

Bringing hope to children in need



Jean Hutchinson is passionate about the Kids Hope program.

Having a positive impact on the lives of vulnerable children has brought much joy to Living Choice Fullarton resident, Jean Hutchinson.

Jean and Scott Hutchinson lead an incredibly busy life - and they would not want it any other way. The first residents to move into an apartment at Fullarton in December 2014, they devote much of their time to helping those less fortunate. They are also heavily involved in the lives of their grandchildren.

For the past five years, Jean has been a Mentor for Kids Hope, Australia's largest early intervention, school-based mentoring program for children experiencing vulnerability. She is now also a Coordinator.

"I am passionate about the program because it provides an opportunity to make a difference to a child, together with bringing such joy to me," said Jean.

Jean first heard about the program through their church, Rosefield Uniting Church. As a grandparent with four grandchildren, she felt she had something to offer and underwent a rigorous training program before mentoring the first child.

"Each Mentor meets with a child once a week for as long as we are needed - sometimes for more than a year. I gain their trust by playing games as

it's a great way to connect with them in a fun way. One young girl was from France, however the games overcame the language barrier and I had wonderful feedback from her teacher," added Jean.

"The last little boy I mentored had learning problems, so I used a puzzle from the Living Choice Fullarton library to help him focus. He loved the puzzle and did not want to stop. After mentoring him for only two weeks, he asked 'Can you come every day?' The following week, when I arrived for our mentoring session, the teacher told me he had been asking all morning when I was coming.

"I have been fortunate that my experiences of mentoring over the past five years, have been positive, but it can also be very frustrating and disheartening for a Mentor if your Mentee is disinterested, distracted or you find it difficult to connect. You just hope and pray for a breakthrough and a good outcome."

Kids Hope isn't the only organisation that Jean has been involved in. Both Jean and Scott have been volunteers with Kairos Prison Ministry for 20 years and Pastoral Welcomers at their church. They look after their grandchildren every Tuesday and share dinner with their family once a week, ordering meals to their apartment from the village's in-house restaurant, Castello's Cucina.