



Issue 14. Jan – Apr 2020

For many, 2020 started with trials and difficulties that were hard to imagine and overcome. From the devastating Bushfires early in the year to the start of COVID-19, St. Merkorious has witnessed the strength and resilience of all those who suffered and bore witness to such unexpected trials. We are grateful to be part of a cause that can help ease those difficulties, either with food or other necessities, backed by a supportive and strong community of sponsors, donors and volunteers. I thank you for being here, helping those who need it most.



*Paula Nicolas
Founder and President*

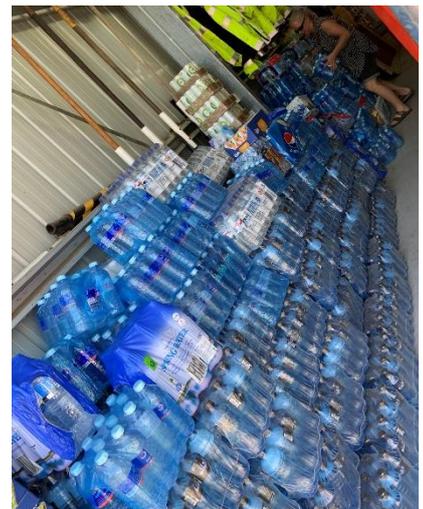
BARGO BUSHFIRE APPEAL AND VISIT- JANUARY, 2020

January saw a summer filled with the tragedy of the devastating Australian Bushfires. St. Merkorious Charity had the privilege of visiting the small town of Bargo to deliver a van full of donated goods to those affected. Among the many items our generous donors contributed were critical items such as water, face masks, pantry goods, hygiene items, electrolytes and baby food.

At Bargo, our volunteers were honoured to meet with Paula Relic, founder of the not-for-profit organisation, 'Our Community Pantry'. Paula and her hardworking team were local heroes that had been busy distributing food and essential items to those in need in the community.

After all that has been endured, Bargo's resilient community was in high spirits and expressed how grateful they were to the generosity shown by St. Merkorious Charity, our donors, sponsors, and our wonderful community who helped the appeal happen. Rebuilding efforts will no doubt be a big job that lies ahead, but we know that when a community works together, we can achieve anything.

We give a huge thank you to our volunteers for coming along on this journey and being touched by this experience. We also thank again everyone who donated items for our Bushfire Appeal.



ST. JOSEPH'S SENIORS LUNCH- 11 MARCH, 2020

We had the pleasure of serving lunch to the elderly parishioners of St. Joseph Maronite Catholic Church during the feast week of the parish Patron Saint. Unfortunately, we had a reduced number of participants as COVID-19 had just broken out. To make up for this, we gave plenty of takeaway containers filled with tasty, nutritious food and guests were extremely grateful to enjoy the company of our volunteers.

Thank you to parish priest, Fr Maroun El-Kazzi for allowing us to serve the congregation. We also give great thanks to the church volunteers for cooking saj and mini pizza to celebrate the occasion.



NEW WAREHOUSE- MARCH, 2020

We have been blessed with a new warehouse opportunity across from our kitchen headquarters in Strathfield South. This acquisition was necessary to maintain social distancing due to COVID-19 as we desperately needed extra space for storage and preparation space for dry and fresh hampers. Thankfully, our new warehouse is conveniently located directly in front of our headquarters, for convenience.

We are so grateful for all those involved in making this acquisition possible.



POINT OF SALE (POS) GRANT- MARCH, 2020

Through the Local Government's Community and Building Partnership funding, we have received \$5,000 to allow us to install point of sale software and label equipment in our kitchen to increase our work efficiency. Although our meals are free, this will enable us to print reports, provide nutritional clarity and ensure every one of our clients is



aware of what they are consuming. We thank Strathfield Council for their continuous support and funding to continue St. Merkorious Charity's operations development.

KITCHEN EQUIPMENT UPGRADE- APRIL, 2020

We have also been fortunate enough to receive a grant of \$25,000 to purchase a new tilting kettle, blast chiller, vacuum sealer and brat pan to increase our cooking efficiency in the kitchen. The new items will allow us to produce more meals in less time, helping our kitchen workers and cook to have an easier time. We thank Strathfield Council again for their generosity.

OUR RESPONSE TO COVID-19

During the unprecedented times of COVID-19, we saw a dramatic increase in the price of goods and ingredients. Demand was higher than ever before and our access to supplies could not keep up. However, St. Merkorious Charity was determined to continue our Food Relief Service to those in our care, especially in their times of need.

Our office was closed from 23 March and reopened on 21 April. Although our office was physically closed, our staff and volunteers quickly evolved new ways to continue serving the less fortunate in our care with minimal contact.

Our strategies to do so were:

- We partnered up with Kebouski and purchased delicious, wholesome meals including shepherds pie, falafel and lasagna and delivered them to our clients. Their professionalism and experience made the process smooth.
- Roast chicken from Costco was distributed to disadvantaged families.
- We implemented a 'drive-thru' service at our headquarters whereby our client waited in their car while the car gets loaded with their quota of pantry staples.
- Safety equipment including masks, gloves and sanitiser were used by everyone handling food.
- We sent out large hampers consisting of flour, salt, sugar, long-life milk and other staples to prolong our client's need to leave their homes to go grocery shopping.
- Staff/volunteers took part in Covid-19 Training run by The National Training Organisation to protect ourselves and clients by minimising the risk of transfer.

These strategies were implemented to ensure we adhere to government regulations and keep our staff, volunteers and clients healthy and safe.



Stay updated via our Social Media!



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St Merkorious Charity



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Westfield
Local Heroes
One act. Big impact.