$300,000 for our end-of-financial-year fundraising appeal which was an incredible result given the current economic climate. A heartfelt thank you.

I want to update you on Kerry, the inspiring mother in regional NSW whose story I shared with you recently. Thanks to your generosity, she received support from our Financial Inclusion team to help her get back on her feet.

We asked Kerry if she had a message for our wonderful supporters:

*"I wanted to learn more about money and to grow as a person. I feel confident that there is more that I can do with my finances. Mary MacKillop Today has provided me with notebooks, a calculator, and budget planners. They're small things but they've already made a big difference in my life."*

We've selected more uplifting stories like Kerry's to share with you:

- The 30-year-old history of Mary's MacKillop's influence in Timor-Leste
- Merewai in rural Fiji, who has been part of our women's leadership program thanks to you
- Meet Tony, one of our passionate and dedicated supporters

I hope you enjoy reading about the life-changing impact you make possible through your loyal support. Thank you.

Jane Woolford  
Chief Executive Officer

*\*Name changed to protect privacy.*

## Harnessing Hope in the Kimberley

The Yawardani Jan-ga (which means "horses helping") program, which is supported by Mary MacKillop Today in partnership with Murdoch University, is helping young Aboriginal people navigating the hurdles of adolescence.

The program, which is owned, developed and facilitated by Aboriginal community members, involves the use of horses to engage at-risk Aboriginal young people in learning a variety of transferable social and emotional life-skills so that they can reengage and thrive in their education.

Young people like 10-year-old Kirra\*, who came to the program after experiencing family trauma. Kirra's first encounter at Yawardani Jan-ga was with Awesome, a gorgeous chestnut horse who calmly let her climb aboard.

"How does that feel?" Professor Juli Coffin asked with a grin.

"Weird, but cool," Kirra responds.

Since Juli founded Yawardani Jan-ga, an Equine Assisted Learning Program, in 2019, she has witnessed

this heartwarming scene hundreds of times.

***"Horses don't carry a yarn. There's never those judgements. It's never false. All they respond to is your vibration and your energy and what you're putting out,"*** Juli says.

For Kirra, the horses at Yawardani Jan-ga offer a calming presence. There is an unconditional acceptance given by the horses which allows young people to feel like they can relax and be themselves.

Over 700 young Aboriginal people have benefited from the Yawardani Jan-ga program. The overwhelming impact has led Juli to begin developing a new site which will double the capacity of the healing program.

Generous people like you are helping us to walk alongside Juli and support the amazing work she and her team are doing in the Kimberley.

Your tremendous kindness to Mary MacKillop Today is making a real difference for so many lives, here in Australia and overseas. Thank you so much for your unwavering support!

*\*Name & image changed to protect privacy*



A participant of the Equine Assisted Learning Program

Inspired by Australia's first saint, Mary MacKillop Today empowers communities in Australia and overseas to realise their dignity through education, health, financial inclusion and livelihoods. All photos by Mary MacKillop Today unless otherwise stated. When necessary, names have been changed for privacy. Front Cover: Professor Juli Coffin, founder of Yawardani Jan-ga.



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Mary MacKillop Today is a member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and complies with industry standards of good practice, transparency and accountability.



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# 30 years since the Josephite Sisters began working in Timor-Leste

Inspired by Saint Mary MacKillop's mission to reach the margins, the Sisters of St Joseph have continued Mary's legacy through courageous faith, deep compassion, and a steadfast belief in the power of education through their work in Timor-Leste. A legacy your generous support is helping to continue today.



Sr Susan with Tetun Literacy Books



Sr Josephine & Sr Tess out in the field

*Congregational Archive Collection. Used with permission of the Trustees of the Sisters of Saint Joseph*

## A Call to Serve the Timorese People

The Sisters first arrived in Timor-Leste in 1994, during the Indonesian occupation. The sight of widespread poverty and the lack of educational opportunities drew them to this beautiful nation in need. Like Mary, the Sisters believed that every person has the right to learn how to read and write. This belief became the cornerstone of their work in Timor-Leste.

## Preserving Local Language

Upon their arrival, the Sisters faced significant challenges. Education in the local language, Tetun, was prohibited, and most educational materials were in Indonesian. Tetun, an integral part of Timorese cultural identity, was at risk of being lost. Despite the restrictions, the Sisters were determined to develop educational resources in Tetun. They collaborated with a talented local Linguist to create the first set of Tetun books for children, which were discreetly printed in Australia and brought into Timor-Leste.

## Building Trust and Providing Sanctuary

Until 1999, the Sisters worked under the constant surveillance of the Indonesian military and could only meet locals safely within church grounds. The Catholic Church became a sanctuary where they could teach and hold Mass in Tetun, offering a sense of normalcy and hope to the Timorese people.

## Rebuilding and Expanding Education

The violence surrounding the independence referendum in 1999 saw the destruction of many schools and educational materials. Undeterred, the Sisters returned to the school communities and expanded their educational program in partnership with the local community. They developed a comprehensive school curriculum in Tetun and trained teachers to use the new materials. Their efforts reached over 800 schools, significantly improving literacy rates and educational access across Timor-Leste. This year, the Timorese celebrate 25 years since the Independence referendum.

## Integrating Health and Education

Understanding the critical link between health and education, the Sisters also focused on health literacy. They developed resources and conducted workshops to teach basic medical care, nutrition, and overall wellbeing. This holistic approach ensured that children were not only educated but also healthy and capable of thriving in their communities.

## Continued Solidarity

The work of the Sisters of St Joseph in Timor-Leste is a testament to their brave dedication and the enduring compassion of Saint Mary MacKillop. Despite the many challenges they faced, they persevered in their mission to reach the margins with education opportunities.

Today, the legacy of the Sisters of St Joseph's work in Timor-Leste lives on through Mary MacKillop Today's team who are based in Dili. Thanks to generous people like you, the spirit of Mary MacKillop remains strong, inspiring continued solidarity with the people of Timor-Leste.

# Planting Entrepreneurial Seeds in the Mountains of Moquegua

Becoming an entrepreneur and running a successful business is the dream of ambitious young people around the world. But it isn't as easy as just coming up with a good idea. You first need the learning opportunities that will make that dream achievable.

But in the rural region of Moquegua, Peru, these types of learning opportunities aren't easy to acquire. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and a shortage of qualified teachers, students in Monquegua can struggle to access the entrepreneurial training they need to succeed.

To help bridge this gap, our Youth Entrepreneurship project in Rural Peru, run in partnership with CEOP Ilo, aims to give students the tools and knowledge needed to develop entrepreneurship skills relevant to their communities' needs.

Meet Maria, one of the inspiring participants of the project. She has an ambitious mindset, and as mayor of



Maria, a future business leader

the student committee at her school, is already applying the skills she has received through the entrepreneurship program.

***“I have benefited a lot from the training. At the beginning, I was not such a confident person. I was not so extroverted, and I was afraid to express myself in front of all the students.***

***“But with these talks that I have received through the project, having interacted with the different members of other school municipalities where they shared their way of working in their educational institutions, it is something that helped me to accommodate my work plan.”***

Thanks to the training she has received, Maria now has a community of young, like-minded leaders to help her see what's possible for her at school and beyond.

She also has the skills to communicate her ideas with confidence and has gained a broadened perspective of what she can do for herself and her community.

Thanks to your kind support, students like Maria can access entrepreneurial skills, giving them an opportunity to change the lives of their families and community forever.

## Give the Gift of Education

Did you know that you can help transform lives through education in Australia and around the world by donating to Mary MacKillop Today on a regular basis?

By making regular, monthly donations, you can help children access books through our Mobile Learning Bus which travels to remote communities to visit schools, bringing fun and creative tools to help children learn.

- \$25 per month: can help supply schools with locally produced story books written in the local

Join our powerful community of supporters today and help children access education and break the cycle of poverty. By making a monthly gift today, you will help transform lives.

language to help children read and write

- \$50 per month: can help keep the Mobile Learning Bus on the road, visiting schools
- \$100 per month: can help buy resource packs for classrooms containing storybooks, notebooks, pencils, colour pencils, rulers, scissors, and glue.

Scan here



# Mary's Feast Day: Be Fierce for Fair!

As we reflect on the recent Feast Day of Saint Mary MacKillop, held on 8 August, we are filled with gratitude for our community's incredible participation.

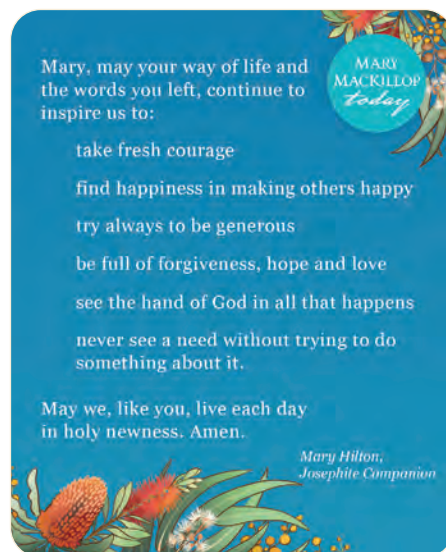
Mary MacKillop dedicated her life to ensuring that children had access to education regardless of their circumstances. Her famous words, "Never see a need without doing something about it," continue to inspire us today. Mary and the Sisters of St Joseph travelled to some of Australia's most remote communities to set up schools. Their dedication to reaching the margins is what we strive to uphold at Mary MacKillop Today — with the support of caring and compassionate donors.

We were thrilled to see schools across the country join us in their Mary's Feast Day celebrations, raising funds towards our Inclusive Early Education project



(formerly Mobile Learning Centre) in Timor-Leste. Mary MacKillop Place also hosted celebrations where we got the chance to meet many of you in person.

Thank you for being a part of this year's



Feast Day celebrations. Like Mary, let's be fierce in the face of adversity and fair when we see injustice. Let's give love to those we encounter each day. Together, let's be Fierce for Fair!

## "I work hard to be able to achieve a better future for my children."

Merewai is a stay-at-home mother of five beautiful children in rural Fiji. She is an enthusiastic participant of Project Talitha training, through Mary MacKillop Today's partner, Ola Fou Fiji, which aims to train young women in building leadership skills, financial literacy, and mentoring capabilities.

For Merewai, creating income for her family is not easy but it is vitally important.

Merewai lives in a remote village in the West province of Fiji and is isolated from basic commodities such as safe water and electricity. Her husband works as a truck driver for a company near town, and for the majority of the week, she and her children are left alone in their home until her husband returns home on Fridays.

Amidst these challenges, Merewai still



finds time to attend the Project Talitha training made available through your generous support.

Merewai also loves to sew. **"Where I live, there is no one that does this. If we have anything that needs to be sewn, we have to take it to the tailors in town where it costs a lot plus transport cost, but if I have it here then it would be a lighter cost for people to pay,"** says Merewai.

With the extra income earned from her sewing, Merewai can better provide for her family's basic needs and save money to send her children to school.

We thank you for being a pivotal part in giving Merewai and other women like her the opportunity to make their dreams reality.

Women's Leadership in Rural Fiji receives support from the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

**“It is what we do with our lives that matters.”**

Anthony\* discovered the life of Saint Mary and was inspired to help others living on the margins.

When Anthony was preparing to transition from primary to secondary schooling, he was told he wasn't smart enough to attend a Catholic secondary school, despite his strong Catholic faith.

Today, Anthony wants to help as many children as possible to have the opportunity he didn't.

**“Everyone deserves a great education at all levels. Leaving a gift (to Mary MacKillop Today) in my Will gives me great pleasure.”**

Anthony has found an immense sense of joy by leaving a generous gift in his Will to Mary MacKillop Today. He believes it's his small way of honouring the charitable legacy of Saint Mary.

**“I would encourage others to also bequest a gift in their Wills... It is what we do with our lives that matters, to live the will of God just as Saint Mary did her entire life.”**

Anthony's generous gift to Mary MacKillop Today will impact so many lives of people living on the margins, now and well into the future.



**If you'd like to include a gift to Mary MacKillop Today in your Will, just like Anthony, please contact April on (02) 8912 2720.**

*\*Image changed to protect privacy*

#### STAY CONNECTED

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**Yes, I want to provide life-changing opportunities to people in need.**

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\$25  \$50  \$100  My choice \$ \_\_\_\_\_

#### My contact details\*:

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Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Street address: \_\_\_\_\_

Suburb: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

#### I would like to make a recurring monthly

gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please debit the credit card below.  
(You can change or cancel at any time)

Please contact me to set up direct debit.

#### My payment details:

Cheque made payable to Mary MacKillop Today OR

Please debit my credit card:  Visa  MasterCard  Amex

Card no.: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Name on card: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



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