

Headline: Melville Rotary markets with heart

From bargain hunters keen to turn trash into treasure, to those with a personal plight to win the war on waste, and others seeking to earn extra pocket money, the Melville Markets has become an eclectic community meeting place with heart.

Established by Melville Rotary 40 years ago, the weekly Sunday morning market at Melville Plaza has become an institution that draws stories of hardship, charity and compassion, as well as savvy sellers, enterprising creatives and bargain hunting buyers.



Every Sunday from 6am until 10.30am, crowds of buyers from all walks of life peruse the wares on display in the shopping centre car park on Canning Highway.

But the magic starts well before sunrise with a band of dedicated sellers who start rallying late on Saturday nights setting up their stalls while the rest of Perth sleeps.

While the premise behind the Melville Markets is to raise important funds to ‘do good in the world’, it has also become a

place of care and compassion.

There are stories aplenty, including of a Rotarian helping to clothe a hungry homeless man with a secondhand coat on a cold morning and buying him a warm toasted sandwich, and others of sellers from war-torn countries who set up stalls to help make ends meet.



Popular artist and designer Anna Chandler is a regular visitor to the markets with her dog Cleo, and says the markets have provided a wealth of inspiration for her much-loved, colourful homewares and textile creations produced in nearby O’Connor.

“There are so many characters here that we’ve been seeing for years and years,” Anna says. “I’ve been coming for over 40 years.

“I’m a designer and every week I come home with a little bit of inspiration and all my designs have been inspired by coming here.

“There might be a tiny little bit of china with a chip in it or a beautiful bit of fabric that’s 100 years old, but there’s something in it, and it will inspire my next range.”

For Jan Stevens and Trish Phillips, their regular visits to the Melville Markets came about as part of a passion to curb the war on waste and donate their profits to charity.

“We used to see the compactors come around when we had verge collections and watch them smash things to pieces and nobody could use it after that,” Jan says.

“We said we would take anything we can carry and bring it out here and don’t sell it for a fortune.”

Now people give them all sorts of goods to sell from golf balls, dolls and dolls clothes, baby clothes, books of every description and jigsaws to sell, with regular donations made to charities including the Cancer Council, CanTeen and to help people living with Parkinson’s and breast cancer.



Moretto and Maria Pasquale use their green thumbs to pot and sell plants at the markets, raising money to help an orphanage in the Philippines and their sponsor children in Cambodia.

“Maria does the succulents and I do the rest,” Moretto says. “We do three days a week in the backyard and three days a week organising to come to market.”

Amanda Pereria has a passion for designer clothes and shoes. For 30 years, she has been scouting, sourcing and selling fine threads to alleviate the amount of fast fashion that ends up as landfill.

“This is my job and has been for 30 years. I love it. I grew up poor and I find people are a bit wasteful so I bring things in, shine them up and offer them for sale,” Amanda says.

Her partner Paul Sylvester says: “She has a terrific eye for it. She sources the best stuff she can find and brings it down here to sell on to the customers.”



In a similar vein, ‘Lady Katherine’ has frequented the Melville Markets for the past eight years, selling her old clothes and secondhand items found at opportunity shops.

“I have always loved clothes so I get to cruise around op shops and go shopping all week. A lot of it is my old clothes, like BC (before child) that will never ever fit me again and there’s the ones after child which are a bit large – it’s the story of my life,” she laughs.

“Sometimes I’m reluctant to sell them because I think I’ve had so many good times in these clothes, so many memories.”



For Feed It Forward volunteer Daniel Barnsley, the Melville Market's Rotary coin spinner has become a welcome fundraiser for the organisation. The coin spinner is offered to local charities each week where patrons can donate loose change.

Feed it Forward partners with supermarkets and businesses, including Coles, Woolworths, Aldi, Costco and Nando's, collecting good food that is destined for landfill and distributing it to people in need across Perth from the northern suburbs to Armadale and down to Mandurah, as well as in the South-West.

"We pick up bakery and grocery items and we give it to churches, schools, soup kitchens and even little displays at the front

of houses. There's no questions asked," Daniel says. "Times are tough at the moment."

Melville Rotary Treasurer David Porter says the markets have been operating for 40 years and have raised around \$80,000 a year for important local and international projects and causes – effectively making it a social exercise in giving back.

"These markets are our primary income source at Melville Rotary. We value them and we value our relationship with the Hawaiian Group," David says.

"Rotary is a developing and changing organisation...we are a group of people with a common interest doing a common good. The funds we raise help us to 'do good in the world'. The majority of the funds that we raise through the markets go straight out to community projects."

Among the beneficiaries are the Rotary Youth Leadership Program, Edith Cown University Indigenous Scholarship, Living Child birthing support in Papua New Guinea, flood relief, bushfire relief and local tree planting.

Melville Rotary welcomes volunteers, helpers and supporters to assist with the Melville Markets.

