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MEDIA RELEASE

Harmonious relationships strike 'accord'

Relationships Australia Victoria (RAV), in partnership with the Darebin African Resource Centre (DARC), will celebrate Harmony Day on Sunday 21 March with festivities for the local African community in the northern suburbs of Melbourne.

The public celebrations will take place at Merrilands Community Centre, 35 Sturdee Street, Reservoir commencing at 2.30pm. They will include live African music, food and dancing, with a focus on youth and children. Players in the official DARC social soccer program in Reservoir and invited teams from other suburbs will also be in attendance.

Held on 21 March each year, Harmony Day is an initiative of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, marking the cohesive and inclusive nature of Australian society and promoting the benefits of cultural diversity.

RAV is a not for profit, community based organisation which provides specialist relationship support services in Melbourne and regional Victoria, including for established and emerging migrant communities.

RAV General Manager Operations, Dr Andrew Bickerdike, said Harmony Day presented a natural platform to provide opportunities for diverse local communities to gather together and participate in fun family activities in their area.

"By expanding our reach to diverse communities, we are gaining a greater understanding of the issues presented by clients of various backgrounds when settling in their new country," Dr Bickerdike said.

"Some of these issues include adapting to new and largely undefined gender roles; inter-generational conflicts within families as they adapt to new values; overcoming language barriers; dealing with a sense of shame in talking about issues; and post-traumatic stress from unrest or war experienced in their home country," Dr Bickerdike said.

Commenting on the Harmony Day event, DARC Secretary, Jeremiah Temple, said it was a way of bringing African residents closer to the broader community. “Young people need support to integrate into society. Social and sporting events in particular keep young people active and off the streets and at DARC we use them as a forum to help them connect to their local community.”

RAV will launch its Diversity Week and Harmony Day celebrations with staff Victoria-wide taking part in ‘A Taste of Harmony’, an initiative of the Scanlon Foundation which encourages workplaces to celebrate their diversity by gathering colleagues together over a delicious lunch made up of foods from different lands.

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