

# Friendship

*June 2021*



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We care, we support, **we empower**

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## Message from CEO

A warm welcome to the June edition of the AMCS newsletter. I hope you are preparing for the upcoming cool weather and enjoying some indoor activities.

This month, we focus on the theme of friendship. In this newsletter, you will see pictures and stories about National Volunteer Week held in May. Thank you to our amazing volunteers that care so much for seniors and their community. Without them, we couldn't help so many people.

We are happy to offer more face-to-face groups and sessions, including outings across Victoria like Bendigo and Hepburn Springs. Carers, volunteers and clients provided positive feedback.

As always, please stay safe. We are available for care and support. If we can help, we will.

We love what we do and are happy to support anyone you know who may benefit from our care.



Elizabeth Drozd  
CEO, AMCS

## Staff profile

Vy Huynh

**How long have you been working at AMCS?**

One year and one month.

**Tell us about your role.**

I assist clients with different tasks — personal care, home care, companionship, and transport to appointments like the hospital and shopping.

I like helping people, particularly seniors. When my grandma was alive, she suggested this career idea. I also enjoy dealing with different cultures and learning from seniors, including the lovely Mrs Janac, featured in this newsletter.



## Nurse's corner — Anything is possible with the right people supporting you

The world and people are currently suffering. We crave kindness more than ever. Friendship helps individuals with sickness and mental health issues and those who lack work and human connections.

Seniors are at risk of disadvantage or social isolation. A mutually respectful relationship where they can share their wisdom improves their self-worth.

In 2017, Michigan State University interviewed 7,500 people on *Are friends better for us than family* — "When participants reported having strong support from close friends, they also said they felt happier."

Caring comes in numerous forms — kindness, generosity, politeness, sensitivity, forgiveness and compassion to those less fortunate. Through companionship, we help others and understand when they are in need.

A 2010 study funded by Brigham Young University stated, "loneliness posed



the same risk to mortality as smoking 15 cigarettes a day or being an alcoholic."

Loneliness may also cause disturbed sleep, high blood pressure, muscle soreness, headaches and a weakened immune system leading to frequent sickness.

Whether you volunteer at a local charity or show empathy towards someone going through a tough time, friendship makes a positive difference in a person's life.

I like working for AMCS. The staff are nice, easy-going, organised and supportive. The company offers heaps of training and mini courses to improve our work performance and knowledge.

**Tell us a bit about yourself.**

I speak Vietnamese. I like going to the movies and eating out at restaurants and cafés. I try to be as healthy and fit as possible, at all times. I make the most of my life, embracing every day with everyone I encounter.





## Meet Maria Janac

### Home Care Package client

Maria has lived an interesting life and speaks fluent Hungarian, Serbian and English, and understands Polish and Russian.

"I was born in Serbia in the part that used to be Hungary before the First World War," she explains. "My village and school were Hungarian. Even the teachers didn't speak Serbian."

Her mother stayed home, and her father passed away when she was young. After the war began, she rarely had enough to eat and lined up for bread and milk. At age sixteen, she worked as a housekeeper and learnt Serbian.

### When Maria met George

Although Maria had boyfriends before, she met her husband at a dance and married him six months later at age nineteen.

"George was a normal, everyday guy," she says. "The youngest in the family and brought up by sisters. They spoilt him and I had to keep spoiling him."

Shortly after their wedding, he left for the army at Bosnia.

"I visited him twice by taking an overnight train 600km away. When you're young, you survive anything," she recalls.

Due to health issues, Maria could never have children.

### Coming to Australia

In 1966, Maria and George migrated to Australia because she had a cousin who welcomed them into her 12 square feet house.

"There were seven of us living there. We were happy in Australia. Afterwards, we rented a place for six months," she says. "When we saved enough money, we built a house and my brother even visited Australia."

Without knowing a word of English, she learnt the language in two years by going to the movies, watching TV and attending night school.

"Whenever I needed small goods, at first, I used my hands to describe what I wanted," she remembers.

### Working 9 to 5

"At 29, I started in a butcher shop with George. He was thirty-one, working outside with sausages while I operated inside as a sales lady," she says. "I worked with food at delicatessens most of my life."

### Life as we know it

While Maria sadly lost her husband of fifty-seven years, she still spends time with her childhood friend.

"We were born in the same Hungarian village next to each other as babies," she says. "We shop weekly for food and buy clothes. I have so many clothes. Her daughter is my power of attorney."

In the early 1940s, Maria dabbled in petit point tapestry — fine cross-stitch embroidery. "My brother taught me. He showed me once, and I liked it," she explains. "He gave me a wooden artwork of horses."

She displays seven pieces in her home and gifted some to her friends.

### AMCS experience

"I'm half paralysed, my eyesight is poor and I can't do much with my right hand and leg," she says. "I don't know how I would survive without AMCS. My Support Worker, Vy, keeps my house clean and changes the bedsheets. She's nice and we get along well. I've had shoulder operations and received a referral for physio. I'm lucky to have this help."





## Understanding My Aged Care's assessment process

Most older Australians prefer to live in their own homes rather than an aged care facility. AMCS Home Care Support encourages seniors to take charge of their living situation and spend time with family and friends. To receive support, My Aged Care completes a full health and social needs screening, organising an assessment by a skilled assessor.

Home Care Support has a long waiting list. There is no time like the present to research your options.

"Almost 100,000 (people in Australia) are waiting for Home Care Packages. 28,000 died waiting in the last two years," says Clare O'Neil, Labor's Shadow Minister for Aged Care.

Compared to individuals waiting less than 30 days for Home Care Support, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) seniors, people living with family and those approved for care alternatives like respite, permanent placement or transition care, expect over six months (The Journal of Nutrition, Health and Aging, 2018). Seniors from multicultural backgrounds may shyly refuse Home Care Support due to a non-family member providing care or lack of culturally appropriate services.

"AMCS has a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion," says Elizabeth Drozd, AMCS CEO. "Our main services focus on supporting seniors from diverse cultural backgrounds with practical assistance so they can continue living in their own homes."



The assessor may ask about your:

- current support and if it will continue
- health and lifestyle concerns
- daily tasks and activities around the home
- memory issues
- home and personal safety
- family and community activities

"For elderly people, there's a background where they don't speak very good English," says Caterina, Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) client.

Language barriers and accessing services often associated with being a burden can cause delayed or denied support. To increase the likelihood for eligibility, answers need to be detailed and accurate.

Seniors often state they are adequate in completing daily tasks or downplay the activities they can no longer do. In reality, they might have trouble making their bed, showering or grooming, preparing meals or attending medical appointments due to mobility issues.

The assessor requires precise information on the areas needing support. Everyone deserves high-quality care and the chance to keep living independently and safely at home for as long as possible.

"My Support Worker speaks Arabic. It's better for me. I can explain better what I need," says George, Home Care Package client.

To learn more about the assessment process, please contact Sinisha, Manager Access and Engagement, on [sinisha.krstov@amcservices.org.au](mailto:sinisha.krstov@amcservices.org.au) or (03) 8371 2304.

## National Volunteer Week — 17 – 23 May 2021

We are lucky to have over 140 passionate volunteers; dedicating their time to support seniors at risk of social isolation and helping AMCS achieve our vision of a fair multicultural society.

To volunteer, please contact [volunteer@amcservices.org.au](mailto:volunteer@amcservices.org.au) or request a Volunteer Coordinator — Milena, Michelle or Sheren — at reception on (03) 9689 9170.



### Marta

Marta called Halina, Home Care Package client, regularly during lockdowns. Although Marta does not drive because there is little public transport around her, she still finds a way to bring Halina's favourite flowers, nasturtium.



### Max

Max started visiting seniors two years ago and now drives a bus for AMCS Centre-based Respite and shopping groups. He stays back weekly and helps in the Respite Group's kitchen.

"I enjoy volunteering. The people I drive, and club members are family. It's a fulfilling job and gives me a purpose in retirement," Max says. "My hobbies include spending time with my grandchildren and racing pigeons which I've done for over 20 years."

Max speaks Polish and was a baker in his career.

### Deb

Deb has volunteered for years. Recently, she met Dana, Community Visitors Scheme client, who had a stroke. Her mobility is limited to a few steps with a walker.

"I pick Dana up weekly, and we set off for a drive. We stop at a café for coffee and sometimes lunch. Every time, I find a different location for a scenery change or shopping trip. Dana is happy to go anywhere that gets her out of the house," Deb says. "Slowly, I noticed a change in Dana. When I arrive, she is always smiling and eager to go."

One time, Dana thanked her and asked why Deb helped her.

Deb replied, "Dana, why not?"



## Adult Community Education

City of Maribyrnong residents are eligible for six online education courses and training to improve their career pathways.

"I took the Careers in Aged Care course because my 73-year-old mother-in-law moved from Brazil to live with us," says Thelma, former participant and now AMCS Emergency Relief Officer. "I wanted to help her. She does not speak any English."

### Careers in Aged Care

Update your professional skills in the home care industry.

Time: Saturdays 10am – 2pm

Frequency: Six sessions, four hours each. 24 hours total.

### Employment Pathways

Learn about employment opportunities and gain skills to attain paid work.

Time: To be confirmed

Frequency: Five sessions, three hours each. 15 hours total.

### Introduction to MYOB Software

Complete financial and accounting tasks like invoicing, budgeting and payroll.

Time: Saturdays 10am – 2pm

Frequency: Five sessions, four hours each. 20 hours total.

### Multicultural Leadership Course

Learn how to apply for government funding and the support services available in the not-for-profit sector.

Time: Tuesdays 5pm – 9pm, Saturdays 1pm – 5pm

Frequency: Eight sessions, four hours each plus one three-hour session. 35 hours total.

### Navigating Microsoft Office

Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel and Outlook.

Time: Wednesdays and Fridays, 10am – 2pm or 5pm – 9pm

Frequency: Five sessions, four hours each. 20 hours total.

### Skills for Work and Study

Improve your reading, writing and maths skills, and identify your career goals.

Time: Thursdays and Fridays, 10am – 2pm and 5pm – 9pm

Frequency: 35 sessions, four hours each. 140 hours total.

Thelma also completed the Multicultural Leadership Course. "The lessons brought me not only knowledge and passion but also an incredible job at AMCS," she says. "I am forever grateful. Assisting people makes my day."

To be eligible, you must be an Australian or New Zealand citizen, or hold an Australian permanent visa. For questions, please contact Vesna, ACFE Coordinator, on [training@amcservices.org.au](mailto:training@amcservices.org.au), 0422 226 105 or (03) 9689 9170.

## Staff profile

Vesna Trampevska Talevska  
*ICT Support Officer and  
ACFE Coordinator*



### 1. How long have you worked at AMCS?

I started in December 2016 as a trainer, delivering ICT (Information and Communications Technology) courses for iPads and computers.

### 2. Tell us about your role.

I have two roles — ICT Support Officer and ACFE (Age, Community and Further Education) Coordinator.

### ICT Support Officer

I take care of office equipment, and help staff with logging in to remote desktop, software applications and fix anything not working. My best achievement is supplying and training Samsung tablets to 125 Support Workers, easing their workload.

### ACFE Coordinator

AMCS is a Local Learn provider, offering six free recognised industry courses for Australia's permanent residents and citizens living in the City of Maribyrnong. We help students explore options for their careers and their professional

development. I collaborate with community centres, libraries, neighbouring councils and providers.

### 3. Tell us about yourself.

In 2013, I came to Australia from Macedonia. I speak Macedonian, Serbian, Croatian, a little Russian and Italian. Being multilingual helps me to interact with clients and Support Workers.

My son, Vasilij, is six and my daughter, Niki, is 19 months. My hobbies are their hobbies — colouring, writing, reading, walks to park, puzzles, cartoons and movies, and games. We love the outdoors, travelling and visiting different places.



## Introducing... Centre-based Day Respite Program in the South

The Centre-based Day Respite Program gives carers a break to take care of their own health and wellbeing, while AMCS support their dependants with activities like gentle exercises, singing, dancing, craft, cooking, guest speakers, games and technology training.

AMCS is pleased to introduce two new groups in Melbourne's Southern Region.

### Eastern European Respite Group

For care recipients from an Eastern European background.

#### Time:

Fridays, 10:00am – 2:30pm

#### Contact:

**Beata Radloff**

Respite Group Coordinator

M: 0403 165 648

E: [beata.radloff@amcservices.org.au](mailto:beata.radloff@amcservices.org.au)

### Sri Lankan and South Indian Respite Group

For care recipients from a Sri Lankan or South Indian background.

#### Time:

Tuesdays, 10:00am – 2:30pm

#### Contact:

**Nalika Ahangamaa**

Respite Group Coordinator

M: 0403 158 359

E: [nalika.ahangamaa@amcservices.org.au](mailto:nalika.ahangamaa@amcservices.org.au)

#### Address:

James Cook Children's Centre

55-63 James Cook Drive

Endeavour Hills VIC 3802

Thanks to the Australian Government's subsidy, only a small weekly fee applies. Transport and culturally tailored food provided.



Photo: Nalika and Ursula

## Digital Mentoring Program and Digital Friends

AMCS provide free training for volunteers to mentor multicultural seniors to learn new digital skills.

Ursula, an 80-year-old active senior and primary carer for her husband, Piya, loves mixing with the community. During COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020, she saw a flyer for this project. She contacted our Project Coordinator, Nalika, around the time of Piya's 84th birthday. Nalika suggested a Zoom party to celebrate with loved ones.

After Ursula learnt Zoom from her digital mentor, she joined other AMCS online

community engagement programs and made many friends. Connecting online has given her the opportunity to enjoy her hobbies while caring for Piya.

Mentors receive:

- learning resources and guides
- Coles voucher
- training completion certificate
- police check (mandatory)
- follow up and ongoing support

While seniors learn:

- basic technology
- video calls
- iPad usage
- Microsoft Office

"My mentor was friendly and helped me learn My Aged Care app. I now know how to use online banking and order local food with confidence," says Geetha, former program participant.

Geetha is now a mentor. "I initially refused and was afraid to become a mentor. After participating in an online event, I grew confident to help others. I feel strong now. I know where to go if I have a problem online."

We welcome seniors to join the Digital Mentoring Program and encourage volunteers to be a digital mentor. Please contact Nalika on [nalika.ahangamaa@amcservices.org.au](mailto:nalika.ahangamaa@amcservices.org.au) or 0403 158 359.

# Staff and volunteers' anniversaries — May to June 2021

Thank you to our staff and volunteers for their incredible dedication and support to the seniors in our communities. Many of them have reached anniversary milestones with us during the months of May to June.

## Staff

Czajkowski, Jolanta	20 years in May
Dygut, Magdalena	5 years in May
Kapelan, Helen	5 years in May
Serafin, Andrzej	5 years in June
Smalec, Marek	10 years in May
Touma, Georgette	5 years in June

Diaz Alvarez, Sonia	2 years in June
Eid Saade, Salwa	7 years in May
Groves, Stella	1 year in May
Halman, Kadriye	1 year in May
Harasimowicz, Julia	12 years in May
Heales, Denise	3 years in June
Krstov, Sinisha	3 years in May
Nunez De Moreno, Sonia	4 years in May
Piovesan, Dalida	1 year in May
Pysk, Irena	4 years in June
Zacharski, Andrzej	2 years in June

## Volunteers

Boberska, Joanna	1 year in June
Civitico, Elizabeth	2 years in May



Australian  
Multicultural  
Community  
Services

## Melbourne Office

Suite 111, 44-56 Hampstead Road  
Maidstone VIC 3012

(03) 9689 9170  
[info@amcservices.org.au](mailto:info@amcservices.org.au)  
[www.amcservices.org.au](http://www.amcservices.org.au)

## Geelong Office

Suite 6, 79 High Street  
Belmont VIC 3216

(03) 5241 2446  
[geelongoffice@amcservices.org.au](mailto:geelongoffice@amcservices.org.au)



*Note: AMCS prioritises the safety of clients, volunteers, staff and community groups. The majority of the photos in this newsletter were taken prior to the pandemic. Therefore, social distancing wasn't required.*