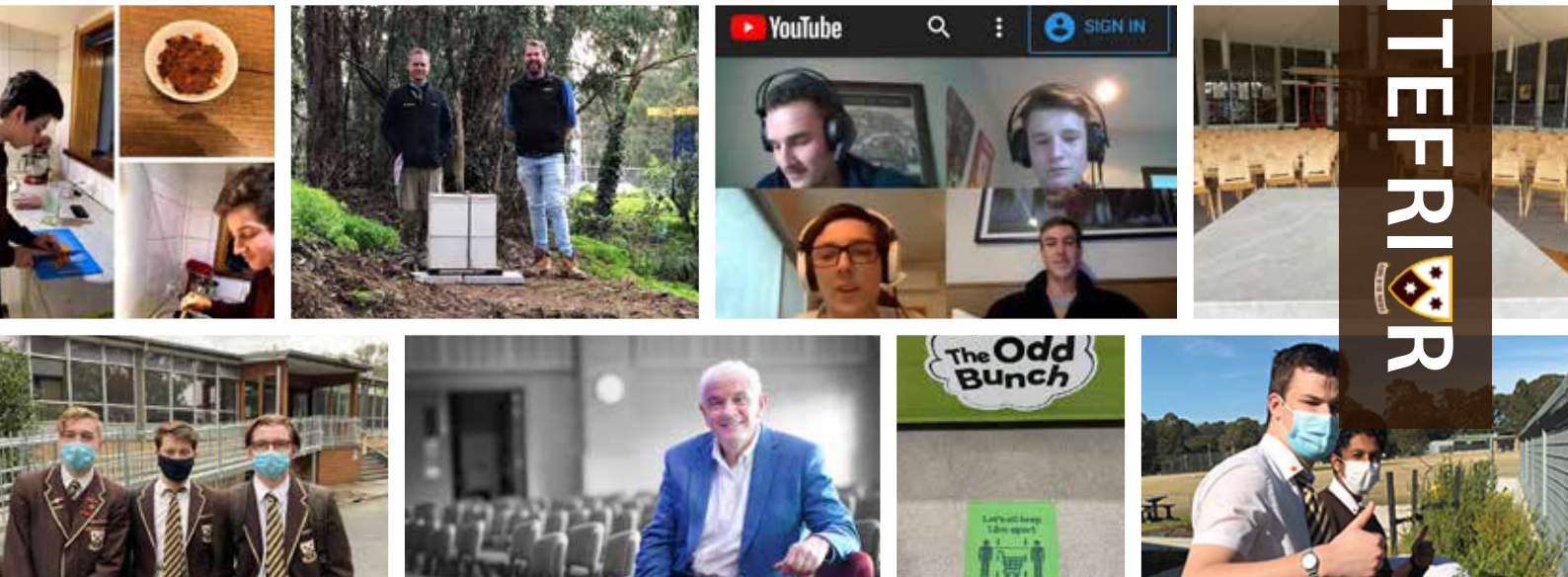


*Belong. Believe. Become.*





## Dear Whitefriars Community

What a year it has been. While our October edition is usually full of all that has been happening within our Whitefriars Community – socials, reunions, trivia nights etc., this year we have had little opportunity to gather together. So, this edition of the Whitefriar Magazine is a COVID-19 one. We have interviewed a very small representation of our community, but understand that everyone has a story to tell and that the impact of these unprecedented times varies greatly. If you have a story you would like to share about your experience, please reach out to us at the College.

Know that our thoughts and prayers are with you. We truly hope that you have been able to find some positives during this time. Be kind to yourself and your loved ones.

*The Editors*

# Mark Murphy

## Principal of Whitefriars College

### Class of 1982

During this period of lockdown, the rhythm of my day has changed. Where once I would spend some time in my office, as well as time out amongst our school community, now there are days when I do not move away from the screen.



Mark Murphy

I do love my job, but it is the parts I love most which I am not able to engage in as much right now. I can't wander into a product design class and ask a boy about the piece of work he is creating. I don't have the opportunity to have those incidental chats with staff and boys in the corridor. I am not able to knock on a pastoral classroom door in the morning to wish a boy happy birthday. Most of all, I can't stand in the middle of the school yard at lunch time and be uplifted by the exuberance of young men as they charge about playing down ball, basketball, footy or just running around. Night time meetings are via Zoom, so I can usually have dinner with my family and even the occasional lunch with my wife. It has been a blessing to spend more time with my family.

Apart from concern for my own family, especially for my wife Caroline who is a COVID nurse, my other constant worry has been for the families and the young men I serve here at Whitefriars. Daily, I hear stories of families whose lives have been turned upside down in the blink of an eye. They contact the College in despair, facing an uncertain future. These are the moments when I see our incredible

staff show such empathy and compassion for families in their moment of greatest need. In fact, this is a common theme at Whitefriars during this challenging time. I have been blessed to witness acts of kindness and generosity from so many members of our community as we stand in solidarity with each other. As Dr Michael Carr-Gregg said in a recent webinar with our families, "when we are together, everything is better."

My personal stress relievers have been exercise, the odd woodwork project in the shed and playing the piano. I was going to say watching my beloved Bombers, but lately that has just added to the stress!

Through surveys of our students, there has been a mixed bag when it comes to their feelings about working from home. Some like the isolation, the lack of distraction and the closeness to the pantry! Others miss the face-to-face interaction with their teachers. One thing they all have in common though, is that they all miss their mates! This too has been a time of stress and anxiety for many but I take comfort in the fact that our staff including teachers, counsellors, House Leaders and Learning Diversity staff are working tirelessly to support each boy's wellbeing in their more challenging moments. My heart and prayers go out to all our students at this time, especially our Year 12 young men whose final year of schooling has not been what they, or we, would have hoped for. I have however, been in awe of the fortitude and maturity shown by our Year 12s. I have been particularly inspired by the way they get around each other which is a hallmark of this place.

My advice to you all is to be kind to each other and don't be afraid to put your hand up for help. If you do that at Whitefriars, I promise you won't be disappointed.

# Jack Harman

Student

**St Thomas the Apostle School**

I am currently in Year 6 at St Thomas the Apostle School in Blackburn and I am starting at Whitefriars College next year. I like to play lots of sports such as footy, cricket and basketball.



This year has been really tough and challenging because of the Coronavirus. I have not been able to see my friends or play any sports. It has been really sad because I am in Year 6 and it is my last year at primary school. It has been hard to learn more difficult topics over a screen and I would prefer to do some things face-to-face with my teacher. There are five people in my family and most school days we are all using the Wi-Fi. Some days it doesn't cope with all of us working from home!

I feel like I have missed out on a lot of special events and things that happen when you are in Year 6, such as playing with our prep buddies, our camp to Canberra, inter-school sports and being the leaders of the school. I've also missed being with my Year 6 friends for the last year before we all go off to different secondary schools. Footy and basketball were cancelled for the whole season, but I am crossing my fingers that I will be able to play cricket in the summer.

I have become better at managing my time and being organised for school. I am also much better at using a computer for my school work and my typing is faster. These skills should be helpful next year when I come to Whitefriars.

During this time, I have been able to spend a lot more time with my dad. We have lunch and dinner together every day, and we play a lot more together. Before the Stage 4 lockdown, my Pa taught me how to use his digital SLR camera and let me borrow it. I have been taking lots of photos and I have really enjoyed learning about photography.

A few weeks ago, Mrs Keyes invited me to an online meeting with herself all the other boys from my year level, who are going to Whitefriars next year. Even though we couldn't meet her in person, it was good to talk to her and see her face, and ask her some questions about Whitefriars. I have also received my 'Passport to Year 7' from her and I am starting to fill that in. I hope that we get to come to Whitefriars for our Orientation Day in December.

I can't wait for the Coronavirus to be over!

# Leanne Lucas

General Practitioner

## Parent

I completed my HSC in 1981 at Templestowe High School. I then went to Medical school at the University of Melbourne and then completed my GP training in the country.

I live with my husband Michael, who works in bank management, and with my sons Andrew and James. I am concerned about my parents who are in the COVID at-risk age group and I encourage them to self-isolate. I am worried that my sons, whilst being very fortunate to be so well supported with their online schooling at Whitefriars, are getting bored and are missing seeing their friends.

My work days have changed significantly. I am working less hours so I can be home more to keep an eye on computer screens that switch onto YouTube in the blink of an eye and to, of course, help craft a Pavlova and lollies into a cross-section of an animal cell.

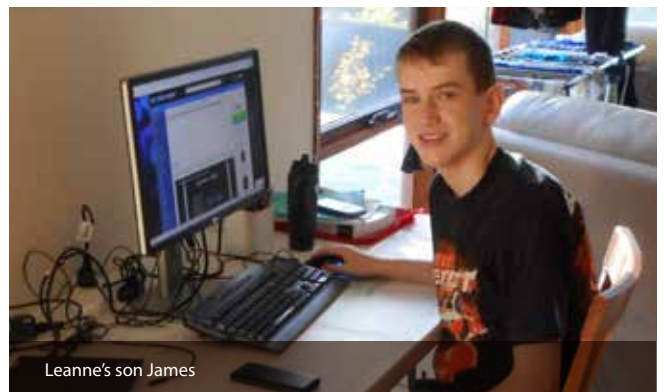
My practice is fortunate that thus far, thanks to our avid screening, we are yet to see a case of COVID in-house. All the staff are getting used to the vigorous probing we have to suffer at any sign of a sore throat etc. The smell of cleaning agents and the fogging as a result of face shields, in combination with masks and glasses, is becoming a constant distraction. Unfortunately, masks will likely be a permanent addition to my working attire.

At times, I feel like a telemarketer, consulting on the phone to our more at-risk patients and I have honed my interview skills. We are seeing a big influx of anxious and stressed patients from primary school age to old age, either worried about getting infected or getting down with the isolation or having lost their jobs. We are seeing mums with new babies, with no access to family to support them and babies that are slower to reach their milestones because it is harder to learn to smile with masked faces and no ability to socialise.

I have found it more stressful to make sure that we don't miss a subtle early case of COVID and then have to deal with all the consequences. In my down time, I make sure that I take time for myself to relax, to read or exercise and I have discovered my local library has an excellent e-book supply.



Leanne's son Andrew



Leanne's son James

My positive started with a negative. I celebrated my 18th birthday in May by finding out my father was diagnosed with an aggressive cancer and needed chemotherapy. Just two weeks ago, his Haematologist phoned me to say that it was likely he has been cured. It made me treasure even more the time that I have with my family and my parents.

Treasure this time with your family and stay safe.



# Shawn Begley

Logistics, Begley Hobba and Manton

**Parent, Class of 1984**

2020! What a year and possibly for all the wrong reasons. I can't wait to hear my kids tell their kids, "Don't tell me how hard your life is, you weren't there for COVID in 2020!"



I completed HSC at Whitefriars in 1984. HSC, what's that I hear you ask? It was VCE with a little more enjoyment, especially compared to the current COVID climate.

COVID has seen an enormous change in all of our lives. I consider myself and my family very fortunate in these unprecedented times. My wife, Ellen, a nurse and myself, in Logistics, are both essential workers, and therefore we are still working as pre-COVID. Ellen however, is now working 12-hour shifts to minimise the risk of infection to the nursing staff. My staff work from home, which has proven to be a reasonably seamless transition.

We are a family of five, Madeleine, studying Law/ Commerce, Olivia, studying Arts and Noah is currently studying VCE at Whitefriars. I especially feel for the VCE students as they will miss a lot of the enjoyment and celebrations that VCE affords.

The pandemic has tested the patience of everyone. If there are any positives, it has afforded us more family time together, creating theme nights and playing games that would only surface on holidays. Ask the children though, they may have a different point of view!

Ellen and I are so proud of how Madeleine, Olivia and Noah have handled the lock downs and restrictions. It hasn't been without the hissy fits and arguments, however, COVID has created a resilience and compassion towards others and their circumstances that was not necessarily contemplated previously. It has taught all of us, to not complain, as there is always someone less fortunate than ourselves.

My motto for COVID? "How you handle COVID is a reflection of the type of person you are and the character you possess!"

# Ross Kirwan

Primary Teacher

**Class of 2002**

I am currently working in primary education, teaching in my 13th year and working as a Numeracy Leader and Year 3/4 classroom teacher.



Ross and his sons



Teaching has been a passion of mine for a long time and the last six months has been a very unique learning experience. I graduated from Whitefriars College in 2002.

As a result of the COVID-19 restrictions and online learning, my work and home life has been quite unpredictable and challenging, but equally rewarding. Like most families, it has produced many challenges and positive experiences both professionally and personally. It has allowed me to reevaluate and prioritise my work/life balance. We all run very busy lives these days and being forced to slow down and refresh, from a wellbeing perspective, has been invaluable.

The transition to online learning was extremely challenging, not only for teachers but also for students and their families. As a primary

teacher, you are highly invested with your students and their parents, so creating a supportive and empathetic platform of communication was pivotal in working successfully together. Catering to all the students' needs via online portals was a new challenge but one that has created some opportunities worth implementing in the future. Promoting and practising a routine of regular breaks, physical exercise and outdoor activities away from a computer was extremely important and also refreshing, from a mindfulness perspective.

The biggest positive from online learning, is the extra time I have been able to spend with my family, and reminding ourselves of this during stressful and challenging moments. My wife and I have two sons, a one-year and a three-year old, and as many other families can attest to, working from home and being a parent at the same time is challenging. However, it was also a healthy reminder that we are lucky enough to have a roof over our heads and still have a job. Witnessing my youngest son start to walk, between online lessons, and my eldest son, invade my Google Meets, would definitely be a highlight of online learning.

I have seen a range of new skills and strengths that are often not seen in the classroom. Students have the extra time to prepare and complete their learning at their own pace and from the comfort of their homes. Students are now prioritising activities that target their specific needs and enhancing their time management skills by creating and following new routines. Online learning has allowed me to provide feedback in a new way and set more personalised and specific goals with my students. Many students are now making more connections with their learning and realising its importance in their current and future endeavours.

Reflecting, the College has supported me by instilling a lasting sense of community, respect and camaraderie. Many of my closest friends today are Old Collegians and reflecting on my time at Whitefriars, the opportunities and rapport we were provided, highlights the importance to build a supportive culture valuing the wellbeing of one another, both personally and professionally. These life skills are important to draw on in a time like this. I say, embrace the opportunities you have been given and challenge yourself to find and focus on the positives in every moment.

# Phillip Deane

Current Student

**Year 8**

This year is my second year at Whitefriars. I am on the House Representative Council and part of the Junior Student Representative Council. I enjoy playing sport, especially soccer, and have made some really good friends here at Whitefriars.



Phillip Deane

In the days before March, I really enjoyed walking down the hill, seeing my friends and meeting with my Pastoral Care group at the start of each day. I think the College has been very organised and flexible to aid students in our learning. I know that this year's VCE students have had a tough time – but I've heard their Pastoral Care teachers have really stepped up. For the rest of us, our workload has been cut down a bit to help us adjust to our new learning environment.

It's been disappointing to go back to Home Learning for the second time. I haven't really enjoyed being cooped up at home all the time. Having said that, there is the extra sleep and extended leisure time. I've committed myself to going on a 15-minute run each day. I attempted this last term and failed, but I feel like now that I know what I'm in for – I will be able to keep this commitment. I've also been working on a painting and playing guitar.

Over the lockdown, I have learnt to manage my time a lot better. I know more about the temptations that linger when you sit on a computer all day. I've had a lot of insight into what I can accomplish with some spare time. The Home Learning Program has also enabled me to learn in a different way and to overcome some of the challenges associated with it. I have seen my peers show that they can tackle any change. Many of us have proven our proficiency with technology. But most importantly, we've realised how much our friendships mean to us and that maybe school isn't as bad a place, as we sometimes think it is.

I've been gifted with more time with my family. My Dad, who lectures in Architecture, has been teaching his classes from home and my little brother, who is in his last year of primary school, has also been learning from home. We've learnt to juggle four Zoom sessions at the same time and I feel like I've learnt more about my Dad's job. We've certainly got a better idea of each other's likes and dislikes.

Because we get to try new subjects in the second semester, I haven't had a chance to meet some of my teachers properly but I do feel luckier than our Year 7s, who have missed out on really getting to know each other and making solid friendships. These last few months have gifted us with more family time, opportunities to set new goals and a chance to appreciate the things that we didn't. Remember, that our Whitefriars community is ready to receive you.

I can't wait to walk down that driveway again.



# Tiernan Bushby

## Paramedic Ambulance Victoria

### Class of 2013

I currently live at home with my mum and dad, and I have been very worried for them as my mum is still working as a midwife and I don't want either of my parents to get sick.



Tiernan Bushby

I also have to be extra cautious as my girlfriend is on immunosuppressive medications and is prone to becoming unwell from infections that others can easily fight off. We follow strict decontamination process at the end of every shift to ensure we are safe from COVID-19 and that our ambulances and equipment are safe for patients.

It's certainly had a huge impact on everything we do. From the start of our shift, we have to undergo a health check to make sure we are safe to be at work. PPE is one of the biggest changes. We are wearing PPE (gloves, mask, and protective eyewear) to every single case we attend. In cases where a patient is identified as a suspected COVID-19 or for cases in aged care homes, we are required put on the added protection of a splash proof gown or the white Tyvek overalls. This means we look different, interacting with our patients

is very different, and it can be quite uncomfortable, but it's vital and we know that it's effective in keeping us safe. There have also been some changes to our clinical procedures.

It has been very mentally fatiguing, working throughout this pandemic. The uncertainty of caring for patients who are potentially carrying the disease and the concern of taking it home to my family has certainly been on my mind, however, I know that I've got support from my family and friends and of course my colleagues – who are all going through the exact same issue. COVID-19 has affected every single person in one way or another, I'm just very lucky that I have been able to keep my job and am able to help in the response to the pandemic.

I imagine at the end of all of this, the community will have more appreciation for the luxuries we have in life; visiting our family and friends, going to sporting and entertainment events but most importantly being able to shake hands and hug our loved ones.

My hope is that people listen to the experts and not the keyboard warriors! Stay at home, wash your hands and wear a mask when you are out of the house. If you have any symptoms, please get tested. Most importantly, look out for your friends who are doing it tough, we all need each other's support.

# Michelle Stapelfeldt

Wallies Lollies, Small Business

Parent / Whitefriars Parents' Association

We have two boys at Whitefriars, Oskar in Year 12 and William in Year 9. My husband (Peter) and I run a small business 'Wallies Lollies'.



Michelle and Peter

Our place of business looks very different with signs on the door advising customers to hand sanitise, wear masks and not enter if ill. We have sneeze guards, COVID Safe Work Plans and cups for pens that say 'clean' and 'used'! We can't even make cups of tea for each other anymore.

Peter and I try to walk every day, where we discuss work outside of the home. We have tried not to project the anxiety from work onto the boys and we have converted our garage into a gym where the family do circuits to loud teenage music!

I miss having our monthly Whitefriars Parents meetings and the momentum of organising events that bring us all together. I think about how we can help our Whitefriars boys all the time; email [parents@whitefriars.vic.edu.au](mailto:parents@whitefriars.vic.edu.au) if you have anything to share.

For us, life going forward will never be taken for granted again. We are just looking forward to having a family Christmas and a relaxing summer... Oh, and a MUCH better 2021.

I'll never forget the feeling of anxiety, worry and dread when the first restrictions on businesses were enforced in March and JobKeeper was still being drafted. We had many sleepless nights wondering how our business would survive during this time.

Slowly, as the 'new normal' evolved, we were able to keep trading and keep our staff. Our day-to-day changed, as we would still get up and go to work, but we had to think about the boys studying at home and how to keep them healthy both mentally and physically.

Both boys are fortunate in that they have part-time jobs, so it breaks up the week for them and gives us something new to talk about at dinner.

Wishing all families health and strength during this time.

# Yolanda Oppy

Registered Nurse

Parent

I live with my husband and three sons, two of whom are currently undertaking remote learning with Whitefriars.



Yolanda Oppy

My husband has been home since the first lockdown in March 2020, he is a business owner and my eldest son took a gap year this year, after finishing Year 12 in 2019. Fortunately, he has been working full-time since March this year, but has only been working from home since early August. I was scared for our eldest son as the COVID numbers were rising in July as he was catching public transport to and from work. As a Nurse, I have heard a few stories about people getting COVID and having lingering symptoms months after their recovery and we were encouraging our son to be as vigilant as possible.

On a day-to-day basis, my life looks very different than it did last year! I am very lucky to be able to work part-time, so I have typically been at home for 3 or 4 days per week, the last few years, having had most of those days to myself... busy on weekends running our boys around to their various sporting or social events. This year, since March, my eldest son and I have been the only ones going to work regularly, and since August, it has only been me leaving the house for extended periods of time. I work at Frances Perry House, where I have been for nearly 10 years. Being a private hospital, we have, at times, had

reduced patient loads due to restrictions on the types of surgeries people can have. However, because we are also a Maternity hospital, babies are still being born and mothers are still coming in for their pre-natal observations, albeit in a very different environment.

Due to the reduced patient load at my usual workplace, I have been seconded to work at other Ramsay Hospitals where they have been overloaded due to local COVID outbreaks. In some instances, this has been quite difficult for me, as I have been on wards where I am not familiar with care requirements for some patients, or the surroundings in which I have been working. Fortunately, I have not been exposed to any COVID patients, but the restrictions under which we have been working has made effective care and communication with patients very challenging. Wearing masks and goggles or face shields can often be intimidating for some patients and can be exhausting if you are having to wear them for many days in a row. You often forget to re-hydrate and the PPE can become very uncomfortable on your face and ears. Nevertheless, this is our new normal.

Some days have been tougher than others, but I do know that I am luckier than most, in that I can interact with work colleagues (many who are friends) regularly enough to break any monotony. I try to exercise with online workouts or going for walks on my days off and cannot tell you how many TV shows I have streamed or books I have read! We are also very lucky in our house, that our sons are all capable of making their own meals/snacks as necessary and we don't have to run around after them all of the time.

A very big positive is that no-one in my family or extended family has caught COVID yet. I hope and pray that it stays that way. We have been so fortunate to live in Australia during this time and on a personal level, my family and I are so lucky that we live in a house with many rooms and a backyard, in which to exercise, eat, relax and sleep. I can only imagine the difficulty of being in lockdown with family in only a handful of rooms. Even as I become lockdown weary, I do know that my family and I are very blessed to live the life we do and I hope that we can hold onto that feeling as and when a vaccine becomes available.

I tell my boys everyday: follow the government guidelines, be safe and be kind.

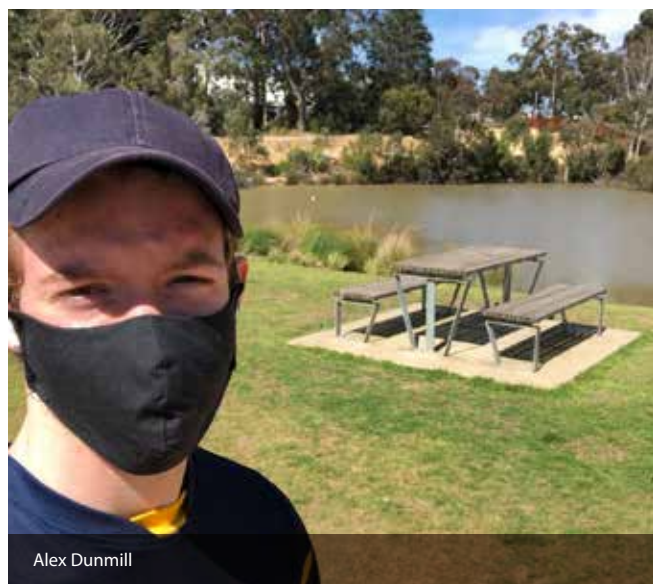


# Alex Dunmill

Year 12, College Captain

**Class of 2020**

Without question, this year has been tough. I've tried not to look back on what I have missed too much. While important milestone events will pass by; formals, valedictory, graduation, my 18th and the days at the College (where the most memorable moments are created), I have tried not to dwell on those losses.



They cannot be brought back and I am blessed to still be receiving an education, to be surrounded by support from friends and for the overwhelming majority of us to be healthy. The past is the past but sometimes there are more important things in life that you must cherish.

I've tried to get out each day for my one hour of exercise, give mates a call, and even tried some mindfulness to settle myself in the face of all this uncertainty. Having spent the last few years seeking more independence from my family, the time I have spent with them over these months have made me realise that, although we may not always get along, there is something so special about them. The stories my parents share of when they were my age, show we aren't as different as I used to think.

I feel this period has shown how strong my generation really is. We are expected to go to school full time, complete hours of homework, part-time work, have a social life, sleep the recommended hours of sleep, spend time with our family, worry about university and our career, have our own relationships, and still look after ourselves and have time to recharge. I don't think many people can achieve that in the face of an uncertain future in the same way my generation does. Regardless of this unique time or not, my generation is capable of so much more than what our Gen Z 'label' would have you believe.

While I've been off campus for a large part of the year, the support of my friends and classmates, the willingness of all my teachers and even staff, who I don't have an immediate connection with, to lend a hand and ensure that my year level gets something special out of the year, has been reassuring.

Above all, this year has taught me resilience. To take the hits but still get back up, to be thankful for what I have and to find acceptance in what I cannot control. This year has taught me what things I value the most and what makes me struggle. And, somewhat cliché, this year has taught me to live in the moment, because you never know when it may change.

So, what do I think? As painful as this year has been, let's see it as the wakeup call that many of us may have needed. A chance to notice the best and the worst about ourselves, and set the wheels turning for the life we want in this new world.

# Michael Mimmo

Casavini Events and Catering

## Parent

It's not my forte to talk about my family and business life but given the unusual circumstances we are in I will make an exception. I am a past parent of the Whitefriars Community (Class of 2019), served on the Whitefriars Parents' Association, husband, father, business owner, member of the Rotary Club of Templestowe, volunteer and car enthusiast.



I am second generation in the hospitality industry where the family has successfully operated function rooms, restaurants, catering and events at venues in Coburg, Elsternwick, Carlton and more recently Doncaster East.

On the home front my wife and I have three adult children all of whom are being challenged like so many, with their full-time University studies via Zoom and Teams. They are also completing an elective fast-tracked subject of online courtesy; where you practice tolerance, restraint, self-discipline and patience (especially when working on group assignments). To tell you the truth observing them from a parent's point of view is often more entertaining than Netflix!

I am a fan of The Block, and it's interesting to see the contestant's reactions to the news of COVID-19 this week, which aired 6 months after the film shoot. The virus news is filtering through onto the set. It is mid-March 2020 and good old Scotty Cam is making changes to the competition as more information comes to hand, new health and safety restrictions are imposed through Australia and the world and the whole cast has a genuine concern and fear of the unknown on their faces. On reflection, that's probably the look we had in March as we desperately digested news, facts, social media, opinions and

took all of that info and attempted to make an informed decision to move forward safely with family, friends, colleagues and the community.

With lockdown one, our household which once resembled the turnstiles at Luna Park with people coming and going to work, university, parties and more, came to a halt and transformed into a study hall, head office, home renovation/maintenance site and cooking school, with sessions of 2 on 2 basketball, for as long as daylight would permit (and if not fouled off first!). This seemed to work we remained positive and no-one was reported or injured!

But with lockdown two, even though we acknowledged the virus, we were quite annoyed and frustrated that our efforts from lockdown one did not achieve the expected result. While new restrictions were necessary, we couldn't understand the method and proportion of action towards the closure of businesses with no transmission. However, we battened down for lockdown two, ramped up lockdown one activities, changed from basketball to cycling, kept in contact with family and friends, maintained connections with voluntary organisations and added detailing cars to the 'to do' list.

Whilst we miss our business, the hospitality industry has been devastated to say the least by the measures that have been put in place for this pandemic. We feel for the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of Melbournians who still have an uncertain future and hope we are all able to support one another and right the wrongs.

If I may close with a quote reflecting the times we are in... *Stop being afraid of what could go wrong and start being excited about what could go right!*

# Leon Malzinskas

Retrieval Doctor

**Class of 1974**

Since July 2014, I have been working as a FIFO Retrieval doctor with the RFDS Western Operation based in Meekatharra, Western Australia.



I completed HSC at Whitefriars in 1974. I am a doctor with a background in rural general practice, anaesthetics, emergency work and obstetrics.

Meekatharra is a small town of 700 people. It has limited facilities and most were closed during the first wave. I mainly keep occupied by working, studying and riding my fat bike through the scrub. My work routine when I returned in March was significantly altered, having to learn all the new processes for making our aircraft "COVID" proof. Then there was the technique of donning and safely doffing PPE, along with learning new ways to do COVID risky medical procedures safely. The precautions we take adds several hours to our shifts - one transfer I did took 14 hours. The wearing of PPE can be exhausting especially during the hot, humid weather of WA - once you have it on, you can't drink, eat or go to the toilet without removing the PPE so you just hold on!

The pandemic has highlighted the deficiencies in the health system that health providers have been warning about for some time. Everything from access to PPE, drugs, medical equipment, vulnerability of the elderly, lack of critical care beds and the sustainability of the medical workforce. These challenges have been met with innovation, improvisation and a realisation that we need to review our attitudes to health, the environment and the economy.

I currently live by myself, with all of my family back in Victoria.

I started my first "work swing" for 2020 in late January, as the coronavirus situation was emerging and there were only a handful of cases in Australia. My son and his partner had been visiting China, so I had concerns for their safety. They managed to return to Australia before our borders were closed. I returned home to Victoria in late February and the rapid spread of coronavirus over the next three weeks was unprecedented. On the evening of Sunday 22 March, I had a call from RFDS asking if I could get back to WA, as the government was going to close its borders to the rest of the country. I arrived in Perth on Monday 23 March and self-isolated for two weeks, returning to Meekatharra in early April. I haven't been back to Victoria since and with the second wave, I don't expect to be home until early December. I miss my wife and family greatly but we keep in touch with a family group on WhatsApp. I have concerns for them in regard to their risk of getting COVID-19, the risk to their employment and the mental health effects of isolation. The only advice I can give them (and those I speak to), is maintain a positive outlook, work the problem and find a solution.



# Mark Alexander

Sergeant of Police

Parent

I completed VCE at St Leo's College, Box Hill in 1988. I am a Police Officer within the Yarra Council area. I have been an officer for 25 years and a Sergeant for 12 years. I also have a Diploma of Business and next year, my son Lewis is looking forward to starting Year 7.



Mark and his family

I live with my wife Janette, who is a physiotherapist working in the Spinal Unit at the Austin Hospital, and my son Lewis and daughter Zara who is in Year 3 at St Francis Xavier, Box Hill. I haven't been overly concerned for them, as my wife has been able to work from home, and working in the medical industry, she is well versed in PPE and the risks of COVID-19. Our only concern is what the kids have been missing out on in regards to classes and sport, but we feel that most people are in the same situation.

Janette and I have both had concerns for our elderly parents, who still live at their homes and have been isolated for the entire period. The lack of socialisation has been hard for them and I know they have missed their grandchildren.

My work has changed. There has been a noticeable reduction in the amount of traffic on the roads and a sense of fear in the community – especially within non-English-speaking communities who don't understand what's expected of them during the restriction period.

Enforcing the lockdown rules can be challenging, as it's nothing people in the community have ever had to deal with. Daily, we are wearing masks and there are numerous safety briefings during the day to ensure we are not exposed.

At times it gets mentally draining, but day-to-day, I am seeing people in extraordinarily tough situations and this reminds me that I'm in a fairly good place and in a position to help the less fortunate – which drives myself and my colleagues. This almost daily reminder, has made sure my family is making the most of our time together and roasting marshmallows on the fire a few times a week!

I have noticed that within our school community and my work, people are really looking out for each other, especially for those who live on their own. I have seen a positive side to some people that I didn't know existed, which has opened my eyes and taught me that sometimes I need to look closer.

It's important to be positive; it won't last forever and most importantly let's stick together to see it through.



# Nick Beltrami

Bachelor of Biomedicine, University of Melbourne

**Class of 2019**

This year has certainly been a considerable mental challenge. After the initial novelty of lockdown wore off, I began to really miss my friends and extended family.



Nick and his friends

Not being able to go out and catch up with them in person has definitely been a monumental struggle, because these people have always played significant roles in my life. To get my fix of social interaction, I've turned to Zoom, as I'm sure many others have. Whether it's been to celebrate a birthday or just have a general catch up, video calls have allowed me to maintain my sanity and keep in contact with those whom I value tremendously in my life.

I currently live with my mum, dad, older brother and younger sister. My immediate family is quite fortunate in the sense that we have always had a reasonably clean bill of health, so I have not had overwhelming concerns for their wellbeing. However, it is well-publicised that even



Arlo

healthy individuals can be crippled by the novel coronavirus, so it would be naïve to assume that my family is completely immune from the physical effects of this virus.

With my parents both working from home and my siblings both studying from home, it has been a blessing to have the opportunity to spend more time than ever before with my family. I like to think that this has enabled us to become a stronger unit and will help us to overcome other challenges in the future.

Being physically distanced from my friends and extended family has also compelled me to reflect upon their importance to me, so as life returns to some semblance of normality I'll undoubtedly have a greater appreciation for these individuals and cherish my time with them more than I ever have. Knowing that we would be cooped up inside for a while, my family also decided to welcome Arlo the Beaglier to our household! He has been a much-needed source of joy for us during this time and we're looking forward to watching him grow up.

Now that I don't have to travel into the city every morning, I can afford to roll out of bed an hour or two later than I did at the beginning of the university year – not a bad deal if you asked me. My day then consists of tuning in to online lectures and participating in online tutorial and practical classes. The nature of my course is quite practical, so it's disappointing to not be able to physically be in the lab conducting experiments, however the university is doing the best it can to simulate this experience for us at home. As an AFL tragic, one of the most welcome changes to my daily life is being able to sit in front of the TV every night and watch the football!

Keep checking up on friends and family, because it's never been as easy for people to suffer in silence than it is in this uncertain time.

# Jodi Longmore-Scott

Real Estate Sales Consultant

## Parent

I'm a Real Estate Sales Consultant in the City of Manningham and I have three boys who have attended Whitefriars over the past nine years. I currently have a son in Year 12 and I must say, it would be the most difficult year yet. I really feel for these boys and everything they have had to sacrifice, but I know it will make them resilient and strong!



Jodi and her family



COVID has had an enormous effect on our family, particularly the second time around. I am working from home with huge restrictions on my industry and not able to assist sellers or buyers with purchasing a home in this stage. I've got two children at home, doing virtual learning and another studying for university at home. Having children in Year 10 and 12, they have now surpassed my ability to teach, so I've found that side particularly challenging! Luckily for us, they seem to be coping well but are both desperate to get back to school and friends.

We are a family of six, my husband has fortunately been able to keep working in his engineering business, my sons are Nick who is studying Bio-Medicine 4th year, Chris studying Chemical Engineering 2nd year and Alex in Year 12, and I have a daughter Arabella in Year 10. The most challenging part of all of this has been catching up with my son and his girlfriend, who aren't living with us, so I think I miss family get-togethers the most! We have tried to alleviate this by catching up with phone calls and going for long walks around the beautiful area in Donvale where we live.

I've discovered many parts to Currawong Bush Park and Mullum Mullum trails that I never knew existed and we will definitely try to keep this as a regular exercise to do together.

My message to the community through all of this is one of gratitude, don't take anything for granted and enjoy every day, as freedom is so easily taken away, which we have all witnessed.



# Laura Simos

## Home Schooling

### Parent

My family of four (Jacob who is in Year 7, Charlotte who is three, my husband Cam and I), have been fortunate to maintain a semi-normal routine throughout this pandemic, despite being anxious.



Laura and Jacob



I am not going to sugar coat it; this second lock down has been hard! It has been a struggle on so many fronts. Fortunately, Cam has been working from home since the second lockdown but it was difficult for Jacob to fully understand the potential severity of this pandemic and therefore willingly comply with the restrictions, at first. Face-mask wearing and limitations on the time spent outdoors is very frustrating for a teenage boy and he is not as engaged with online learning.

Personally, I have loved being at home but it has been very stressful for the children to adapt to the slower pace as we are an active family who enjoys the outdoors. Holiday periods have been particularly difficult, as we usually get away.

We never look too far ahead and take each day as it comes. Positive thinking has helped us enormously

It was the 'unknown' that scared me the most; uncertainty surrounding employment, would food be in short supply and therefore priced exorbitantly? We felt as if we were in limbo as we watched and waited for the daily reports and numbers.

At the outset of the pandemic, Cam and I sat down and discussed our work plans, as both of us had been classified as essential workers. Cam had just started a new role at the Bendigo bank as a Mobile Relationship Manager. I came with more than the usual risks, as it required that he travel across Melbourne, often visiting areas regarded as hotspots. Given Charlotte's age, I decided to step back from my role in the Early Childcare sector, as we did not have alternative support and I worried about placing my child into long day care whilst the pandemic was unfolding.

In terms of our lifestyle, the first lockdown was not as problematic as the second has been. There was a sense of novelty and a belief that it would soon be over. We were all enjoying the time together; Jacob was still feeling connected to school and excelling in all areas, and he was still able to socialise with his friends at a distance on his bike.

but we have also learnt to avoid things which are bound to bring anxiety and stress (we never watch the news). I cook, garden, exercise and have daily family group chats on Zoom. We have been providing meals for some of our elderly neighbours, made lasagnes for essential workers in our street, and at Easter, made and delivered fresh hot-cross buns. I hope that this shared interest in other's wellbeing continues in our community once this pandemic is over.

During the course of this year we have become a lot more flexible and resilient, as both individuals and as a family. Home schooling has given us a much better understanding of Jacob's learning strengths and challenges, which will help us to act pre-emptively in the future. We have increased our capacity to produce our own food and Jacob has been learning to cook food from scratch - something that I will definitely continue to encourage!

I take my hat off to the amazing staff who have been working on Zoom with our boys, whilst juggling often-competing commitments to their own children behind the scenes. My greatest thing I have learnt is to be kind to others and yourself.

# Sue-ellen Woods

## Medical Laboratory Scientist

### Parent

I am a Medical Laboratory Scientist working in the Pathology Department at The Royal Melbourne Hospital. The Laboratory consists of four different sections - bacteriology, TB laboratory, serology and Molecular Microbiology.



The Molecular Microbiology laboratory

The Molecular Microbiology laboratory, tests for a range of microbiological and virological pathogens mainly, at this moment in time, Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2. I am a senior member of the Pathology Department.

My work routine has been significantly altered. The laboratory staff has been split into two teams. One team works Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and every second Wednesday whilst the other team works Thursday, Friday, Saturday and every other Wednesday. This arrangement means that if someone comes down with Coronavirus, the whole laboratory will not have to be quarantined thus effectively stopping all Coronavirus testing in The Royal Melbourne Hospital, which I think is extremely important.

Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 testing is carried out 24/7. On top of this, all the standard routine testing still needs to be performed. The Molecular laboratory has become extremely busy. The routine work and the added Coronavirus testing is now having to be performed by half the number of employees. New temporary staff have been employed. I now drive to work, as I don't want to catch public transport. I am enjoying driving, as the traffic is still quite bearable and the City of Melbourne has eased parking restrictions for hospital staff.

I have found the changes more physically exhausting than mentally exhausting. I feel very fortunate to still have a job to get up and go to everyday. I still have a lot of routine and structure in my life, and I think that is so important.

I live with my three children and my partner Tim. I have a daughter Cassie who is 19, and two sons Jack, 17 and Nathan, 12. Nathan is currently at Whitefriars in Year 7. My biggest concern for my family members was always the possibility of community spread when we were not in lockdown. My partner Tim is a bus driver, my daughter is a hairdresser and when the boys were going to school, they were catching public transport – so they were all incredibly vulnerable to community-acquired Coronavirus. Even though I work in a hospital, I do not have any face-to-face contact with patients and all of our work is carried out in safety cabinets wearing masks, gowns, gloves and safety glasses. I feel very safe at work and there are very high safety standards in place.

For me, the pandemic has highlighted the importance of the everyday hero and hopefully trivialised the appeal of the reality TV stars and social media celebrities. I think it's a great reminder to find the positives even in the smallest of things.

# Renada Lee

## Mental Health and Wellbeing Insights Specialist

### Parent

I love solving problems and making a difference. After two decades conducting market and social research, and completing a Master of Science (Applied Statistics), I'm now in my dream job with SuperFriend, where I'm helping to create mentally healthy workplaces across Australia.



I'm also passionate about indoor skydiving, travelling, reading, escape rooms and spending time at the beach with family and friends.

I live with my husband Michael (Class of 1996) and our three children, Parker (who will be starting at Whitefriars in 2021), Jonah and Portia. None of us have any underlying medical conditions that make us more vulnerable to COVID-19 and we have been carefully obeying all of the lockdown restrictions to minimise risk of infection, so I haven't been scared for them.

While Michael's continued to work on-site at the barracks, in his Army role, I can work anywhere that has an internet connection so I haven't been in my CBD office since Friday 13 March. This has been a huge change, as the kids and I can all wake up later and our mornings are far more relaxed before the school day starts. Before the pandemic, every morning would see me rushing to get ready for work, helping the kids to get ready for school, driving them to school, then racing to the train station to find a park, before travelling for 45 minutes into the city. Having said that, while I was at the office, I had plenty of interesting conversations with my colleagues and could grab a delicious chai tea whenever I felt like a break. It's been challenging supervising remote learning for three primary school kids while working full time, especially given their primary school has not run online classes – only 15-minute catchups at the start of each day.

The younger two have particularly struggled with their concentration and motivation, whereas Parker is self-driven to complete the assigned tasks. Thankfully, Michael's been granted extra leave to supervise remote learning once a week, and the kids have really enjoyed spending additional time with him.

I've found the last six months incredibly tough mentally, but thankfully SuperFriend offers all of the support and resources I could ask for. The first thing I did, was let my manager know I was struggling and we worked through some options to alleviate my stress, including putting some projects on hold and changing my work hours. I also implemented some short-term health goals to work toward, such as hitting 5,000 steps (usually it would be around 15,000) and drinking two litres of water a day. Sleep also became critically important, so I downloaded an app called Sleep Cycle and tracked my sleep to work out the best bedtime routine to optimise my sleep quality. I've been missing indoor skydiving tremendously, especially since it keeps me physically and mentally healthy, so instead I've put a countdown in place until the lockdown restrictions end and I watch indoor skydiving videos daily to keep my spirits up. I've also missed connecting with my closest friends, the ones who help to keep me balanced and sane, so we have gone virtual and connect via apps like House Party and Zoom. I've particularly enjoyed catching up over a drink at the end of the week, but not needing to drive or catch an Uber afterward since we're already home!

The kids and I agree that the best part of lockdown has been the opportunity to spend a lot more time together as a family. The pace of life has definitely slowed down and we have genuinely enjoyed riding bikes through puddles, building obstacle courses, competing in dance-offs and searching for the perfect marshmallow toasting sticks together. I'm also able to identify more quickly when the kids are struggling, since I see them all the time. I've introduced them to different coping options like meditation, Star Wars yoga (google it), quiet reading time, Epsom salt baths and asking for help before they lash out. We are all having a lot more cuddles too, which is really helping us to get through these challenging times.

My advice? Keep talking about what you need, organise things to look forward to and be kind to yourself.



# Emma Dorrat-Sims

Pharmacist

Parent

I am a mother to three awesome boys, my eldest son James started in Year 7 at Whitefriars this year.



Emma and her family

My husband, Keith, and I met while I was working in the UK and we celebrated our 16th wedding anniversary earlier this year, just before life as we knew it changed.

COVID hasn't made me scared for my family, as they are resilient men who have coped amazingly well with the unexpected changes life has brought this year. I have been concerned about the potential for exposure to the COVID virus in my work environment at the pharmacy and fearful I would inadvertently infect members of my family or friends.

With home schooling in full swing I have found it challenging to support three children in their home learning programs. However, one of the benefits of home-schooling is that mornings are so much easier, with no rushing to get everyone out of the house and no lunchboxes to pack.

From a professional perspective, it has been a very challenging time as the COVID period has been busier and more stressful than any other stage of my working life. Working in community pharmacy I am in contact with the wider population, which brings home the real impact that COVID is having. Every day at work I see the anxiety, fear and stress that people are experiencing in their lives, from the fear of the virus and the economic impact the lockdowns are having.

The routine of my day-to-day work is different; we see many more customers attending the pharmacy for primary health advice and support. The physical environment has changed with large Perspex screens in place to minimise the risk of spreading the virus. Social distancing makes it harder to have confidential conversations, which are often personal and should be had discreetly. I have also noticed a greater need for social connection and interaction in people who come into the pharmacy.

The introduction of Telehealth has many benefits to the community but also creates logistical issues for pharmacy as it adds more administrative tasks. Additionally, there is more time taken up in stock control with the constant pressure to source and maintain stock levels as many supply chains continue to be affected by business lockdowns and delayed shipments. I have had multiple conversations with customers advising them of delays in supply for medications which cannot currently be sourced.

The pharmacy I work at also supplies medications to a number of aged-care facilities, which has become more challenging, as this sector has been under immense pressure in the past few months due to the high-risk factors with this group in our community.

I have found the past six months to be both physically and mentally draining. I am working longer hours in a more complex environment and there is more to do with everyone home ALL the time. Managing stress is an ongoing process but I have a strong network of family and friends who are supportive. My husband and I walk our dog most mornings, which is a great way to start the day. Recently I have really enjoyed getting back into reading, I have found ending the day with a good book and the occasional glass of red wine is relaxing.

The positives of COVID have been the calmer mornings with a slower pace of family life. Without extracurricular commitments and my husband not travelling with work, we are spending more time together as a family, which I am enjoying. While I do look forward to the return of sports and music, I hope that as a family we can find a better balance between activities and a calmer family life.

My words of wisdom: be kind to everyone, including yourself.

# Henrich Galam

Secondary Teacher

**Class of 2010**

I teach English and Humanities at Whitefriars College. COVID, upon reflection, has abruptly taken a lot away, as it is the little things that make our day to day.



Waking up early, getting dressed, the daily commute and the interactions with staff, students, friends, and family. Video chats do not quite cut it, I'm afraid. However, despite all the reductions in movement, I've actually enjoyed the time we have had at home. I feel more productive than ever, even after the school day's finished. Crashing on the couch after a busy school day isn't as frequent, (though sometimes the couch chooses you!).

At times, the lines between work and life blurred. I recall the first time we went into lockdown as particularly ruthless. The comfort of a schedule was sudden and unjustly taken away and of course, that took time to adjust. My colleagues and I were still trying to emulate what we could achieve in a conventional classroom environment. Oh, how we learnt quickly from that! Now we're in round two, I'm confident we found the sweet spot. Checking in with my family, relatives and friends has kept me distracted with the reality of the world, as does indulging in my hobbies. My housemates are also working from home, and between us three and their two cavoodles, there's plenty of healthy distractions. With that said, it's also just as healthy to embrace boredom. With what is happening right now,

naturally there is a sense paranoia of what comes next. While I am generally a 'Pollyanna' (glad this and glad that) even this has shaken me, but I still remain cautiously optimistic.

When I'm asked about the positives of this experience – I always say it's a challenging question! But what has changed for me is my relationship with time. I hate to admit it, but the time at home has made me realise how much I procrastinate. And as daggy as this might sound: meal-prep on the weekends has been such a boon.

As a teacher, perhaps our experiences with online learning could see an educational revolution in how children learn; we have entered a state of flux. I often think as educators, we can underestimate how well children can adapt. I've certainly seen some students thrive in this environment and I'm sure a new dialogue will emerge as to what we deem as best teaching practice. However, I cannot fathom the sheer emotional toll this may be having on some students and I want to remind them it's not their fault. The way they are feeling about this is 100% valid and I hope they have a robust support network if they are feeling blue.

As a school, we have implemented a traffic-light system for the boys to self-monitor how they are feeling and have clearly communicated the way in which to access help via the school. I am aware that our psychologists, House Leaders and Pastoral Care teachers have been incredibly busy managing the welfare of some students and as always, I would invite any students, friends or parents to get in contact with the College if they have concerns for their son. Together, we are stronger.

Whitefriars being a 'community' rings true during this time. There are many students who have kept in good spirits and their positive energy makes the difficult days worthwhile. And I cannot express my gratitude for the staff that I work with, who do their best to make home learning run like a well-oiled machine.

Be good, be kind and look after one another.

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