



Alfred

# Matters:

Regular news  
bulletin for  
the staff of  
The Alfred

## Exciting new phase for The Alfred Centre

Construction of The Alfred Centre got off the ground last month, with Minister for Health Bronwyn Pike, doing the official 'soil turning' before an audience of patients, staff and community members. The Minister also launched The Alfred Centre's Community Participation Panel (CPP), which has been established to ensure a patient and consumer focus during project planning. During the launch CPP member and Alfred patient, Sean Lank, also presented a unique perspective of his personal expectations of The Alfred Centre.

involved detailed planning for each area of the facility. This was a great success, thanks to the hard work and dedication of many staff across The Alfred working with the consultant team.

The Alfred Centre project team welcomed aboard Accenture Management Consulting and Technology Services as information, communication and technology consultants for this phase of the project. This important work will provide a clearer idea of the technology required to support the model of care.

For further information or to sign up for regular electronic updates regarding the progress of The Alfred Centre, please contact The Alfred Centre Project Office on (08) 9397 1243 or e-mail [thealfredcentre@alfred.org.au](mailto:thealfredcentre@alfred.org.au)



Alfred MP and Chair of the CPP Tony Exton with Health Minister Bronwyn Pike.

## Alfred patients top effort at Transplant Games



Over 1,000 participants from all over the world flocked to Adelaide in September to compete in the ninth Australian Transplant Games.

Amongst the crowd were several very keen Alfred transplant recipients. Norm, who had a heart transplant 14 years ago, competed in the bowling events, where the competition was evidently tough.

"The competition was very stiff this time around, with some very high class bowlers. There were also a lot more bowlers compared to when I last competed ten years ago," said Norm.

Sophie Morell had a bone marrow transplant 21 months ago and with 14 medals to her name it appears that she's doing extremely well. Sophie competed in rowing, cycling and swimming events and came home with seven gold, six silver and one bronze medal.

Alfred kidney transplant patient Gail Smyth competed in 6 different events including squash, walking, running and in the pool. She won 5 gold medals and 1 silver.

**Congratulations to all patients who competed in the Games.**

## Decade of community care for mentally ill

Ten years ago, Victorians with mental illness were given an alternative treatment to the institutions where many were locked up and left with poor care in antiquated facilities. In 1994 twenty people were instead taken to the very first Community Care Unit, run by The Alfred.

The Alfred's Psychiatry Community Care Unit (CCU) celebrated a decade of personalised care for the mentally ill during Mental Health Week earlier this month. The CCU, opened in Alfred in 1994, has proven to be a big success.

To celebrate, a morning tea was held to mark this major milestone. The event was attended by many who have seen the CCU grow and flourish over the years, including patients, past patients and their families, former Health Minister Caroline Hogg, Director of Alfred Psychiatry, Associate Professor Peter Dwyer and Professor Alan Fels, whose daughter Isabella has been a resident for the past year.



Head of the CCU Dr Louise Dawson was recognised for her contribution.

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Sign up for CT week - See centre spread



Bone Marrow Donor Institute  
Red Ball 2004



Cancer survivor Sophie Morell is ready for the Great Victorian Bike Ride.

Picture TOM CAMPBELL, 4/20/07 11

## Answers lie in the soil

WORMS would be wise to wriggle out of the way - Stonnington workers are planning to test for soil contamination at several council sites.

Childcare centres, maternal and child health centres and kindergartens are included in a health risk assessment of council buildings and facilities.

Stonnington chief executive Hadley Sides said testing would begin at the Bowen St area of Majors East - home to the May Armstrong Childcare Centre, Fenwick St Kindergarten, a maternal and child health centre, MECWA, a scout hall and the former Chadstone library.

"Following a number of incidents in other municipalities across Melbourne, it is important for council to undertake these assessments," Mr Sides said.

"It is expected the assessments will be progressively undertaken over 12 months at approximately 20 sites throughout the municipality."

The soil assessments will involve drilling with specialised machinery and Mr Sides said disruptions during the testing period would be minimal.

"As part of the process, soil samples are sent to a laboratory for analysis, which will then be examined by an independent environmental auditor appointed by council," he said.

"As we receive these reports for each site, the information will be made publicly available to interested parties."

Stonnington Council will let parents and users of the buildings know when the tests are due.

For further information, phone Stephen Larkner on 8290 2548.

# Biker on a mission

SUVI MAHONEN

SOPHIE Morell knows what it's like to be at death's door.

She was diagnosed with leukaemia when she was 27.

"I had a blood test on Monday and by Friday I was in the Alfred having chemotherapy," the 30-year-old said.

"Two months later I was told I had 12 months to live unless I had a bone marrow transplant."

No donor was found in Australia, but the Bone Marrow Donor Insti-

tute in Melbourne found her a match in Norway.

It was a tense time for the Prahran resident. Her specialist from the Alfred flew to Oslo to pick up the tissue.

It was ferried by ambulance from the airport to the hospital because there was only a 36-hour window of opportunity to transplant the tissue.

"I owe my life to this man on the other side of the world," Ms Morell said.

"I want to thank him and ask him why he did such a selfless act for

"I owe my life to this man on the other side of the world"

— Sophie Morell

someone he had never met. I'm so grateful."

With her new lease on life, Ms Morell is on a mission to spread the word about bone marrow donation and to raise awareness of the life-saving institute.

She will take part in the 170km VicRoads Great Victorian Bike Ride this Saturday, cycling for the Bone Marrow Donor Institute's "Back on Track" program.

Ms Morell will be one of a record 8000 cyclists taking part in the world's greatest cycling holiday, along the Great Ocean Road.

"Doing the bike ride is something practical I can do to raise awareness about bone marrow donation and support the institute," Ms Morell said.

"Bone marrow donation is harmless and painless - and saves lives."

NEWS

# Determined climb to line



THE next phase of bone marrow transplant recipient Sophie Morell's life will be all green and gold.

After successfully battling acute lymphoblastic leukemia, Morell is in her final stages of training for next month's World Transplant Games.

She will compete for Australia against more than 50 countries in rowing, cycling and swimming.

She will also captain the first Australian Transplant Rowing Team.

"Eight months ago I wasn't able to walk upstairs, but I was so determined to make it," she said.

The Prahran athlete competed at last year's Australian Transplant Games in September and scored an amazing medal haul of seven gold, six silver and one bronze in swimming, rowing, cycling, eightball and 3km run events.



World Transplant Games competitor Sophie Morrell. NS1MP404

Morell, 30, trains every day in swimming, rowing and cycling to prepare for the world games.

She will fly to Britain next week to meet her fiancée (also a transplant recipient) before flying to

Ontario, Canada, for the games, where she will compete in five individual events and two relays.

» Sophie Morell is this week's Stonnington Leader senior Sports Star nominee

feb-mar 2005

# ride On

the bicycle victoria magazine



## healthmatters

# A very big two-year-old

First leukaemia, Sophie Morell has a new life - and it's better than the last. Kate Johnston meets a winning woman with the spirit of a carefree kid



Sophie Morell lay in her hospital bed staring at the stationary bike that had been put in her room. She was desperate to jump on it, to feel again the joy of driving her body to the edge of its limits. But extensive radiotherapy and chemotherapy to fight acute lymphoblastic leukaemia had left her barely able to walk one lap of the ward.

"Whenever I had been accused in life, it had always been upon that had helped me through," she says. Now all she could imagine was the drive to one day ride again. She had been given three months to live unless a bone marrow donor could be found.

Two years later, Sophie can contact her Norwegian donor to thank him for her new life. She might tell him she, as her health improved,

"There's not a lot of awareness about life after a transplant and how great it can be"

she found liberation within her limitations. She recently won the women's 10km road race at the Australian Transplant Games in Adelaide and has been selected to represent her country in cycling at the World Transplant Games in Canada next July. Her winning form in Adelaide continued when she met her partner, Gareth, a kidney transplant recipient and captain of the English transplant cricket team.

"My life's better now post-transplant than it was beforehand," says Sophie. "And I thought I had a good life then."

Competing again has given her a positive focus and helped clear her mind. But her illness' impact is far from over. The pain barrier has to be managed. Doctors encourage leukaemia patients to take up physical exercise as soon as

possible after treatment, but a bone marrow transplant requires the immune system to be rebuilt from scratch and Sophie cannot afford to get too down. A cold could turn to pneumonia all too quickly. After training she often has to sleep for hours.

Physical limitations are still daily, but within them lie possibilities. The opportunity and ability to cycle is all that stopped her enjoyment of the sport. Now in transition, she still lives within the unknown every day, but chooses to be grateful for what she can achieve. Her energy levels may go up and down, but she does to improve as her spirit returns to the scene.

"I am using my transplant to better my life in sport, not using my sport to better my life because of the transplant," she says.

Sophie is also setting up a foundation to support survivors in creating a rich and fulfilling post-transplant life.

"There's not a lot of awareness about life after a transplant and how great it can be," she says. "The foundation will look after 17 to 20 year olds. There's so much for kids and the older olds. There's an eye roll to you about, for someone, relationships and intimacy post-transplant. I was patient and provided so much to hospital, for a long time I had someone watching me."

And so she keeps life plans for a new career as a motivational speaker, training for more gold medals and an overseas trip and the necessity of being in hospital staring at her stationary bike bring a lifetime ago. But it's only been two years since her transplant. "Tuesday 14 December was my birthday," she says. "I turned over for a very big one year old."

### Fact file

■ Blood and bone marrow cancers can develop in anyone, of any age, at any time.

■ Leukaemia is cancer of the bone marrow, where blood cells are made. Leukaemia occurs when abnormal white blood cells multiply rapidly, and crowd out healthy cells, leaving the body starved of oxygen, with little immunity to disease, and unable to plug wounds in the skin and blood vessels.

■ Each year about 6400 Australian adults and children are diagnosed with leukaemia or a related blood disorder.

■ Between 1982 and 1994, more Australian males died from leukaemia than females were diagnosed (Australia Institute of Health & Welfare).

■ About three in 10 adults diagnosed with leukaemia will go on to live a normal life, while seven out of 10 children (five puberty) will survive the disease.

For information on donating bone marrow, contact the Leukaemia Foundation on 1300-620-420 or visit [www.leukaemia.com.au](http://www.leukaemia.com.au)

# OFF T

## Great Vic report

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# Stonnington Leader

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## Sophie's keeping her focus



SOPHIE Morell (right) doesn't take much for life's setbacks. The next phase of the bone marrow transplant recipient's journey will be paved in green and gold. After successfully battling acute lymphoblastic leukaemia, Morell is in the final stages of training for next month's World Transplant Games, in which she will compete in the rowing, cycling and swimming events.

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Picture: TOM CAMPBELL/STONNINGTON LEADER



# Where's the car park?

NATALIE WHITE

ANOTHER 346 apartments are to be built in Chapel St - despite the developer ignoring a five-year-old directive by Stonnington Council. Australand will build an 18-storey residential complex at 470 Chapel St, north of Toorak Rd, and a second, 14-storey, building facing Maloune St. The buildings will contain 346 apartments, shops, a cafe and a

multi-level 1100-space public and private car park. They will form part of a \$40 million 718-unit development on the site. Council approval was given despite the company failing to build a 237-space temporary car park on the same site by April last year - a council directive of March 2000. Australand agreed to supply the car spaces as part of a previous application for the site. The car park was to help meet a parking

shortfall at the Como Centre. Australand is in breach of the March 2000 agreement, but the council is unlikely to pursue compensation. It could be entitled to claim the 1796 sq m land at no cost and build the car park itself. Instead, the council is expected to negotiate another deal with the developer, as outlined in a report at last week's council meeting. Stonnington planning manager Stuart Driffin said the council

would debate its course of action at a future meeting. "It is a significant decision," he said. Australand apartments manager Robert Pradolin said the car park obligation should be reviewed to see if it was "actually needed". "If it is required, we will build it. If not, we will work with the council to do something that will be of more benefit to the community," he said. However, last year Mr Pradolin

told the *Stonnington Leader* "... we will provide 237 car spaces that will be part of a public car park to ease the (present) traffic congestion." (May 5, 2004) Cr John Chandler said the missing car park was "of some concern". "We've been waiting a long time for this car park," he said. » Have your say, email [stonnington@tr.newsnet.com.au](mailto:stonnington@tr.newsnet.com.au)



interview

with Libby Wilkie



Sophie's voice

Sophie Morrell hasn't let leukaemia dull her zest for sporting success

Talk about looking at the glass being half full. While the mere thought of being diagnosed with leukaemia and having to endure chemotherapy and a bone marrow transplant would be enough for most,

Sophie Morrell not only experienced this battle, she seems to have reaped it on the chin.

"I'm not someone to just sit back and let it get me," she says. "I'm here for a reason. Someone told me that six

years ago and I never knew why. But now I know it's to educate people about transplantation and to find that life balance and motivation within."

Now a motivational speaker for schools and community and corporate

organisations, Morrell was a sales and marketing executive in the Middle East when she was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukaemia. It affects blood cell production and bone marrow, and is the most common form of childhood cancer. "My parents and friends say it's based on a genetic up," jokes Morrell.

Having the rug pulled from beneath her forced Morrell to change every aspect of her life. "It immediately got everything in perspective," she says. "You have to prioritise what you want to achieve. By the time I was 30 I wanted to be married, have a career, be on a six-figure salary and live a house with a picket fence and a smart car. I was 27, and had to move back with my parents with none of that. I lost my career, I didn't have my car, I could barely walk, and I lost my hair and my fertility because of the chemotherapy and radiation."

Morrell approached her impending struggle by establishing a business plan. "The mission statement was pretty simple – it was to stay alive. My break-even point was the day of my transplant, or anything prior to that was a net loss and anything after that was a net gain."

Thanks to a successful transplant, and the bone marrow of a 47-year-old Norwegian man, Morrell is still able to make personal plans. Her most recent involves competing in rowing, cycling and swimming at the 2009 World Transplant Games (WTG).

The WTG began in 1978 and alternates between summer and winter games. This year's event is currently being held in London, Canada, with more than 3000 participants representing more than 35 countries in a variety of sports such as tennis, volleyball, ten-pin bowling and golf.

Morrell flew to the UK last month to join her fiancé, kidney transplant recipient Gareth Pollard, for some northern summer training in her chosen sports.

Before the diagnosis, despite her chaotic work schedule, Morrell managed to squeeze in games of polo and swimming. "I love sport," she says. "It's critical to keeping a healthy mind because it helps clear your thoughts. What I found most difficult through treatment was that I wasn't able to do sport. When I got stressed, frustrated or angry I couldn't get on my bike and go for a ride; I wasn't allowed to get in the pool and go swimming. That outlet wasn't there, and it was the biggest challenge."

This is the first year rowing has been on the WTG program. Morrell jumped at the chance to "get back into the boat" (she being up her own years ago) and took up cycling.

"It's an amazing sport technically and psychologically," she says, noting her choice of a sport on the medal podium as "better than average, but I'm not going to jinx myself." She's unable to choose a favourite among the three sports, and equally loves cycling and swimming.

"Just being on the bike, there's no feeling that can compare," she says. "And I'm a water baby. I believe I could swim before I could walk. I take any opportunity to be in the pool."

While Morrell's not a huge fan of the dapper Australian team uniforms, she's like what it symbolises. "I know it sounds really corny, but the chance to represent my country in the green and gold... it's anything like the Australian Transplant Games last year. I'd walk away elated."

"You feel normal because everyone around you has had a transplant and you're all in the same boat. There's no stigma. It's a shared experience that's hard to describe."

Morrell and her personal business

"By the time I was 30 I wanted to be married, have a career and be on a six-figure salary"

Snapshot

NAME Sophie Morrell

AGE 33

OCCUPATION Motivational speaker;

LYVES Patron

MUST ADMIRE SPORTSPERSON Muhammad Ali, because of his sense of humour – he can still laugh at himself. The way he conducts himself through illness, he's an extraordinary person.

MUST ATTEND EVENT AT THE COMMONWEALTH GAMES

Cycling. The atmosphere at the stadiums is just amazing. To be able to compete at that level without drugs is extraordinary, there are very few people who can.

HOW DO YOU RELAX? I struggle to relax. The only time I relax is when I'm in hospital because I'm forced to stop. And probably when I sleep. It's the only time my mind turns off.

LISTENING TO The free CD that came out with The Age (Life is Beautiful) with ABC Classic FM. I love it, and I get so much work done listening to it.

READING Billy by Pamela Stephenson and a recent novel about (spoiler) Leslie Armstrong called 20 Days in July.

are aiming to row at Boston's Head of the Charles Regatta within the next two years, and in true glass-half-full fashion, she's optimistic about the future.

"I'd just take each day as it comes, and look forward to every day because it's a day further away from the transplant. If the leukaemia comes back again, I'll deal with it. I've dealt with it before, and I can deal with it again."

As we wrap up print, Sophie Morrell won a gold medal in rowing at the World Transplant Games.