

MEDIA RELEASE



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Bendigo businessman backs youth support centre

Bendigo, Friday 30 April 2010: A Bendigo businessman's support of St Luke's will confirm Mundy Street's location as a progressive youth precinct with the establishment of a youth support centre.

Every year, Don Erskine donates the fees he receives from local board positions to a community cause or project.

This year, St Luke's is the recipient of a \$50,000 donation from Mr Erskine - \$30,000 of the funding will kick-start Bendigo's youth support centre in Mundy Street and the remaining \$20,000 will benefit the Early Years Parenting Program.

St Luke's staff have recently moved into the former CVGT site and work is underway to transform the two-storey building into a youth education and support centre with tutoring rooms, Chutzpah Factory programs and youth referral staff - all located in the one centre.

St Luke's CEO David Pugh said it was appropriate during this International Year of Youth to be standing in Mundy Street – Bendigo's unofficial youth precinct - acknowledging a generous donation by a local businessman.

"I cannot stress enough how significant Don Erskine's donation to our organisation is – it is not often that we receive a donation such as this from an individual," Mr Pugh said.

"Don is a great example of a successful member within our local community who not only talks about putting back into his community, but who follows through with support of organisation's such as St Luke's."

Don Erskine said his involvement on local boards, including Coliban Water, was important not only in ensuring that our community continued to be represented by locals, but for the fact that it enabled him, as an individual, to financially support not-for-profit community organisations such as St Luke's.

"What I like about St Luke's and the youth support and education programs in particular is the fact that my donation is going directly to those in need of support," Mr Erskine said.

"These youth-oriented programs are making a long-term difference in people's lives, and that is so important for not only these people in need, but for our entire community."

Mr Pugh said Mundy Street was the perfect site for the development of a youth precinct given that it was already the location for youth-oriented services including Bendigo TAFE, B-Central, Netschool, Bendigo Community Health Services and St Luke's.

St Luke's youth support and education centre is focused on disadvantaged youth and providing programs and support to enable young people in need to not only achieve their goals, but importantly, get their lives back on track.

The approach taken at the centre will be one of positive engagement, timely support and providing pathways to education and employment.

St Luke's long-time supporter and Patron Bruce Reid commended Don on his decision to support St Luke's youth programs.

"What a terrific example Don is setting, not only for the young people who will benefit from this centre and its programs, but for other like-minded directors of boards within our community," Mr Reid said.

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