

KIDS CAN'T WAIT!



Once in a Generation:

In 1937, after two years of devastation from the polio epidemic, Tasmanians came together and created StGiles. At that time, polio was creating similar challenges to those we are currently experiencing with our borders closed and movements restricted. COVID-19 is this generation's pandemic challenge. Our borders are once again closed, our movements restricted, and it appears it will be many months before life returns to normal.

Many Tasmanians are doing it tough at this time, and for those with a disability there can be extra challenges! St Giles is determined to provide support and we've changed a number of our services to address COVID-19 challenges. These changes have put pressure on our ability to respond to the needs of those we serve.

StGiles has watched a year's planning evaporate as fundraising event after event has been cancelled due to COVID-19. The Balfour Burn, Niche Markets and Mark Shelton's Walk to Hobart are examples. Even our raffle with Woolworths was cut short.

St Giles Kids Can't Wait Mid-Year Appeal will now be our major fundraiser for 2020. Please, donate now – your support at this time is more important than ever!



DONATE HERE

Please accept my special gift of:

☐ \$20

☐ \$50

☐ \$100

☐ \$200

☐ \$

Name

Save us \$1 with your email address for your receipt

Address

State

Postcode

My cheque is enclosed, or please debit my:

☐ Mastercard

☐ Visa

Expires / CCV

Please sign here

Ongoing support

☐ Please charge \$_____ monthly to the credit card details above until I advise otherwise in writing.

☐ Please send me information about remembering StGiles in my Will.

If for any reason you do not wish to receive our appeal information, please write to us at StGiles, PO Box 416, Launceston TAS 7250 or, email society@StGiles.org.au. StGiles respects your privacy. If you have any questions about your privacy please call us. **(Donations to StGiles of \$2.00 or more are tax deductible).**



From StGiles archive

Once in a Generation - Polio Pandemic

It's impossible not to draw comparisons between the 1935 polio outbreak and COVID-19.

Polio spread quickly and easily, globally for much of the 20th century, until a vaccine was developed in 1955.

In early 1935 Launceston was the epicentre of a polio epidemic - 'infantile paralysis' - a virus which affected mainly children and left many paralysed.

For three years, Tasmanians endured state-wide restrictions on movement – street by street, town by town, region by region, quarantine and fear had arrived and stayed; unwelcome and cruel.

The 1935 polio outbreak continued until March 1939. An estimated 2000 Tasmanians were infected and it cost 81 Tasmanians their lives.

As well the University of Melbourne reported in *"Epidemics"*, January 2018: "Hospital wards filled with paralysed victims bandaged into splints and families built special carts to move around their stricken children.

At its worst, victims would be left

reliant on artificial respiration for the rest of their lives. It wasn't until the 1950s that an effective vaccine was developed that would eventually eradicate the disease in developed countries; it's estimated that 20,000-40,000 Australians developed paralytic polio between 1930 and 1988."

In 2013, Launceston author Anne Green wrote *Billycarts & Wheelchairs – 75 Years of StGiles*

She painted a vivid word picture of Tasmania during the deadly polio epidemic:

'Launceston and Campbell Town themselves became restricted places with children under 17 forbidden to leave or enter without a medical certificate. Those who did were required to have a written undertaking from their parents that 'they will remain in isolation for a period of 21 days on arrival at their destination and will report to the local health officer of the district every third day for a period of 21 days'.

'As the epidemic continued to take its course, optimists believed it to be ebbing and the pessimists still envisaged the worst was yet to come. Those who had contracted

the disease but not had any effects of paralysis, returned to their homes and their lives. For many who had a degree of paralysis, there was a need for after-care: for treatment, rehabilitation and even re-education to live their life with new challenges.

'The Tasmanian Society for the Care of Crippled Children had been established in Hobart in October 1935. As the epidemic's epicentre, there was the need for a similar group in Launceston. The Examiner announced in early December that an executive committee of Drs Grove and Fulton, Messrs R Snelling, G Perrin and G C Hinman had been appointed to organise and conduct a meeting the following Monday, the 13th December, in order to form a group to augment the work of the government, such as provide transport to clinics, supplement education and to help locate children who needed treatment.

'The aim was to form a group to augment the work of government ... to eventually be extended to embrace all crippled children." On December 13, 1937 the Society, StGiles, was formed. 🍇

Mark Shelton's Walk and Events Cancelled



On Friday, March 13 our Events team cancelled a year's work in 30 minutes, wiping \$100,000 from StGiles budget. A busy year was scheduled, including Emergency Services Minister Mark Shelton, taking to the Midland Highway for a second fundraising walk to Hobart. In 2018, Minister Shelton raised

\$22,000 and even snow on St Peter's Pass didn't stop him.

The Bracknell farmer turned politician always understood the work of StGiles, but it was the birth of his grandson Evan that triggered his passion. Evan has Down Syndrome. He's also unstoppable, like his 'pa'.

The whiteboard in the StGiles

fundraising office said it all, with red lines drawn across all events until December:

Balfour Burn –
March 20 – cancelled till 2021

Harmony Niche –
March 21 – cancelled

Easter Niche –
April 4 – cancelled

Mark Shelton Walk to Hobart -
cancelled

I-Know Trivia –
June 13 - cancelled

Starry Night Niche –
July 13 – cancelled

Altogether, a \$100,000 financial loss.

We will be back in 2021 and are already looking at how we can adapt. Hopefully our Christmas newsletter will bring good news about new events and exciting projects! 🐼

Q: What Does StGiles Look Like in COVID-19?

A: It's very quiet and very clean

StGiles is an essential service and during March most of our days were spent gearing up and changing as the pandemic evolved, hour by hour.

Everyone who had a spare moment, donned blue gloves and walked through our offices spraying surfaces with disinfectant and wiping with blue CHUX – across all our buildings at least four times a day.

Doors were left open, to avoid the use of handles. Windows were open to keep air fresh and signs, signs and more signs about distance and handwashing.

Senior staff were seconded to a COVID-19 Response Team and an Outbreak Management Team.

Daily briefings started each day with eyes glazed and a daily task list that just kept getting longer.

Some of the challenges our teams faced were:

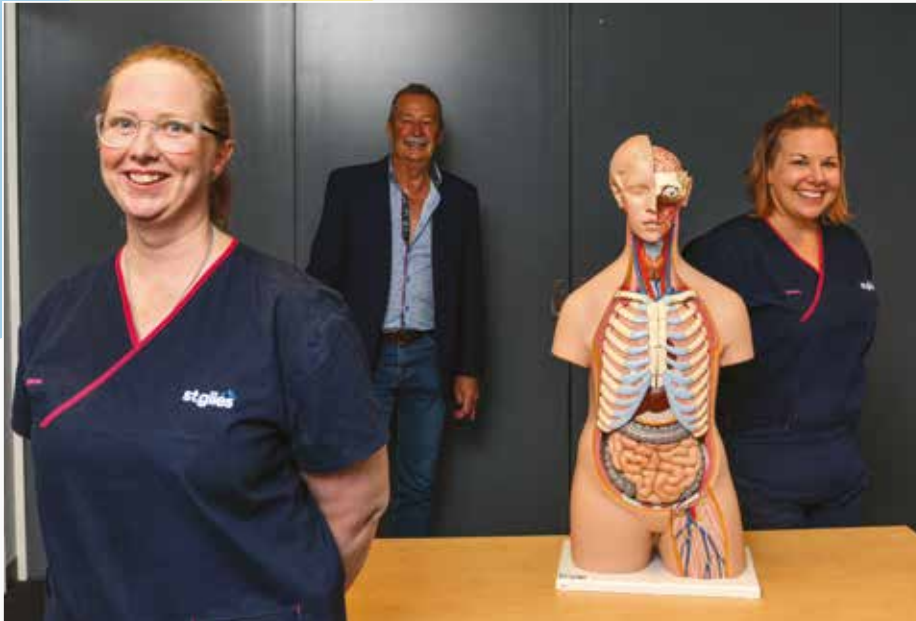
- Who could support a participant with COVID-19? When surveyed, the majority of our staff put their hands up to professionally support a participant diagnosed with COVID-19 using PPE and Commonwealth guidelines as they applied to StGiles' diversity of participants.
- How to deliver face to face therapy? Our therapy teams worked with our IT 'department' – Geoff and Cohen – to make telehealth available whenever it was requested.

- How to ensure the rights of people who use our services are not compromised? Every opportunity was made to hear what our participants wanted, giving them the dignity of risk.
- How to guarantee the health and safety of our workforce? Fortunately the Commonwealth and State governments set the rules. We put signs across Hobart, Launceston and Burnie which stated how many staff could be in each space – i.e. an office that could previously house four, within COVID-19 could only safely contain two.

StGiles is proud that we continue to provide our services across Tasmania. 🐼

A Matron In The House

Noun: a woman in charge of domestic and medical arrangements at a boarding school or other institution.



Keeping a healthy distance St Giles Clinical nurses Neville James and Nadene McIntosh with 'Matron' Elisha Deegan

Historically, St Giles had a Matron – they were an assortment of competent and larger than life characters.

In 2020, during COVID-19, our Manager of Clinical Care Elisha Deegan RN has become our Matron of the Moment.

In 'Matron's' Words:

In the days before Corona became a virus and it was still just a beer, my alarm would sound in the morning and signal the beginning of a 20 minutes fight between my brain, my body and my bed.

March of 2020 my alarm signalled something new. My brain, body and bed started saying: "Quick sticks; find out what's changed overnight; I know you're comfortable, get up now. I will be waiting for you when you fall back into me tonight."

As the manager of Clinical Care at St Giles I have the privilege of working alongside a number of amazing nurses.

We work in the primary health space to assist the people of St Giles to stay as healthy and well as possible.

We work with the staff to provide training so that they can provide exceptional care to people living with a disability who choose to access

services with St Giles.

As the virus changed from overseas nuisance to COVID-19 'the pandemic' I followed its journey and developed scenarios to keep St Giles' participants and staff safe and healthy.

My days over the last month have changed dramatically. As they have for everyone. While millions of people have been forced to slow down, to stop, to stay still, I have sped up exponentially.

My days are full.

I have read great reams of literature each day trying to stay abreast of developments in a situation that is evolving and shifting at a rate akin to my Labrador chasing seagulls on the beach.

As I head into work by myself (my carpool colleague is working from home) the peak-hour roads are more like Sunday afternoon traffic.

I use the commute as a chance to prepare for what might come at me today:

- Will today be the day we need to deploy the isolation boxes full off PPE to keep our staff safe while they continue to deliver essential care to someone suspected to have COVID-19?

- Will one of the people on the Outbreak Management Teams' register of people awaiting results for COVID-19 tests call with a positive result?
- What are the important changes that have occurred that the response team needs to be aware of?
- How can we assist participants who are wanting the annual influenza vaccine to access this in the safest way possible?

Amid this COVID-19 pandemic I am also ensuring that my team have the support and resources they need to continue their work as well.

The training that Clinical Care delivers is typically delivered in large groups, some of this is mandatory, there is no exemption.

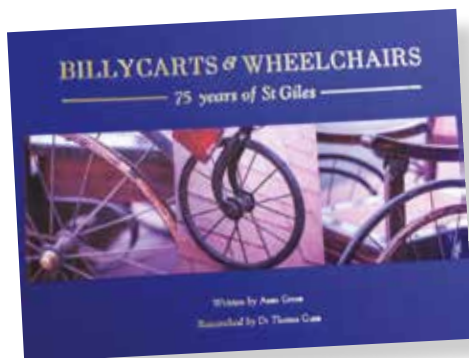
My mind is working on solutions to work around the restrictions that the pandemic necessitates. How do we run First Aid and CPR classes? How are we going to make sure that staff are confident and competent to complete invasive tasks for people? What can we achieve over telehealth for people spread across this amazing little island of ours that is today, in some places, as inaccessible as it was 100 years ago?

Each day goes by too fast and I am left with items on my list of 'to do' tasks every afternoon. Some of them wait until the next day, some get picked up by someone else and some get completed in the evening once I am home again.

On my quiet and traffic free drive home I reflect upon the day and try to let some of the frustration or stress go. I need to prepare to greet my daughter with a smile. I need to get back to my little piece of paradise, strip off my clothes, get clean, put on clean duds and then, finally I can cuddle my kid and my husband ... if the kitchen is clean.

Even though I am here with the people I love the most I am a NURSE, I'm with my family, but the people of St Giles are my 'patients' and I will continue to work through this COVID-19 pandemic to nurse them and help them however I can. 🐼

1935 How it Was



Extracts from *BILLYCARTS & WHEELCHAIRS 75 years of St Giles* by Anne Green.

One paper headlined: "Four Deaths in City (Launceston) in 24 Hours; two were aged 17, one 24 and the fourth 32."

This took the total to 8 deaths and 60 confirmed cases. Two days later, there were 12 new cases and two further deaths.

In Canberra, the Prime Minister, Tasmanian Joe Lyons announced he would not be returning home with his

family for Christmas due to the epidemic. The restrictions relied initially on public goodwill but tended to cause frustration and confusion. Unsurprisingly, there was a general exodus of children. One mother was indignant after her child travelled from Launceston Circular Head and had to serve an order for 21 days isolation.

Launceston was the epicentre of the Tasmanian outbreak.

After only a fortnight, 31 cases had been admitted to the Launceston Infectious Diseases Hospital from areas beyond (the first cluster) Inveresk, with suspected cases also in Campbell Town, Cressy, Devonport and Queenstown.

It was no longer a sporadic case or two. Clubs and organisations began cancelling events, dances, games and Sunday School and the teachers of the Beaconsfield municipality were asked not to make their usual weekend visits to Launceston.

Finally, on Friday November 19, 1937, all children were sent home from Launceston state schools, except those preparing for the scholarship exams.

Marjorie Gardner (nee Arnold) recalled after being diagnosed, being taken away in a strange vehicle to the Infectious Disease ward: 'I waited for my parents to come and say goodbye but they couldn't, since I was a diagnosed infantile paralysis case in isolation. I think that ... is what really struck you more than anything else, it was this shocking isolation'.

(Source: Paul Richards *Affecting a Cure*)

The social costs of the epidemic were beginning to show as the first person was charged for leaving the restricted area. A 15-year-old was prosecuted for continuing to attend the Launceston High School School, despite restrictions. She had gone undetected as her home was in the country and she had been staying in Inveresk. "The girl told the court she was anxious to pass her examinations and consequently had wanted to attend school".

Interested in reading more? We still have some copies of *Billycarts & Wheelchairs* for sale at \$10 each.

To order email society@stgiles.org.au

I was a participant in StGiles We Can Programme in June 2019



By Jane Mignot

At the moment, we are all experiencing COVID-19 as a virus of the world.

It's taking its toll on our economy and people have lost employment, businesses have shut down, the population is self-isolating and there are strict rules and financial loss.

Please stay connected and

communicate with family and friends, through Facebook, social media and phone or other safe methods.

During the We Can Programme I discovered I had a skill for storytelling. My story was published in the last edition of this newsletter.

I would like to be a writer who captures and takes photos in time, and write stories that have an emotional connection to our city of Devonport and its attractions.

But due to COVID-19 virus my work is on hold. There are many setbacks, delays and anxieties.

Like me, you may have a story to share and it can be a rewarding experience and have people enjoy. We should all take the time to talk face to face. But we have to wait until it's safe and be cautious.

But we can all express our own thoughts, opinions, experiences,

circumstances, situations to family and community which can be useful information during these difficult times.

Telling your story also connects the past and present.

I hope I can be an inspiration as a writer, to be a voice and have discussions and the courage to tell.

Through their stories, please take the time to listen to others as you may learn something and be surprised.

As a society we can be swept away by the digital world. We can become lost as people have less time in busy lives to listen to others. We can all stay connected by reading stories so many to be told about COVID-19 and how it has effected and changed people and the world we living in. We need to stay in touch.

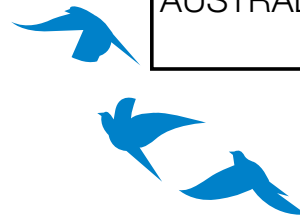
I hope I give you encouragement to get chatting Tasmania and keep safe.



KIDS CAN'T WAIT!

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7 days please return to
StGiles Society
PO Box 416
Launceston TAS 7250



Our Essential Services are...



StGiles essential services continue within COVID-19, with our teams adapting and safely providing support, therapy and care, where it's needed, across Tasmania.

We are taking advice from the Commonwealth and many of our allied health services provided in Hobart and Launceston are being offered via telehealth.

The ASELCC at Burnie is still open, Monday to Friday.

And our support services are providing in-home support, again following the Commonwealth's COVID-19 guidelines.

If you have any questions about our services you're welcome to contact our customer service team on 1300 278 445 