from the editors

WELCOME to the first edition of Change Makers magazine. The Change Makers magazine is a collaborative media project led by the students at Woodridge State High School and supported by students from the School of Journalism and Communication at the University of Queensland. The magazine is one part of the Change Makers’ Project funded by the Federal Government’s Department of Immigration as part of their Diversity and Social Cohesion Program. The project’s aim is to build greater connections and cross-cultural understanding between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Pacific, Australian and newly-arrived refugee communities in Logan City. The Change Makers’ Project includes youth camps, student-led community events and publishing a magazine. This magazine seeks to tell the story of Woodridge’s youth through the use of stories, photography, artwork and illustrations. The aim is to break stereotypes and showcase stories that promote pride, hope and inspiration. In this first edition, the magazine highlights and celebrates the diversity of the Logan community. We are proud of the stories that are being told and we hope you enjoy reading “the real story of Woodridge”.

from the change makers

AS the Change Maker youth at Woodridge State High School we decided to make a magazine to change the bad stereotypes of our youth in Logan. We are proud to be from Woodridge and want to celebrate our multicultural school. We love our community. It makes us feel safe and it is our home. We have come together as Change Makers, from many cultural backgrounds, to positively impact our community and to speak out for our youth. We want Woodridge students to be proud of who they are and where they have come from. We want to make our whole community feel the same way and to know that change is possible!

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Funded by the Department of Social Services under the Diversity and Social Cohesion Programme
FIFTY ONE years ago, Aboriginal elders used bark to send an enduring message to the highest authority in the land, seeking to end injustice. Today, children tracing their footsteps are going even further. Woodridge State High School students have crafted traditional bark petitions to call for an end to racism, a message that will be heard on a global stage at the 2014 United Nations World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

The bark tradition dates to 1963, when the Yolngu people of Yirrkala, in the Northern Territory, sought recognition of traditional land rights by sending two petitions, which combined bark painting with text on paper, to the Australian Parliament. They were the first traditional documents to bridge Commonwealth and Indigenous laws.

The Woodridge students drew on the tradition as a response to racial riots in the Logan community during 2013, which saw violence flare between Aboriginal, Pacific Islander and African families.

Their petitions ask for fairness, tolerance, an upgrade of educational and hospital resources, and to “bring some poor people from another country because they don’t have anything in their country.”

Alexandra Green, a Woodridge student in Year 9, said she was overwhelmed by the positive response with the bark petitions from her classmates.

“It made me proud to be an Aboriginal person sharing my culture,” Alexandra said.

Fellow Woodridge student Chantal Sadi said that acknowledging other cultures and apologising for wrongdoing (to the Stolen Generation) allows people to heal and release pain.

“It’s easy to feel powerless because no one listens to the poor in Australia, but they can empower themselves with education. These students by necessity have to develop skills of diplomacy and peace-making that should be acknowledged and, in the case of the bark petitions, applauded.” Among the individual messages on the Woodridge bark petitions were: “More help to find and prepare for jobs”; “Unity of all races”; “End racism”; “Fairness”; “Violence is not peace”; “Equal rights for everyone”; and “As a group we can accomplish anything.”

Dr Davis said the petitions outline a vision for racial harmony and better social infrastructure for youth to prevent boredom, as well as raise concerns about health care costs.

“I was extremely moved by the park petitions,” Dr Davis said. “I’m not sure social mobility is as achievable today as it was for me, but it just means students from Logan have to work twice as hard as everyone else.”

Head of ESL at Woodridge High School Kate Davis said that the bark petition themes highlighted the passions and sentiments of the youth in the Woodridge community.

“Over 50 years later, the bark petition legacy lives on and continues to inspire our young people to stand up for change and positive reform in our nation,” Ms Davis said.
Sitting beside me, he fiddles with his fingers in his lap as he shares his life with me in broken English. Each word separated by silence as he translates his thoughts to English words. Showing maturity and wisdom of a man much older than his 18 years, he recalls his father’s death, traveling to Iran to flee the “War on Terror”, his journey to Australia by boat and losing his best friend to the waves on the way. Growing up in Afghanistan through the 1990s during the height of the Taliban regime, life was never going to be easy, but as a religious and ethnic minority, the challenges of living in central Afghanistan were enormous. Being of Hazara ethnicity and practicing Shia Islam, he had always been in the minority, sharing his ethnic and religious group with only 9 percent of Afghans. “The Taliban wanted to kill me for my religion and my face [ethnicity],” he tells me. “I wish there was a school for my religion and I wish that someday Afghanistan will be free of the Taliban,” he said. He hopes for equality and an end to racism in the Middle East, and shares with me his plans to become a writer and tell his story with people both in Australia and Afghanistan. His mother taught him how to read, how to write, how to count and how to calculate, all behind closed doors as they were not allowed to study. She continued to home school her children even after the death of her husband. “My father’s friends saw him die, then at night, they came to my house and told my mother we had to leave because the Taliban were coming to kill us too as the food we were eating was bought with his money,” he said. “If the Taliban found out we were studying, they would have killed me,” he said. Traveling from Indonesia with only his good friend by his side, he began his journey to Australia along with 90 other asylum seekers, including children and pregnant women on an old boat carrying double its capacity. “Everywhere was dark. I have never feared the sea as I feared that night,” he said. On the sixth night the petrol for the pump ran out so the boat got heavier as the water built up, and people panicked and moved to one side of the boat, and tipped the boat. It was in the afternoon that 42 of us were saved but my friend was not one of us,” he said. “When I closed my eyes, I remembered my family, my village and clung to them, but if I died, I would have been happy because I didn’t do any bad things in my life; I didn’t kill anyone.” he said. He said leaving behind his home and his family had devastated him, but was regrettably the only option. Although his family were poor in Afghanistan, he explained to me his love for his village; the place he grew up, and the adoration he has for his family, who he never stops missing. “I have a nice situation here. I have food, I have a place to stay, I feel safe and I can go to school, but I haven’t seen my family for two and a half years,” he said. “If you gave me a billion dollars, I still couldn’t live without my family,” he said. Since arriving in Australia nearly two years ago, he has begun attending Woodridge State High School; his first opportunity at an education and a chance to learn English. “The night before I started school, I slept with my bag beside me, woke up at 5am and came to school here with no English,” he said. His courage and optimistic personality have seen him thrive in a school environment, making many friends. “It was scary, but it was great and Woodridge has given me so much hope.” he said. “I’m now a student leader so I can represent students to management, and that’s a really good chance for me to start doing good things for people” he said. “I have lots of fun with lots of people from different countries, and I love all of them,” he said.
Woodridge State High School is one of Australia’s most ethnically-diverse schools. With students from more than 65 different ethnic groups the school community is multicultural. This diversity can be seen clearly in the kinds of food students eat during their lunch break.

A TUCKSHOP lunch is still popular. This student said they did not buy from the tuckshop everyday but said they normally spend between $10-$12 when they do.

BIRYANI is a classic rice dish from South Asia and Afghanistan. This is a popular lunch for students from India, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. It often contains chicken.

BOLANI is common in Afghanistan and it’s made with potato and flour. The vegetables go inside, then it’s closed and cooked in oil. “I made this this before school. It took me an hour, but it’s worth it because it’s so yummy.”

FOR Muslim students during Ramadan there is no lunch. During the fasting month, Muslims from the age of 1-2 refrain from food and drink from sunrise to sunset. Ramadan occurred over June and July in 2014.

LUNCHES from leftovers are still popular. This Indigenous student said she enjoys taking cold pizza to school after sharing takeaway with her family the night before.

STILL a common lunch is the sandwich or ‘sanga’. This student said their lunchbox is a ‘typical’ lunchbox with salad sandwich, muesli bar and potato chips.

THIS student from Africa says since coming to Australia she enjoys sandwiches. “Today my lunch is a chicken sandwich. It’s pretty boring but nice and easy to make. I have to make it myself.”

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STUDENTS from Southeast Asia enjoy noodle-based lunches. This salad known as Yum Gung in Thai, includes prawns, mint, coriander, glass noodles and peanuts.

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AT lunchtime I’m usually so busy playing with the soccer ball that we forget to eat. When we do bring food, it’s always noodles or rice. That’s nicer than sandwiches.
EVERY child needs a safe place. The Bulkairi Space provides exactly that for students at Woodridge State High School. Woodridge was one of the first schools in Logan to create an Indigenous-focused space that supports students and the community with educational and counselling resources, as well as a safe place where students can freely express themselves. The Bulkairi space has been running since 2007. Community Education Counsellor Justine Cooper and Teacher Aide Bronwyn Ahsee said that the Bulkairi Space offers a second home to some of the 80 Indigenous students who have access to the space on a daily basis.

“We’re just trying to make the kids proud of themselves and give them a pat on the back when they need it,” says Justine.

“We won’t have our mob against each other, we’re all family here,” she said.

The team goes above and beyond to help break the stereotypes associated with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

“The perception of our Indigenous community is that we’re all down at the park sniffing glue, and that we steal and beat our women,” says Justine.

“Our kids are nothing like that.

“These are definitely still issues and for some reason it’s highlighted within the Indigenous community, but these things happen in other cultures too and not just in this area,” she said.

Working side by side with the students and their families, the Bulkairi Space team fosters a united community through mentoring, community group partnerships, cross-cultural workshops, and helping youth to get involved in sporting and cultural activities.

This year in May, the team was also responsible for organising a school-wide project to commemorate National Sorry Day. Each class created Indigenous message sticks with heart-felt messages that the students read out during a special school assembly. Traditional wood sticks with painted messages were often used as a way of communicating between Aboriginal mobs and signified safe passage into another nation’s territory for the one who carried the stick.

One class message read: “Stolen hearts, stolen children, stolen generation, we are sorry.”

One English as a Second Language (ESL) class also volunteered a considerate and genuine apology to the stolen generation showing the influence of the Bulkairi Space in integrating students from different cultures at Woodridge. It read: “As a class of many different cultures, from many different countries, we would like to say sorry for the sadness of the Stolen Generation. We would like to say THANK YOU for this wonderful country.”

“The ILC (International Language Centre) and ESL classes really get involved in all our activities - they love it because they can relate to our stories,” says Bronwyn.

Helping Indigenous and other cultures to come together, the Bulkairi Space is a small area making a big difference where it’s most needed.
Harmony Day

Har-muh-nee: An agreement that brings peace and a sweet sound.

Every year Woodridge State High School comes alive with colour, fashion, dance and food as students celebrate their diverse cultural backgrounds with great pride.
FINISHING high school is usually associated with Schoolies Week and the glitz and glamour of school formals. But for some Logan students it’s also associated with a loss of community. Youth worker Edgar Venegas says students at Woodridge State High School often feel a ‘sense of loss’ after graduating. “The school becomes like a family; part of their support network. When this is gone the students feel lost as they transition into life after school.”

In a bid to smooth this transition, Woodridge State High School has launched an Australia-first ‘Community Hub’ program aimed at supporting students and their families after they graduate. The important project links community services, education and training providers, and government organisations to provide vulnerable graduating Year 12 students and their families with the training providers, and government organisations to provide vulnerability and opportunity to enter the workforce.

Mr Venegas says it’s about letting students and families know that when their children leave the school they are not forgotten. "We are here to support students, to help them find work and to help them equip them and give them skills so that they can find their way after school. "Our students come from diverse cultural backgrounds and we help these students, most who speak English as a second language, to understand how to go about getting a job and how to write a resume."

Project Manager Josephine Aufai says the Hub continues to transform the community. “We are seeing people and a community empowered to reach their full potential,” says Ms Aufai. Woodridge graduate and mother of four Tamara says the Hub helped her complete a certificate course and enrol in a Bachelor of Human Services at Griffith University. “Now I feel I can do anything,” says Tamara. Further to job and university transition support, the program, which is the only one of its kind in Queensland, also provides health advice and cross-cultural workshops, as well as resettling students and their families who have recently arrived in Australia. “When people arrive in Australia there are lots of issues. The Community Hub is about providing integrated support. This includes conducting courses on home fire safety, storm safety and where to go for help. “It’s about building a stronger community."

The Community Hub is a partnership with the not-for-profit organisation BoysTown.

A Queensland-first program at Woodridge aimed at empowering and equipping families is giving the community a new source of hope.

The Community Hub is a partnership with the not-for-profit organisation BoysTown.

Pacific links

An innovative program aimed at reaching out to the Pacific Islander community is Logan is encouraging a culture of learning and hope among today’s students.

An award-winning schools-based program aimed at improving the learning outcomes for Pacific Islander students is being pioneered in Logan. The Pacific Links initiative at Woodridge State High School involves partnering with local community organisations to raise the aspirations of students. The initiative, which partners with organisations including Griffith University, Pacifika Pioneers, Good Health Nutrition, Voice of Samoan People and the Hope Centre aims to work with families and Pacific communities.

Community Hub Project Manager Josephine Aufai said research driven by Woodridge High found that a targeted initiative was needed to support the unique and complex needs of Pacific Islander students. The school, which has a current enrolment of 1,100 students, has more than 350 students of Pacific Islander heritage.

"The school began researching alternatives and found that working collectively with community organisations and local businesses could be an effective way of enhancing the learning and vocational outcomes of these students."

The targeted approach, which was originally established in 2010, includes a number of strategies aimed at building student success. Under the Pacific Links program, a mentoring program has been introduced, linking students to key members of the Pacific Islander community.

The weekly meetings aim to encourage school attendance, build resilience and support students in setting academic goals. The program also collaborates with local churches, attended by many of the students and their families.

In addition, the program also includes family nights, homework programs and home visits with school representatives.

Under the holistic initiative students also receive leadership training, financial and employment advice, attend camps and gain insights into employment, study and vocational options after they finish high school. Since Pacific Links was introduced school attendance rates have increased, suspension rates have decreased and student behaviour has improved. The success of the initiative has provided a model which has now been used in other Queensland schools.
Pang is a 17 year old girl. She is not married. In Hmong culture, she is an exception. Early marriages were the norm in traditional Hmong culture, where life was based on farming and involved short life spans. However, even today, it is still a big part of Hmong communities. Traditionally, Hmong girls marry starting at ages 13 or 14 and often marry older husbands. These young brides usually drop out of school to fulfill their new roles as wives and homemakers.

While teenage marriage still happens in Hmong society in Australia, Pang Lor and her family are among the increasing number of Hmong people that have shunned this custom since migration. “Back in Laos, this was the way things were done and even in Australia there are some of my friends who get married and leave high school,” she said. “It is part of our culture. But since we came here, there are many things that we are changing.”

In Hmong culture, during New Year’s Day, teenage girls and boys throw and catch a ball with each other as a form of courting. During this time, they get to know each other and traditionally, a marriage followed soon after. Pang said that this was the way her parents met each other. “They met and got married on the same day,” she said. “In Hmong culture, after throwing the ball, if you decide to get married, the groom has to visit the bride’s house and throw a party.”

“We do not have rings but we tie a white string around our wrists to show that we are married and that was what my parents did,” Pang said. Thongsin Lor, Pang’s father, says that such quick marriages on New Year’s Day were common back then but he does not expect them now. “Now you can go to throw balls on New Year’s as friends and you don’t have to get married to them,” he said. “We still do it as a Hmong tradition but things are also very different. I do not expect my daughters to find a husband that way.” “For my daughters, I think it is up to them who they want to marry and when,” he said.

Mai says that she is thankful her parents’ have shed this tradition and instead encourage them to work hard in school. “I am lucky because my parents do not pressure me to find a husband and I can just concentrate on my studies.”

For my daughters, I think it is up to them who they want to marry and when,” he said. Mai says that she is thankful her parents have shed this tradition and instead encourage them to work hard in school. “I am lucky because my parents do not pressure me to find a husband and I can just concentrate on my studies.”

Pang is in no rush to get married and is excited about being able to study business at university after high school. “I think people will realise that they don’t need to rush into marriage like back in Laos the longer they stay in Australia,” she said. “There are other people like my family and with more education, the number of young marriages will also go down.”

“We will always keep parts of Hmong culture with us but we are also changing. It’s a new life, That’s why we came to Australia,” she said.

Child marriage

Early marriage has been part of many cultures for thousands of years. But as Alynna WONG reports one Logan ethnic community is making a stand against the practice.

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They encourage my sisters and me to get a good education and they know that if we got married now, we would not get a chance to finish.” “We know that education is the most important thing to have right now and all of us want to go to university,” she said. Pang is in no rush to get married and is excited about being able to study business at university after high school. “I think people will realise that they don’t need to rush into marriage like back in Laos the longer they stay in Australia,” she said. “There are other people like my family and with more education, the number of young marriages will also go down.”

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Did you know…

1. In 2013 the Australian Government made forced/child marriage a criminal offence.
2. Under Australian law forced/child marriage is considered a form of human trafficking.
3. The changes to Australian law recognise forced/child marriage is ‘never acceptable’ in Australia.

New forced marriage education campaign announced

FEDERAL Justice Minister Michael Keenan has announced a $480,000 anti-forced marriage campaign, that will include a schools-based education campaign.

Mr Keenan said the Australian Government recognised that forced marriage was unacceptable in Australia despite people’s cultural background.

He said under the government plan teachers in both government and independent schools would receive training on how to identify at-risk children at schools.

Mr Keenan said a further $70,000 had been allocated to the Australian Muslim Women’s Centre for Human Rights to develop an education program aimed at increasing the ability for community organisations to work with young women and families on the issue of forced marriage.

“Some marriage can be prevented, and with the right tools we can empower young men and women to protect themselves and their friends, and get help when needed.” Mr Keenan said.

He said although forced/child marriage was now illegal in Australia, community-based measures were needed to detect and prevent forced marriage.
“I have learnt that no matter how different we are, we all have similarities.”

“The Change Makers’ camp made me improve my confidence.”

“I really enjoyed learning the surfing. I also learnt a lot about other people’s cultures. They are now my new friends.”

“There were so many great things at camp. We learnt about other people.”

“I liked the camp because I connected with other cultures and made new friends.”

“We got to do activities that tested us. In these activities I learnt to trust other people who are not from my own culture. It was awesome.”

The Change Makers Project included two camps at Tallebudgera. These camps brought influential youth together for three days of challenges and adventures. Students from all year levels, social groups and cultural backgrounds had to apply for the camps by outlining their hope and vision for the community. Only the best applications were successful.

On the two camps students had to work together in team-building activities, listen to other points of view in cross-cultural dialogue and develop a shared vision for the Woodridge community. They were given skills and confidence to be Change Makers in their generation.
LOGAN police and Woodridge High’s indigenous youth have bonded over three touch football matches, but it’s what has happened off the pitch that leaves Origin great Petero Civoniceva applauding.

Catch Me If You Can, a program created by Martin Ermer and Cheyann Beard, is directed at creating a stronger relationship between the Indigenous students at Woodridge High and the local Logan police.

Marty said the idea was to get the two groups to bond over three touch football matches that were planned the same Wednesday as the three State of Origin matches. The students also played a curtain-raiser at the final State of Origin match at Suncorp Stadium.

“We thought if we planned the touch matches the same day as State of Origin, more students would want to get involved because of the excitement surrounding the games themselves,” he said.

The first match was played on May 28, and former Bronco and Origin great Petero Civoniceva joined the students and officers to officially commemorate the kick off.

Although the match was the main spectacle of the day, Petero said the most important part of the program was the one-on-one time the Woodridge students would get with the police officers.

“It’s all about interaction,” the rugby league legend said. “It definitely helps towards breaking down any preconceived ideas of what a police officer is all about, and see the human side of who they are.”

Marty and Cheyann said this is exactly the message they want to broadcast to the students at Woodridge.

“We wanted the police and the students to interact because there has always been a divide based on their attitudes and perceptions. We thought if the police and students can get to bond and know each other, we can make these attitudes and perceptions more accurate and challenge the stereotypes,” Marty said.

To facilitate this interaction there was a series of icebreakers before the game – ‘speed yarning’ being the highlight.

“Basically the students all had a sheet of questions that they got to ask the police officers. The questions were aimed at some basic personal information and stuff the students might want to know about the police,” he said.

As the students got to talk to the police officers, Cheyann said the tension was gone nearly immediately, and the students really enjoyed talking to the officers.

“They were so enthusiastic. It was great because the students were so keen to ask more questions they kept saying ‘one more minute, just one more minute’ as we were forcing them to move on.”

Keiryn Dermody, held similar thoughts about the success of the ‘speed yarning’.

“One of the key parts of this for me is the speed yarning. It really breaks down the barriers. It creates a familiarity between the police and the students that isn’t forced,” Constable Dermody said.

“Sport is always a great way for people to engage with each other. I really hope the students enjoy it,” she said.

By Jordan McMullen

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LEAGUE GREAT: Former Brisbane Broncos star Petero Civoniceva supported the Catch Me If You can program in Logan recently.

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“Basically the students all had a sheet of questions that they got to ask the police officers. The questions were aimed at some basic personal information and stuff the students might want to know about the police,” he said.

As the students got to talk to the police officers, Cheyann said the tension was gone nearly immediately, and the students really enjoyed talking to the officers.

“They were so enthusiastic. It was great because the students were so keen to ask more questions they kept saying ‘one more minute, just one more minute’ as we were forcing them to move on.”

Keiryn Dermody, held similar thoughts about the success of the ‘speed yarning’.

“One of the key parts of this for me is the speed yarning. It really breaks down the barriers. It creates a familiarity between the police and the students that isn’t forced,” Constable Dermody said.

“Sport is always a great way for people to engage with each other. I really hope the students enjoy it,” she said.

By Jordan McMullen

LEAGUE GREAT: Former Brisbane Broncos star Petero Civoniceva supported the Catch Me If You can program in Logan recently.
SPECIAL education programs are quite normal in Queensland schools - but Woodridge State High School’s program gives an entirely different meaning to the word special. Woodridge High is a diverse community, hosting students from more than 90 different cultures. These include ethnicities from all over the world, including people from Australia’s Indigenous community. However, alongside this cultural diversity, there are other significant differences in the make-up of the school’s society. While most of the students are successful in completing the school’s regular curriculum, students with special needs require more assistance than others to succeed in their studies. These students can suffer from a number of issues including speech, language, intellectual, psychological and physical disabilities. To properly support the needs of these students the school established a Special Needs Services, a faculty that focuses specifically on providing assistance for these students.

Shirley Van Zyl, Head of Special Needs Services at the school, says the faculty is involved in planning education programs for 87 students. "It is not a blanket approach. It is absolutely individual and changes as a student’s needs develop," she said. "They may start in the EAP (educational adjustment program) in Grade 8, then in year 10 they may develop the appropriate skills to go into regular classes." She said because every student progresses in a different way, their programs are constantly looked over to determine whether changes need to be made. "It’s not necessarily a structured program that we have. As the students’ needs arise we create something around it until the student has overcome that problem," Ms Van Zyl said. Because of these programs, lots of students have successfully entered regular classes by overcoming obstacles in their studies.

"We have lots of students that are totally mainstreamed. I see them once or twice a year because they are doing fantastically," she said. However alongside catering for the needs of regular schooling, the Special Needs Services faculty also offer some unique opportunities. As their students may not have the ability to make that final hurdle into regular classes, students are given other opportunities to obtain a Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE), so they have the possibility to study after high school.

"A QCE is an important part of high school and all students should have the opportunity to achieve that certificate," she said.
Education has long been considered a key to opportunity. As Alicja RUDZ reports two former Woodridge State High School students are celebrating their new life in Logan and have overcome the odds. They are now set to graduate from university and make their mark on the world.

“I pushed myself. Everything is still challenging for me, especially English, writing and math.”

Adapting to the Australia education system has been a challenge for Kim, who says that Burma has strict teaching methods that do not encourage students to be creative or think for themselves.

“In Burma you study what they give to you and you do it their way - everything has to be what the teacher says,” says Kim.

“But in Australia you are encouraged to have your own ideas, and that is very challenging.”

The girls fled hardship in Burma, where attending school was a struggle for many.

“There’s no such thing as research or studying on the net,” Kim said.

“You’d be very lucky to touch a computer in a public school. Only in a really good school and even then one computer would be used by three or four students.”

Huai said growing up in Burma was unsafe, especially for girls.

“Anything can happen at any time and it wasn’t safe because they (the military) can come and attack at any time,” she said.

“There’s a saying in Burma - if one of the police or military say just come with me for a minute, it can be for 45 years; that’s how they get you.”

Huai and Kim left Burma in 2006, entering India illegally after one week of traveling on overcrowded transport with some family friends. They would stay for a year to await UNHCR resettlement, leaving behind their parents and younger brother. But they found school in India difficult and isolating, unable to speak Hindi and in a small minority of Asians among 2000 Indian students who didn’t speak English.

“I hated going to school because I didn’t know what they were talking about,” Kim said.

When they arrived in their new Slacks Creek home in Brisbane in 2007, the young women said they finally felt free and safe.

“It was a big thing for us - the fridge was full of food, ready to eat, and it was quite safe,” Kim said.

“We didn’t lock our doors the first night we arrived.”

Huai said it was like arriving in another world.

“You just feel like you can speak your mind. You just feel free. It’s like a dream.”

Kim also thought finishing school and at age 18 entering Year 10, while Kim confirmed that the transition from high school to university was a big step, aided through access to the Griffith UniReach and UniKey outreach and mentoring programs, which provide targeted support for refugee and ESL students.

Sanesie Dukuly, founder of the Griffith University Student Refugee Association (GURSA) and Griffith UniKey mentor, says that support programs provide important social support and a sense of belonging for students.

“If we come together we can achieve more and the next generation will benefit,” Sanesie said.

Huai said the biggest challenge has been managing time and having the confidence to seek help.

Veronica Jukic, Head of Futures at Woodridge State High School, said the first year of university was when students “can get lost.”

She said it was important for each to learn that their journey was unique.

“It’s about making them understand that the road is different for everyone,” she said. “Showing them there’s no one way in and that one way is not better than the other. It really starts with the student – making them aware of their abilities and outlining different approaches.”

Huai’s advice for other refugees is to try your hardest.

“Although you are from a non-English speaking background, there’s always a chance,” Huai said.

Kim also thought finishing school and attending university would be impossible.

“I thought you had to be smart and have the money to come to university,” Kim said.

She now has a dream to set up her own school in Burma.
2013 result. functions as a family in order to better the exceptional hard to build a team, which
devolve a really exciting and technically very hard from the beginning of March, to develop a strong community and are achievable through foster the development of a strong healthy communities and cultural pride throughout the competition. AOB believes that these important components will promote healthy choices, foster the development of a strong community and are achievable through respect and cooperation.

The Woodridge State High School House community and are achievable through respect and cooperation. The House of Champions Hip Hop Dance competition is an initiative led by the Academy of Brothers, with a strong focus on uniting communities. The HOC Hip Hop Competition provides an innovative platform for rich cultural exchange and the promotion of uniting cultures through dance.

Academy of Brothers (AOB) worked alongside schools and community organisations to promote healthy choices, healthy communities and cultural pride throughout the competition. AOB believes that these important components will foster the development of a strong community and are achievable through respect and cooperation. The Woodridge State High School House of Champions team for 2014, worked very hard from the beginning of March, to develop a really exciting and technically sophisticated Hip Hop Dance routine. In 2013 Woodridge achieved 3rd place in this competition, and have worked exceptionally hard to build a team, which functions as a family in order to better the 2013 result.

The hard work paid off, when on Saturday, 28th July, at St Laurence’s College, the Woodridge SHS students represented their school, community and families very proudly, taking out 1st place in the competition, winning a huge trophy, and $3000 towards the costumes and needs of 2014’s team. The time and level of commitment that these students put in is commendable, and special mention must be made of our team leaders, who choreographed and coordinated the team of 24 dancers – Tony Lagassia, Maisha Timo & Nausone Robertson, who’s individual talents are extraordinary. Our Woodridge SHS community are very very proud of our team, for not only their commitment and their winning performance, but the way which they carried themselves throughout the entire competition, representing us all so proudly!

As a result of this success, the team has been invited to perform at a number of events including the Pacifica Unity Festival on August 30, and have also nominated to take part in ‘Remix’, another dance competition in November.

Jump on the bandwagon, and get ready to support our team as they take on the world stage.

The Woodridge State High School Community

Building a culture of success

Leapai legacy lives on

Comment
by Margaret Setefano - WSHS Change Maker

He started from the bottom and became a big shot. Alex Leapai, a former Woodridge student, is well respected throughout the community of Logan City. He started as a student in Woodridge State High School and like any other, had to overcome the battles of living in a low socio-economic area to achieve success. Although he had trouble with alcohol, drugs and had spent time in jail after leaving school, he ensured his life turned around.

Leapai became a successful boxer, joined church choirs, raised a family of six children, drove a delivery van to pay the bills, fought in pubs, clubs, RSLs and eventually made a name for himself on the world stage. He came a long way, and on April 26, 2014, became the first Australian to have the chance to fight for the undisputed heavyweight belt against the Ukrainian world champion in Germany.

He worked hard to get where he is today, with the support of his wife and kids, who have been there every step of the way. He was determined to be an example to the new generation and to help them avoid some of the things he did in his past. Because of his story, he is seen as more than just someone who is able to achieve his goals. He is a hero and an inspiration. He gives the students of Logan City hope. Hope that allows them to believe you don’t have to have a perfect background to become successful and achieve your dreams.

Woodridge runner takes on nation’s best

If you were to walk into a Woodridge High ESL classroom you may see Chekole Getenet studying quietly at his desk. But this Ethiopian born student is hiding a secret talent. He can run FAST.

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He was determined to be an example to the new generation and to help them avoid some of the things he did in his past. Because of his story, he is seen as more than just someone who is able to achieve his goals. He is a hero and an inspiration. He gives the students of Logan City hope. Hope that allows them to believe you don’t have to have a perfect background to become successful and achieve your dreams.

Hope that allows the students to focus on school, knowing that anything is possible if you put your mind to it but, to also never give up on yourself and keep fighting whatever battles you are facing.

“I wish back then that I could focus on school but I learnt that the hard way. I have the chance now to share my story with the kids, and hopefully they can kruskole down and focus and not leave it too late like I did,” Leapai said.

On March 7 2014, Leapai came back to his roots and talked to the Woodridge State High students and gave them a pep talk. He inspired them to stay in school and not let anyone stop them from doing what they wanted to do in life.
WHAT does it take to be a champion rugby team? This year Woodridge State High School’s rugby team showed the winning formula includes a variety of ingredients. These include: a dedicated and respected coach, a team of players committed to each other, relentless early morning practices and a lot of hard work.

During the footy season, coach and former retired Woodridge teacher Dave Allen, and the rugby league boys are the first to arrive on the school grounds at a 6am every morning. Mr Allen, who has tied the football team’s class attendance and their effort in the classroom to their team participation, says involvement in team sports is great for building discipline among the students.

Before the school day begins, Mr Allen has the team engaged in rigorous training sessions and then feeds the boys breakfast before sending them to class to focus on their studies for the day. One of the players, Nathan Hudson, says Dave Allen is more than a coach, he’s also a ‘mentor’.

“I am proud to play alongside my brothers and mentor Dave Allen,” said Nathan. Nathan is not the only one in the team to feel that way. The players’ passionate commitment to their coach and each other has earned them striking success. Earlier this year Woodridge State High School defeated Palm Beach State High School 18-16 in the gripping final of the Titan’s Cup. After winning the Titan’s Cup, the team were able to go down to the Titans game and catch up with former Woodridge student and Queensland State of Origin representative Josh Papalii. Josh, who is now one of the National Rugby League’s elite forwards, is another Woodridge success story, thanks to the mentorship of Dave Allen.

But this year’s triumphs didn’t stop there. Douglas Epi summed up the team’s achievements when he said, “Out of all my years playing rugby league, this year is the best year I’ve experienced. We took out Titan’s Cup, Country Cup and dominated through Logan district. But my favourite part about the team is my Woodridge brothers.”

“As a player I am very grateful to be a part of this team.” Nathan Hudson said the players were proud of their standout year. This has been one of the best years for our rugby league team. First we won the Titans Cup for the first time ever, then we went on to win the Country Cup for the first time as well.”

Mr Allen, who still coaches the team five years after retiring, said his greatest satisfaction was seeing the kids motivated to succeed. Mr Allen’s personal commitment to the players has seen him nominated for the Pride of Australia Community Spirit medal.
Kaleidoscope is the name given to the annual street festival to celebrate the diversity of Logan City. This year marked the ninth anniversary of the festival which gives people the chance to celebrate Logan City’s rich cultural heritage. Logan City is one of Australia’s most diverse communities with more than 26-percent of residents born in another country and more than 215 ethnic communities represented in the city.
Woodridge High art students and their self-portraits. Their life through their eyes.