

ACROSS THE GENERATIONS

NORTHCOTE

Aged-care residents are being given a new lease of life in Northcote thanks to an innovative project that encourages youngsters to reach out to their elders.

Led by Darebin Council, Museum of Me is a cross-generational project that has brought together 34 grade 5 students from Westgarth Primary School with nine older people from two aged-care facilities.

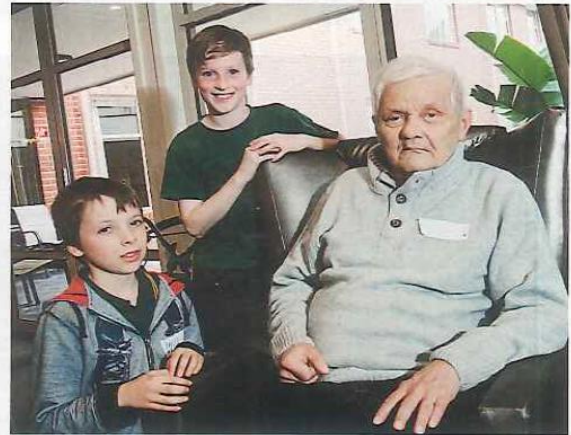
During weekly sessions, the children get to know the residents of Westgarth and Ruckers Hill care homes and develop relationships by sharing stories and photographs, as well as creating crafts and music together.

The eight-week project will culminate later this month with a documentary and a visual artwork inspired by the Museum of Me concept. Darebin Council arts and cultural development officer Elizabeth Welch said the project was designed to create a continuing relationship between the school and the care homes, while also working to close generational gaps.

"There is a real buzz when the kids come into the home and it is wonderful," she said.

"This is just a pilot, but we are hoping that it could eventually be rolled out across Darebin."

Westgarth Aged Care manager Jamie Broadfoot said the project was helping to



Reaching out: Grade 5 students Will (left) and Ben with Ralph Vanderhoeven at Westgarth Aged Care. (SCOTT McNAUGHTON)

improve the residents' mental health and well-being.

"The majority of our residents would spend most of their time inside," he said.

"So when the kids come to visit them they really enjoy it. Many of them tell us it is the highlight of their week."

Westgarth resident Ralph Vanderhoeven, 82, said he looked forward to seeing the children each week.

"It doesn't get any better than when they are here laughing and talking; it is the ultimate," he said. \

LISA HIGGINSON