

# SAMARITANS KEEPING IN TOUCH

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## FAREWELL TO OUR FOUNDER CHAD VARAH

“My father described this befriending of the suicidal thus: ‘There are in this world, in every country, people who seem to be ‘ordinary’, but who, when meeting a suicidal person, turn out to be extraordinary. They can usually save lives. “

Edward Chad Varah, priest and founder of Samaritans, born 12th November 1911, died November 8 2007 aged 95. His remarkable life began in Barton-on-Humber, northern England, the eldest of nine children, and went to university at Keble College, Oxford.

His first funeral, as an assistant curate, prompted his lifelong commitment to suicide prevention and education. The funeral was for a 13 year old girl who had taken her own life because she feared she had contracted a STD; in fact she had started to menstruate. Spurred by the girl's death, Rev Varah resolved to promote sex education among young people and offer support to youths, views that saw him harshly criticised in the 1950s.

his promise to help people in emotional need came in 1953 when Varah was appointed Rector to St Stephen Walbrook Church in the City of London. Varah advertised in the press for people to help – not as trained counsellors, but as ordinary human beings offering a listening ear and emotional support. Inundated with people willing to help, he opened the first drop-in centre where emotionally isolated and distressed people could go to find a sympathetic ear – and Samaritans

The opportunity to act on

Continued on page 4...

## CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOME

We welcome contributions to the newsletter. So send in your letters, ideas, articles and photos! Email to [publicat@bigpond.net.au](mailto:publicat@bigpond.net.au)

Despite an initial reluctance to follow in his father's footsteps, Varah was persuaded to study at Lincoln Theological College after graduating in Politics, Philosophy and Economics from Keble College, Oxford.

## CHOCOLATE FUNDRAISER

### THIS ISSUE..

40th AGM	1&3
Street Appeal	1
Movie Fundraiser	2
CEO's Message	2
How you can help	3

I have this theory that chocolate slows down the aging process.... It may not be true, but do I dare take the chance?

*Unknown*

Good, now that you are in the right frame of

mind...if you have ever wanted to eat chocolate knowing that it is for a good cause.. Here's your opportunity! So eat up! And feel good.

You can also take a box of chocolates to work or clubs you may be involved in to help raise

money for Sams. So eat up! And feel good. Give Jennie a call on 93815725 if you are interested in helping us fundraise.



## PUBLICATIONS PROMOTIONS

The Youth & Community Liaison Office has recently been hard at work on a big publications promotion drive.

Publications packages were sent to all metro and country high schools as well country medical practices and hospitals. Our

new Youth Directory, youth videos, cards, brochures Talking to Parents on Suicide Prevention and Youth Stress Awareness booklets.

It was a huge undertaking with over 300 packages being sent out.

This was an important part of our promotions drive for

the year as the more publications we have out there, the more people get to know about our service.

The drive has already proved successful with many people contacting us to order more and congratulating us on their good quality.



## STREET APPEAL

Our annual Street Appeal was held on 19 October. The day was successful despite limited support and resources available.

A small handful of people

managed to raise around **\$900** on the day. A big thanks to Andree Darlington, an ex-Sam who is now a Friend of Sams made a huge effort on the day and made a donation over and above donating her time.

All advertising was free so no money was outlaid on the day so all the proceeds are profits for the Samaritans.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Mandy 924, one of our Community Liaison Officers, recently manned a Samaritan stall at the Blue Sky Mental Health Awareness Day hosted at Minnowarra Park in Armadale.

This is the second year in which this event was organized by a Perth mother who has lost two sons to suicide and wanted to support and educate the community, especially who may be affected by mental health issues.

Mental health professionals

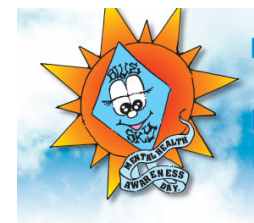
and support groups were present to provide information on how to recognise symptoms of mental health issues as well as the warning signs and risk factors associated with suicide. Treatment options and support available for individuals, family and friends were also an important focus of the day.

Live music was provided by top local bands including Rain and 7 Years. The music was carefully chosen to be topical and included themes on despair and suicidal ideation. Individuals were en-

couraged to access support services on the day.

A family atmosphere was encouraged with giveaways, a sausage sizzle and a horse drawn carriage being provided.

The day was a positive testament to the difference and individual can make and the strength of communities who support each other.



## DIRECTORS MESSAGE

### JUSTINE COLYER

What a great time to take on the role of being Sams' Director! Although we don't have enough resources to achieve everything we want to, our current position means we are able to think about what we'd like to do as well as what we have to do. So, to Ash Towns, our previous Director, and everyone else who has helped Samaritans get to where it is now, a BIG thanks.

As there is no immediate crisis, it's tempting to think things will continue to roll along and we'll be ok. There are things we know we should do but they are not simple to address so they can end up in the 'too hard basket', left to be tackled the next time there is a crisis. Part of the problem is that the same things come up all the time – raising money, improving public awareness of who we

are and maintaining volunteer levels. It can seem like we are always working hard on these things but don't 'solve' them and that can be quite demoralising.

I think one way we can remind ourselves of our achievements is by having a really clear plan for the Samaritans about what we want to do and when. Then, as we go through the year, we can have some satisfaction in ticking off the tasks and knowing we are nearer to our goals.

#### The main things I believe need to done are:

- Achieve a wide and secure funding base. We need to have some certainty that we will get a reasonable amount of money each year, such as from the Government, and that we are

capable of raising the rest ourselves. We also need to have a good spread of funding sources so if one stops, we are not poleaxed.

- Improve our public profile. When people stop putting 'Good' in front of our name and asking if we want to come and pick up their fridge, we'll be part of the way there!
- Improve our corporate governance. The Samaritans operates on 2 full time equivalent paid staff, huge input from volunteers already doing shifts and the sniff of an oily rag, but it really is a fair-sized business and the fact that we are a charity doesn't mean we shouldn't run it in a professional manner.

All of these are about supporting the main reason we are here, being there for the thousands of people who, for whatever reason, don't always have someone they can talk to when they need to – who can't turn to their husband, their mother, their friend for help and sympathy but can speak to one person who they know will listen, a Sam.

#### New Committee

It's really encouraging to see a record number of Samaritans put their hand up to be on the Committee this year and share their enthusiasm, wisdom and experience in making the Samaritans better for the callers and the volunteers who give hours of their time each week with such good humour.

"Every time a hand reaches out to help another...That is Christmas.

Every time someone puts aside anger aside and strives for understanding...That is Christmas.

Every time people forget their differences and realise their love for each other...That is Christmas."

May this Christmas bring us closer to the spirit of human understanding, closer to the blessing of peace.

**Samaritans management and staff wish you all a merry festive season surrounded by family and friends.**



## FAREWELL FOUNDER

Continued from page 1...

was born.

There are now 200 branches in Britain and Ireland, in addition to some 200 affiliated centres in 38 other countries, in 1953 "to befriend the suicidal and despairing." Since it took its first call in the UK in 1953, Samaritans has grown to the point where it has nearly 17,000 volunteers in Britain and Ireland and has received more than 53 million calls since it began centrally tracking figures for the region in 1978. Chad continued to run Samaritans until 1987, thereafter remaining an active member of the organisation.

In 1950s Britain, suicide was illegal, making the discussion of such thoughts and fears incredibly difficult for individuals. Chad Varah's ground-breaking approach to resolving this contributed immeasurably to fundamental changes in the law and attitudes towards this difficult subject. Moreover, Chad's role in the creation of an international network of charities to help people in emotional distress and at risk of suicide worldwide means that it is no exag-

eration to say that the global society owes him its collective thanks.

An early proponent of sex education, Chad wrote an article in the *Picture Post* in 1952. Far more important to him than the outraged responses of conservative society were the 235 people who wrote in afterwards to bare their souls, 14 of whom showed signs of considering suicide as an option. From 1967 to 1987, Chad also worked as a consultant to the sex education magazine, *Forum*, his work was recognised by his appointment as Patron of the Terence Higgins Trust, the UK's largest HIV and AIDS charity.

He was awarded the Order of the Companion of Honour for Services to the Samaritans by Queen Elizabeth II in the Millennium New Year's Honours List. He considered his CH the greatest of the many honours bestowed upon him in his lifetime.

Rev Varah's wife Doris died in 1993, and he is survived by four of his five children, 12 grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

"Chad Varah was an utterly remarkable man who founded an organisation which has saved the lives of countless people since 1953," said Prince Charles, the heir to the throne, and patron to the Samaritans. He was an outstanding humanitarian and a great Briton."

The Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams added: "Chad Varah made a unique contribution to the life of our whole society, changing attitudes to suicide and bringing a distinctively pastoral and wholly non-judgmental approach to people in need, especially those coping with depressive illness. His vision and energy in the foundation of the Samaritans and its subsequent development is a legacy that stretches far beyond the church and far beyond these shores."

The late Michael Varah, Chad's eldest son who died earlier this year shared that "My father always spoke of Samaritans Volunteers as the most incredible group of people -- unsung heroes, whose commitment and dedication is the lifeblood of the Organisation. They are my father's legacy".

He remembered: 'My father described this befriending of the suicidal thus: 'There are in this world, in every country, people who seem to be 'ordinary', but who, when meeting a suicidal person, turn out to be extraordinary. They can usually save lives.

How? They give the sad person their total attention. They completely forget themselves. They listen ... and listen ... and listen, without interrupting. They beam approvingly or shake their heads sympathetically. After a long time, they say, 'Please tell me more.' If asked for advice, they say, 'You're the only person who can advise you well - what do you think you should do?' They have no message. They do not preach. They have nothing to sell. We call them 'Samaritans'."

