

Primary entry #16: New Lambton Public School



New Lambton Notebook



Laurel Leddy works relentlessly to support local causes.

Picture: Jenna Marley

The charity worker with a big heart

By TULIP CRANSON

NEW Lambton local Laurel Leddy insists she gets just as much out of her charity work as the people she helps.

Mrs Leddy, who owns and operates Wakett's TV and Aerial Services, is involved in many charity groups, but one that is particularly close to her heart is One to One, of which she is vice president.

One to One is a local charity started by Mary Maughan in 2003, and now comprises five dedicated women who meet monthly.

Since it began, One to One has raised over \$200,000 by hosting race days, luncheons, balls, fashion parades, market days and more.

Allambi Youth Services, Heal For Life, The Nicholas Trust, Jenny's Place, and Scouts with Special Needs have all benefited from the women's relentless fundraising.

This year One to One has chosen the Mark Hughes Foundation as its beneficiary, partly because of founding member Mary's own battle with brain cancer. The Mark Hughes Foundation was formed by former Newcastle Knight Mark Hughes and his wife, Kirralee, after Mark was diagnosed with brain cancer in 2013.

Included in this year's fundraising line-up is a market day, Back to Lambton Night, Christmas in July, November race day and a Christmas function, when the cheque is traditionally handed over.

Art is the best medicine

By OSCAR RICHARDS-FLANAGAN

TOURETTES Syndrome, or TS, is a mental disability that affects 1 per cent of Australians. Bliss Cavanagh is one of them, and she took her experience of living with Tourette's and made it her inspiration for helping other people.

May 3-10 was Tourette's Awareness Week. Ms Cavanagh recently opened Studio Bliss in the Hunter Street Mall. The furry nature of her spaces and soft music create a calming environment and a place to relax, especially for people living with TS.

"I started playing around with soft fabrics and I loved fur," Ms Cavanagh said. "I put some light behind it and saw how beautifully it lit up. After that I started to make hundreds of Furry Delights and people loved them."

Her sensory environments were part of a Fine Art Honours Project at Newcastle University. Ms Cavanagh decided to create her own personal art space which resulted in a 2012 show at Watt Space titled *Sensory Overload: A Moment's Liberation From a Tic*. When making and sculpting products, it helps liberate her from the tics that frequent people with TS.

In 2013, Ms Cavanagh created an installation for the Newcastle Writers Festival. This year she is



Bliss Cavanagh has created a space that provides calm for people living with Tourettes Syndrome.

Picture: Oscar Richards-Flanagan

doing another at the Maitland Library for the kid's school holidays program.

Growing up with TS, Ms Cavanagh didn't have the same support that is available today. "People didn't talk about it [or] understand much... people still don't but it was much more stigmatised [back then] and I was afraid of people knowing about me."

People who are diagnosed with

TS frequently tic, which is the word given to the involuntary actions people with Tourettes feel compelled to perform.

Ms Cavanagh handcrafts every furry delight that she sells, and also sculpts and designs all her fuzzy furniture and lighting. She donates a percentage of each sale towards supporting other families, friends and schools or people with TS.

Ms Cavanagh is now the Newcastle TS Support Group Leader and she will be holding group meetings in her sensory space that are open to family or guardians of people with TS.

Her advice to kids with Tourette's is "Find something you love doing, and get better at it and that's the first step to becoming more tic-free."



Trent the diamond python delights New Lambton Public School students, Isobel Redford and Emma Bryan.

Picture: Oscar Richards-Flanagan

Blackbutt's arena spectacular opens

By PHOEBE PARKER

DOZENS of excited, nature-loving Novocastrians, including students from New Lambton Public School, were recently invited to the grand opening of Blackbutt Reserve's wildlife arena and amenities block.

The arena, located in the Carnley Avenue entrance, is an impressive hand-cut stone building designed by

the team at Blackbutt, headed by Brad West. Construction began in March 2014 and, after delays due to inclement weather, was officially opened on May 20.

As Blackbutt remained open during this construction project, visitor safety had to be a priority, as did preserving the surrounding ecosystems.

New Lambton Public School students were the

first to experience an education lesson in the new arena.

"The arena enables people to get up close with the animals and it also lets us educate large groups in all sorts of weather," said Blackbutt Ranger Emily Moore. To help visitors fully experience the shows, a large multimedia screen has also been installed.

It was officially opened by lord mayor Nuatali Nemes.

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