

# the natural news

Quarterly newsletter of the Australian Council of Natural Family Planning

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Winter 2001

## Wandering Wisdom

Many women have been helped with the knowledge a Wandering NFP Teacher can give them. 'One woman would not have her beautiful little girl today if she had not had the opportunity to learn NFP so through her charts the doctors were able to find a serious blood complication that was stopping her holding a conception,' explains Mrs Sue Butler, an NFP and FLE educator who has been traveling Australia imparting this knowledge since 1993.

'Personally John & I have no permanent home. We have a Hilux that carries all our office, NFP and general needs. We are always being consumed by the

beauty of the land. To return to a town for two months over Christmas for the last 8 years, and to see the changes, from years of dry to the wonderful surprise this year of green grass high enough to nearly hide the cattle. The colours that changes from harsh red or orange to the soft greens of lush grasses and then to see this dry out over a few weeks.

'Australia is a magnificent country. We have had such a wonderful opportunity to see so much of this country and have so much more to see... All this, plus a chance to explain the importance of being a woman and the value of NFP to couples!' (More about Sue on page 10)



Sue teaching students in rural Australia

from the president

Susan Berg

Dear Fellow Members

I AM writing to you this time in the new look first addition of the Australian Council of Natural Family Planning (ACNFP) Newsletter. This newsletter has been prepared by the Promotions Committee of ACNFP, which is made up of volunteers that have been appointed by the ACNFP Executive. Many topics are covered in the newsletter including articles and pictures that should give a human face to Natural Family Planning as it is taught right around our vast country. Natural Family Planning (NFP) is a very special ministry that often helps create social change in couples lives for the better. This change establishes a shared responsibility in a couple's life enabling them to deepen their marital relationship in a healthy environment.

As NFP Teachers I am sure you have experienced first hand the change that takes place in a couple's relationship when they abandon contraception and learn to become NFP users. The question clients of NFP often ask after experiencing this change is - Why aren't more people using NFP as it is so great? The answer is lack of resources to promote NFP more widely.

NFP week this year is from

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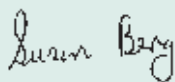
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12th till 19th August. The National NFP program will launch a generic booklet to cover all stages of a woman's, life to be given out to doctors, nurses, priests, pre-marriage couples and community groups in general. Our own Promotion's committee will be launching a flyer for schools to promote NFP. As NFP teachers we encourage you to use these resources to promote the great ministry of NFP.

Thank you fellow members for your continuous work in the field of Natural Family Planning. Please feel free to contact me at anytime through the ACNFP Head Office.

Yours sincerely



Susan Berg,  
President.



#### ACNFP Nominee

Susan has been President of the Australian Council of Natural Family Planning for the past two years and will continue in this role for another two year term.

Susan has been involved in the welfare sector since 1984. She has an extensive background in senior nursing positions, including seven years in theatre nursing – in Australia and overseas – and was officer in charge of triage nursing in the Australian Army Reserve from 1979-1981.



Barbara at her Farewell Mass with Bishop Cremin, Polding House Chapel, March 30th

## Time to say Goodbye

It is with mixed feelings that one of NFP's most prized contributors from the past decade resigns from her post. Barbara Ashwell joined the staff of Natural Family Planning Services, Sydney in March 1991 as a special Projects Officer. Originally from New Zealand, Barbara took up residence on our Sydney shores in 1989 after years of Missionary experience in Western Samoa. She came to NFP with a proven track record as she had managed to set up Catholic Social Services (during her stint in Western Samoa), which included the work of natural family planning and family life education.

Barbara completed the Sydney teacher training course and has been an accredited teacher since 1992. 1993 saw an extension of Barbara's hours when she became Editor of the ACNFP Newsletter, a role in which she has continued until the end of 2000. In 1999 she also became Centre Leader of the Riverwood Centre.

While teaching NFP, Barbara's skills as an empathetic listener took over and her delight was obvious when a client rang to say that she was pregnant after years or months of trying! Barbara unceasingly sought to increase her skills by completing such courses as 'Pastoral Care and

Counselling' (1999). As part of her duties with NFP Services, Barbara was instrumental in the organisation of many conferences and inservices from ACNFP Conferences to an International conference for NFP (1992) after which she was co-author of the report of the proceedings. Barbara wrote the policies for Harrassment and Occupational Health and Safety for NFP, plus the NFP update which is widely used throughout the Sydney Metropolitan area.

After 8 years of newsletter production, the ACNFP Executive decided to change the way the newsletter was produced and to give Barbara a well-deserved break from her task as Editor. Barbara is to be congratulated for having done an excellent job of producing the ACNFP Newsletter over that amazing length of time. Accolades from around the world have been received for her since the news of the change in Editor has been announced.

This is not to say that Barbara will slow down...quite the contrary. She has since taken up a very challenging position on the Pastoral Care Team at St Vincent's Private Hospital where all her wonderful skills will come into play. We wish her well!

## HEPATITIS B (HBV)

- Hepatitis B (Hep B) is a virus which causes liver inflammation. It is spread much like HIV and is a sexually transmitted infection.
- Hep B is easier to catch than HIV because it is over 100 times more concentrated in an infected person's blood.
- Hep B can cause severe liver disease including liver cancer
- There is a vaccine for Hep B which consists of three injections usually given over a six months
- Many states now provide this vaccine free to students at Year 8 level
- Hep B is a hardy virus that can exist on almost any surface for a number of weeks
- Hep B is found in blood, semen, vaginal fluids and pre-ejaculate fluid
- People newly infected with Hep B experience some illness

### HEPATITIS B TRANSMISSION

**Hepatitis B can be transmitted in the following ways:**

- Through contact with infected blood
- Through sexual contact
- Sharing needles or drug equipment for illegal drug use
- Body piercing or tattooing with unsterile equipment
- Sharing or personal hygiene items eg: toothbrushes, razors, and nail clippers
- From mother to baby around the time of birth
- Needle stick injury

## HEPATITIS C

- It is believed that approximately 200,000 Australians are infected with Hepatitis C (Hep C). The virus was identified in 1989 and in 1990 a Hepatitis C antibody test became available which enables the identification of individuals who may be exposed.
- It is estimated that approximately 11,000 new infections occur in Australia per year
- In Australia the prevalence of people with the virus is estimated to be between 0.5% and 1%. This means that on average, up to one in every 100 people would carry the virus



**HEPATITIS B & C are Blood Borne Viruses which cause Liver inflammation and possible liver disease.**

**The transmission of these viruses is increasing in Australia**

Krina McGlaughlin

### THE HEPATITIS C VIRUS

- Hepatitis C is a disease caused by a virus that affects the liver, making the liver cells inflamed. Over time this may lead to scarring on the liver.
- This in its severest form is known as cirrhosis. It may take up to 30 years from point of infection before liver function is greatly impaired.
- It is not believed that Hep C is transmitted sexually, but if blood is involved eg, menstrual blood or from cuts or lesions caused by sexually transmitted diseases there would be an increased risk.
- Hep C lives in the blood and can be present wherever infected blood is to be found. The virus can even exist in amounts of blood that are too small to see.
- There is no cure or vaccine for Hep C.

### HEPATITIS C TRANSMISSION

- Hepatitis C is a blood borne virus spread by blood to blood contact
- Sharing and reusing injecting drug equipment
- Unsafe body piercing and tattooing
- Needle stick injury
- Mother to baby before or at birth
- Sharing or razor-blades, toothbrushes, nail clippers

**Why include information on Hepatitis B&C in our Family Life Education sessions?**

- Research undertaken by D. Ollis, J. Watson, A Mitchell and D. Rosenthal from Latrobe University in Victoria has provided a great insight into the sexual behaviours of young people in Australia. Their research highlighted that information sources used and trusted by adolescents included 63% of young people indicating

that they trusted health educators. This information enables us to feel confident that when we deliver correct information, plus advocate chastity and messages about love and relationships in our Family Life sessions we will be listened to.

- Research in Australia clearly indicates that young people are becoming sexually active at a much younger age. Studies indicate that teenagers have a great deal of correct knowledge about HIV/ AIDS but little if any information about Hepatitis B & C.
- It was conclusive from the research that the most common form of contraception used by young people is condoms. However substantial numbers of students, particularly young women in Year 12, are using the oral contraceptive pill. This is a cause for concern because the pill does not offer any protection against STI's.
- Adolescents are very pro condoms! Condoms are designed for sperm not HIV which is many, many times smaller than a sperm. Condoms were designed to provide protection against pregnancy - once per month for approximately 24 hours. Young people need to be aware that STI's can be transmitted at anytime of the month!
- HIV and Hepatitis B are viruses that may be transmitted through sexual contact via pre-ejaculate liquid, vaginal secretions, and may be found in menstrual blood. This information can be passed on to students when delivering basic Fertility Awareness sessions.
- Our Family Life Education programs stress the need for young people to understand fertility, highlight the health and relationship benefits of sexual abstinence and the risks of early sexual activity and contraceptive use.
- Using a 'Fertility Awareness' approach, provides a basis from which young people can make informed decisions. Our information is designed to allow young people in Catholic schools to choose abstinence and confidently articulate their values in the face of peer group pressure.
- Our programs support parents in their role in guiding their children's sexual development.

# Lessons in Loving

With Willa Webb

Two hours of sex, cycles and contraception in Year 11 was my first real sex ed. Fairytales, teenage love stories and the "Where Did I Come From" book mum gave me, were my preparation to enter into an adult world. Living through two divorces in my own family had stripped any of the fairytale from marriage, so for me it seemed that my path would be closer to that many of my friends were experiencing. Let's face it, Scott and Charlene had just done it on Neighbours. Everyone seemed to be doing it, and so my focus on life shifted, from teen to obscene.

Of course, Jesus was there in my heart, quietly correcting me. But when it came to the crunch, the alcohol and drugs helped to blot Him out. He couldn't be that important, could He?

God brought me around the back way, in His wisdom. He led me to a man who challenged the disrespectful attitudes I had developed, and He set the scene for a love story that was more in line with His plan for me. He had some long years converting me to a loving and chaste marriage, and motherhood! But now I can see the beautiful journey He has walked with me, and I am in awe of His mercy and love.

A meeting with a friend gave me my first insight into natural fertility. I was 22. Up till then I had only known of contraception and had been on the pill since I was 16. Hearing about the negative effects of the pill on the body, I stopped taking it. I began chanting temperature, and promptly fell pregnant. The flaw was that I was looking for a much higher rise than .2 degree, and I had no idea I should be observing mucus. My partner and I moved to Port Macquarie and had our first child. Scared by the inef-

fectiveness of the natural method I went to the Family Planning Clinic where they fitted me with a diaphragm, the most troublesome, inconvenient, and yukky method I had encountered. We soon had our second child. I started getting a bit desperate. I enquired about Natural Fertility Management but the fee was out of my reach at the time, so I spent some time observing my cycles in relation to the moon. Interesting study...but not enough. For the first time I learned about abstinence.

*I learned to love the feeling of the fertility process taking place in my body*

This really motivated me to learn more, and it was at this time I met Mary. She gently moved me with the Rosary. Very soon I attended my first Catholic mass, midnight at Christmas, and I've been there ever since. The last place on earth I had ever expected to be. One of the first things I saw in the Parish News was an ad for Natural Family Planning. I enquired, and found that it was to train to be a trainer. I thought that sharing the knowledge would be a good idea, so I applied.

The first training revealed truths; I could feel it within my own body. I learned to love the feeling of the fertility process taking place in my body. Understanding what it meant in practical terms was liberating. Teaching the method, the natural next step. A gift.

Deep thanks and respect to those who have passed on the knowledge over the years and best wishes to current teachers on their journey.

# Saskia's Sentiments

Saskia Ebejer

MY journey with Natural Family Planning began about 18 years ago thanks to my parents. They gave me a book on Christian sexuality, which outlined NFP, and from the time I read about it I believed in it. I didn't quite understand the concepts but I knew in my heart that this was God's plan for married sexuality.

Once I was married I thought maybe we should look into it in greater detail but found out I was pregnant. "Too late," I cried... never too late!

After my first child was born I decided to further my journey of learning NFP. Thanks to a wonderfully supportive teacher and her trainee of the time, my husband and I were encouraged to walk the NFP road. We learnt together and about each other, sometimes with great difficulty, at other times with delight. The gift of our sexuality is respected and honoured thanks to NFP.

This road has now opened to a highway since deciding to become a trainee in 1998. I found out there were no Sympto/thermal teachers in the Arcdiocese of Canberra/Goulburn. I wanted to fulfill a dream I had of becoming a teacher, which I never thought would come to fruition. Although I first started with fear I am now becoming more assured thanks to the wonderful support of all at NFP. I have never felt unwelcome or unsupported on this journey. Each weekend seminar I attended served to reinforce my belief in NFP.

My respect for those that have travelled this road before me has grown. The presence of the whole NFP team, from the medical professionals to the other teachers on these weekends

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gave me confidence in myself and what I would teach.

As accreditation loomed nearer and I began seeing couples for NFP instruction, I found to my surprise they were the teachers and I the student. Learning about them and sharing NFP with them is a huge privilege of which I am humbled. I know it will not always be easy for me to guide them; they are beginning their journey as we also did. Some may not continue with NFP, however I hope to instill in them a respect for each other that they can draw on in their married life, be it now or later.

*The friendships I have found in NFP have become very important to me*

In sharing the journey with other trainees I have realised we have come from diverse backgrounds and beginnings. I have also found they shared the same fears and hopes as I, but were willing to continue on because their belief in NFP is beyond these fears and doubts in themselves.

In my diocese, which covers a huge area, being the only Sympto/thermal teacher has been both daunting and exciting. Promotional work is very important. I have had some successes in getting NFP known, but also some failures. Now I am an FLE trainee and the skills needed for this I'm sure will complement my NFP work.

The friendships I have found in NFP have become very important to me. I did not know that this would happen. It is the unexpected bonus of being a trainee and now a teacher. If you think that there is someone who can learn and teach NFP don't hesitate to approach them, I don't plan to be the only Sympto/thermal teacher in my diocese for long. May God continue to bless our work and everyone we meet through it.

QUOTE OF THE ISSUE

"If diamonds are a girls best friend, she hasn't met her mucus yet"

# CONTRACEPTIVE NEWS

Susan Berg

IT is very important for NFP Educators to be aware of the new contraceptives coming on the market, so when clients that are turning away from contraception to NFP become our clients, we understand what they have been using and the side effects they have suffered.

The contraceptive *Implanon* has been available commercially from May 2001 in Australia.

Otherwise known as 'the etonogestral implant', it is being advertised "for women who require long term contraception without fuss" (British Journal of Family Planning, p.99) However it is not 100% affective.

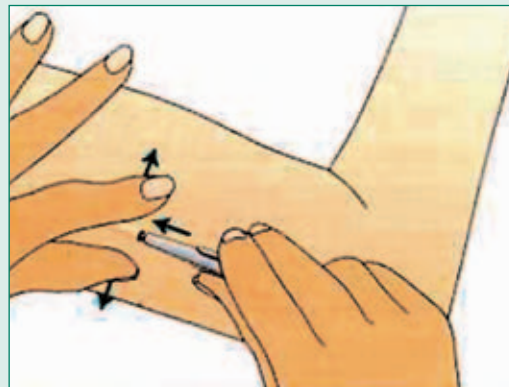
### What is Implanon?

*Implanon* is a single small non-biodegradable semi-rigid rod 4cm x 2mm containing 68mgs of the progestogen etonogestrel. The implant is inserted just under the skin in the upper side of the arm (see diagrams.) *Implanon* contains

no estrogen and can stay in situ for three years.

### How Does Implanon Work?

*Implanon* works by preventing the release of the ova from the ovary and thickens the mucus at the cervix preventing sperm getting into the womb. It does this via the etonogestral that is released gradually from the rod, 60-70µ day in weeks 5-



6, decreasing gradually at the end of the third year. You may be thinking that something this strong would have an effect on your body? Well,



of course, even though it is being advertised as being practically harmless compared to other contraceptives. We'll let you be the judge...

Like many of the progesterone-only contraceptives, *Implanon* has the same disadvantage of breakthrough vaginal bleeding.

Other possible side effects of *Implanon* could be headaches, migraine, nausea, vomiting, breast tenderness, libido suppression, weight gain, acne, emotional lability, abdominal pain, rising blood pressure and vaginal secretion changes.

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# With heartfelt thanks

*In the 6th Gospel of St Luke 39-45 the theme is  
“A person speaks from what is in their heart” —  
This epitomises **Judy Milne**.*

By Frances Cartwright

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**B**ack in May 1973 Father Frank LeFevre who was our Parish Priest in South Tamworth invited Dorothy Raye and Father Brian Larkey to promote Natural Family Planning in our community as he could see a real need for this apostolate here. Judy Milne was one of the young mothers who responded to this invitation and I also was privileged to be in this group. Following this we travelled to Armidale shortly after to hear Dr. John Gallagher speak. Later on that year Judy attended the Workshop of the Ovulation Method at St Margaret's Hospital in Sydney.

Judy was inspired to get a group charting here in Tamworth which she did with help from Bev Heazlett, Joan Hognog, Sandra Grace and myself. We would all gather at someone's home and compare our charts and help one another understand our symptoms. Dorothy Raye came back again to follow up our group.

When the Sydney team considered us experienced in charting and ready to begin teaching we started planning for our own Clinic. Judy was already showing her leadership skills and mainly because of her organisational abilities and understanding of the role of an NFP teacher our Clinic was opened at the Baby Health Centre in October 1974.



Retiree Judy Milne

Judy has with her friendly outgoing nature, her intelligence and great teaching abilities been a great asset to our Clinic over 27 years. I know Judy found the decision to retire from NFP extremely difficult and respect her for this. I feel privileged to have worked with her as teacher and good friend all this time.

Some of the outstanding achievements that Judy was mainly responsible for bringing to fruition were:

- First Regional Conference;

Tamworth in May 1976 with Rose & John Robertson as guest speakers.

- The NFP Segment of the Tamworth Base Hospital's Rural Doctors Conference;

- Part 1 Teacher Training Tamworth with Rose Robertson, Margaret Frater, Dr. John Gallagher 1977

- 1978 Inservice Tamworth with John Gallagher

- Part 2 Teacher Training Tamworth 1978 with Dr. John Gallagher, Bishop Henry Kennedy, Margaret Frater and Annette Milross

- 1979 Clergy Conference Armidale Diocese NFP Segment

- 1980 Regional Inservice Dr. John Gallagher and Anne and Peter McGowan

- 1981 Regional Inservice — Dr. John Gallagher and Mrs. Ronnie Spencer

Judy has been very involved in High School Talks, Pre Natal and Pre Marriage and travelled

extensively throughout our region taking her message of Natural Family Planning with her. Judy also has attended nearly all the National Conferences and State Inservice training.

We wish Judy all the very best in her retirement (she may be able to take up Landscape Painting something she has yearned to do) or with her gift of the spoken word, perhaps she could write a book.

Whatever Judy finds herself involved in the future, she will do so with her heart and soul.

# Question and Answer of the Week

## Dear NFP Teacher,

I have been married for two months and taken the pill for these two months. I never feel like intercourse and my husband is upset because he feels like it's his fault. A girl friend told me that the contraceptive pill can make you feel like you don't want intercourse. I love my husband and I want a good marriage. Can you tell me if I stop taking the pill and learn Natural Family Planning, will I start to want intercourse?

Jody

## Dear Jody,

Current research states that for some women taking the contraceptive pill, their libido can become suppressed and they don't often feel like having intercourse. As an NFP teacher I would recommend that both you and your husband make an appointment as soon as possible with your local NFP teacher. NFP teachers are educated about the many side effects of the contraceptive pill and can teach you how to use NFP as a couple.

NFP Teacher

## WHAT'S HOT & WHAT'S NOT



- ▶ FAST ◀
- ▶ ACCURATE ◀
- ▶ WATER RESISTANT ◀
- ▶ NEW MEMORY FEATURE ◀

**When it comes to Natural Family Planning, you can rely on Becton and Dickson digital thermometer readings. Just contact your nearest NFP centre for supplies.**

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# Outcomes of the Board of the Natural Family Planning Program in the 2000-2001 funding period

From Susan Berg, ACNFP President and Board Member.

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During the current funding period the Natural Family Planning ('NFP') Board of Management ('the Board') has met in Canberra on three occasions – 21 August 2000, 11 December 2000 and 20 March 2001, and a fourth meeting is scheduled for 7 June 2001.

## Achievement

In 2000-2001 the NFP Board of Management has achieved the following outcomes:

- liaised with Catholic Church Insurance to ensure optimum insurance protection is in place for all concerned with the provision of Family Planning Program (\_FPP\_) Grant funded natural family planning services. The revised cover will be commence in the 2001-2002 financial year;
- sought advice from Australian Catholic Commission for Employment Relations to ensure the employment and service delivery practices of the NFP Program are consistent with the provisions of current legislation. Employment practices are currently being reviewed;
- implemented a successful generic NFP national promotional strategy developed by the two Professional Teaching Associations and the Secretariat. National promotion strategies continue to be developed. Additional printed material focusing on the *concept* of NFP is expected to be completed within the current funding period;
- launched the NFP Program Website;
- developed a *Procedures Manual* to be used by all service providers which will detail the administrative procedures and practices of the NFP Program. The manual covers a wide range of operational and procedural matters applicable across the NFP Program, and is tangible evidence of the cooperation that exists between each Professional Association and the Secretariat; This manual is to be launched July 2001.
- submitted the *NFP Program Annual Report 1999-2000* and the *Progress Report July – December 2000* to the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care (\_DH&AC\_);
- submitted the 1999-2000 Audited Statements for the NFP Program to DH&AC;
- developed the *NFP Program Business Plan 2000 – 2001*;
- finalised a *Strategic Directions Statement* which outlines the Origins, Vision, Mission, Principles and Key Activities of the NFP Program;
- developed a *Service Charter* which will be soon be delivered to all service providers to make available to all clients;
- invited the Director of the Population Health Strategies of DH&AC to join the Board for an informal discussion at

the meeting of the Board held 30 May 2000. This provided the members of the Board with an opportunity to canvass issues of mutual interest;

- The revised funding agreement between the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care ('DH&AC') and the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference ('ACBC') for the 2000-2001 funding year was received in December 2000. The documents in general terms emphasised an increase in accountability measures, a practice already evidenced in other Commonwealth Government funded programs.

## Summary

On behalf of the ACBC, the Board fulfilled the terms and conditions of the 1999-2000 funding agreement between DH&AC and the ACBC. The Board has continued to undertake cross-program initiatives in a climate of mutual respect, and a willingness to adopt a cooperative and collaborative approach to achieving the objectives of the NFP Program. The June meeting of the Board will be the last for two of the inaugural NFP Board members. Mrs Margaret Frater (ACNFP Inc Nominee) and Mrs Joan Clements (OMR&RCA Ltd Nominee) will be stepping down having completed their two-year term on the Board. They will be replaced by Mr Tom O'Donnell (ACNFP Inc Nominee) and Mrs Kerry Bourke (OMR&RCA Ltd Nominee.)



## Introducing the Teacher Training Committee

### Susan Berg

We've already had a chance to meet Susan, but what about the other members of the ACNFP Teacher Training Committee?...

### Noelle Melrose:



Married to Noel and has 3 children. Co-ordinator of NFP for the Rockhampton Diocese for the past 9 years. Member of the Teacher Training Committee since 1992. "My interest is FLE predominantly in Secondary Schools, as well as educating indigenous and deaf / hearing impaired people on reproductive health in the Central Queensland area."

### Evelyn Brien



"I have had 21 years service in NFP. I was a teacher, Centre Leader and Family Life Education co-ordinator at Parramatta and became Director of Natural Family Planning in September 1999. October 2000 saw my duties commence on the Teacher Training Committee and I have been Secretary of ACNFP since 1998."

### Krina McGlaughlin



"I have been involved in NFP for 11 years and currently hold dual positions as Coordinator of Natural Family Planning in Adelaide and Education Officer for the Adelaide Diocesan AIDS Council. I have been a member for a number of years. My particular interest is Family Life Education and my work has increasingly involved the provision of educational services to both Primary and Secondary schools. I am married to Mark and our son Luke is 8 years old."

### Rebecca Hart



Joined TTC in 1996. ACNFP appointed trainer in Victoria (Diocese of Melbourne, Sale and Ballarat). After marrying Greg in 1986, Rebecca has a history teaching NFP full time from 1987 with Melbourne's CFPC until 1994, "when my James came home". She then moved consecutively to the coast then the country, and worked part time until 1998 when she returned with her family to Melbourne where she resumed her full time position.

### Ann O'Donnell



Ann is the founding member of NFP services in Perth (1968) and has been its Director since 1983. Joined ACNFP in 1974. 1984 - became a member of ACNFP TTC, and was accredited as a Trainer of Teachers 2 years after, then elected Chair of Committee in 1992 & 1994. Appointed ACNFP Trainer for Western Australia, Ann's experience ranges from introducing Programs (e.g. 'Pre & Post Menopause') to specialist programs in the Philippines and Pakistan to assisting with various Research Programs and Publications and too much more! Ann is married with four grown sons.

## This is a call to all FLE educators

### Let's Share Our Ideas!

We, the Promotions Committee for ACNFP, ask you to please contribute some material from your program content to enable us to produce a promotional brochure that could be used in schools.

Send all information to:

Noelle Melrose – email: [centacare@rok.catholic.net.au](mailto:centacare@rok.catholic.net.au)

Address: PO Box 819, Rockhampton, Queensland 4701

# Wandering Wisdom

## In the beginning

I BECAME officially involved with NFP in 1970, when I contacted Melbourne Catholic Family Planning Center after the birth of our 4th child, John & I had successfully used NFP since 1964, but I was being encouraged by friends to become an *official* teacher. For the next 31 years I was to teach NFP and FLE. Being a country teacher, you quite often were involved with the clients in areas outside NFP, through church, school, children or just as friends. There was no ACSWC and no money. We worked from our home or the client's home. I have done quick consultations at the request of the client between the aisles of the supermarket, picking up a child from school and once while my husband & I were having a romantic dinner at a restaurant. In the early '80s we opened our first office.

I sailed through menopause with the help of a wonderful husband, NFP, and Melbourne Catholic Family Planning Centre who put up with this crazy woman. As our children finished Secondary school, John sold his pharmacy and became a 'Locum Pharmacist' traveling away from home during the week. Then the big step came when the last of the children left home: we traveled **together**. At that time Bairnsdale NFP centre had teachers, the schools had FLE teachers and I thought this must be the time to stop. I think they call it retirement. I wonder if a true NFP teacher ever quits! Changes direction? Yes.

## My change of direction

I was asked by the PP of one town where John worked, to speak at all Masses about the Bishops encyclical on NFP. The adjoining parish booked me for the following weekend. That must have been the start of my change of direction because nothing has been that scary since.



As I arrive in a town, I am often asked, 'What do you do with your time while John works all day?'

*They have been informed that NFP does exist and it does work.*

That enables me to explain my work as a NFP & FLE teacher. There is no set plan to introducing NFP & FLE in a town. Sometimes I will contact the Parish Priest, others it is the Catholic or State School, the Hospital, or the local doctor. Often the person who asked that question will arrange for me to

speaking to a group. Most regional, remote and outback towns are thrilled to find someone in town who is prepared to work with their students, hospital or couples. To have an educator visit a town is very costly, some are 1000km from an NFP centre, usually situated on the coast. A return plane flight can be over \$800. In one outback city recently, I gave 18 presentations; these including *Puberty, Teenagers, Menopause, I am Woman* (information on the effect of hormones). I spoke to students, school teachers, parents, women, a professional women's group and a problem student group.

*I Am Woman* is a talk I have prepared taking women through a cycle, explaining the development of oestrogen, the effect of mucus, ovulation then progesterone and its effects. To users of NFP, this is something we all understand **but** most women are surprised and even some are angry nobody has told them about themselves. I remember the excitement of a woman who had just found out that the emotional changes she experienced during her cycle were normal.

Even talking while having my hair cut can quickly lead into an information session, with questions coming thick and fast. They have been informed that *NFP does exist and it does work.*

## Where do I wander

My area is from country Victoria to the outback and regional areas of Queensland. A menopause

presentation in a Caravan in Darwin, a consultation with a very desperate couple one Sunday morning in Perth, and one on the edge of the Nuliabour, while visiting a friend. I can only do the initial instruction and then hand over to the main centre and with the 1800 number the couples are confident in continuing. Our Wanderings have taken us to Queensland: Cairns, Townsville, Mt. Isa & Winton, Gayndah, Mundubrea, Coll-insville & Taroom and to Victoria: Nathalia & Shepparton, Maryborough & Swan Hill, Rainbow & Dimboola just to mention a few. (See if you can find them on a map!)

## *In outback towns you have a go at everything*

The students are extremely honest. I am not a school teacher, I am a stranger and usually I don't know Mum, I'm also not going to be around for long. In a recent talk, I commenced slowly with a description of a cycle and the effect hormones have on the feelings and attitude of women. I often give these female students the right to make choices, real choices (the choice to say NO). It doesn't take too long before the questions start to flow, and all are answered. To suggest to a 16 year old female who has already been sexually active that she has a right to start again, and if she wants, can remain celibate from now until she marries, opens up a new world for her. One of my big worries was my age, now 60 and very grey, how would these students react? I am thrilled to feel their comfort in asking so many questions... some personal, but not rude - question: Can you still enjoy sex after Menopause? Answer: Can you



Still on the journey together: Sue and Paul Butler

ever! P.S. I find the 'Menopause' presentation (prepared By Stephanie Gunton at the Cairns NFP) is very popular in many towns, and the same comment is made every time — "This talk has been so positive."

During one School Holidays, a mother asked if I would talk to her 16 year old daughter, I said 'yes' and suggested she may like to bring some friends. Sixteen young women attended. They even booked the community hall!

## The people

Country people deserve a fair go, and if I can give them a little personal service from NFP and FLE, I feel great. They do miss out a lot. One of my first shocks was not having Mass on Christmas Day but three days *before* Christmas. Sometimes Father is unable to drive 200/300km to say Mass because of the Wet Season. John & I join the Parish for the two months as Readers, Special Ministers, etc. In outback towns you have a go at everything. And, of course, if I have nothing to do, St. Vinnies always needs help.

## How we do wander!

We have had such a wonderful opportunity to see so much of this country and have so much more to see. Climbing to the top of a gorge at Lawn Hill National Park, Q., to be alone to soak up the peace and beauty of God's creation. Winjana Gorge, W.A. at late afternoon, walking through the rock face to a light golden glow of sand surrounded by pitted cliffs... and crocs! On our way from Vic to Qld we spent a few days at Kaputar National Park, sitting atop the area we had just climbed to watch an Eagle Soaring.

Driving from Katherine to Kunnanurra, this area is so hard to describe on paper, Awesome, Magnificent, Powerful, Beautiful. At each turn in the road to see towering cliffs, in spectacular natural colours or rocky formation that stretch into the distance for miles; a sunset on the beach in Western Australia where the sun literally fails out of the sky. What a joyous vocation!

Any grey nomads, ex NFP teachers who want to join this unique ministry?

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## Snapshots of NFP Life

Sydney and Rural teachers at an ACNFP Conference dinner in Melbourne Oct. 2000



"Be Person Centred" is the catch-cry of this inservice session

Working in unison with lovely people for a wonderful cause!



The lights for life!



Getting serious about learning life matters

ACNFP have a series of frequently updated brochures on any pregnancy and family issue.

To obtain these please do not hesitate to contact any NFP centre.

