

June 2024 Newsletter

Our mission is to provide a supportive and informative environment for people with lung conditions and their carers.

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NEXT MEETING: Thursday 11th July 2024
10:15 am – 12:00 noon
Weston Creek Labor Club
Teesdale Close, Stirling ACT 2611

The July meeting will be a get together and discussion meeting.

Our connections with Chifley Gym

Helen Cotter

We were very sorry to hear about the closure of the Chifley Gym as Lung Life's connections to the Gym go back a long way.

Many of us were exercising at the Canberra Hospital Gym until we were persuaded to move to another gym. Andrew Bird convinced us to go to Chifley Gym which was just starting up.



Andrew, a lovely young man with a lung complaint, was working towards getting a lung transplant – which he received but he unfortunately died soon after. *Editor: Unfortunately, around 7 to 10% of lung transplant recipients do not survive for more than a year; and this figure would have been higher in 2008.*

We were so impressed with Andrew and his approach to life that we organised a memorial plaque for him to be placed on a suitable piece of gym equipment in Chifley Gym. Now, with the closure of the gym, the plaque has been returned to us, bringing back memories to those of us who knew Andrew.

Gym ‘family’ oldies fight to keep on exercising – The Editor

The heading above appeared in the City News as the headline for an article on the closure of the Chifley Gym. One of the ‘gym goers’ who was interviewed for this article was a disappointed Pam Harris (pictured) who had been a member for 17 years (Pam is quoted below from the City News article).

‘A lot of people, they’re on their own, so they look forward to coming and catching up and maybe having coffee’.

‘For me, three times a week it makes me get up and want to come and see people.’

For Pam, and other seniors, the Chifley Gym was the perfect place to exercise. They were looked after with both a ramp to enter the gym and easy to access disabled parking. While exercising they were around others who were attending for similar reasons to their own. You would have looked a bit out of place in the latest gym wear in the gym with these determined exercisers.

For those who are reading this on their computer you can read the City News article by clicking on the link. <https://citynews.com.au/2024/gym-family-oldies-fight-to-keep-on-exercising/>

Val Dempsey also in City News - Chris Moyle

I’m full of admiration at the way Val Dempsey (pictured) keeps going and achieves so much. This is despite having myositis. I have always presumed she only had a mild form of the illness and even though she has talked about myositis in the past it isn’t an illness that really registered with me or that I’ve remembered. I need to hear it again, so it sinks in, and I’m interested in knowing how Val copes with the illness.

I read her recent interview on the challenges of living with myositis in the City News (May 23-29, 2024). Below is my short summary.

‘How are you?’ is a common greeting.

An in-depth answer to this question will probably deter many from asking again. Friends may or may not understand, and there are the ‘fix it’ people who have lots of advice without fully understanding you or the illness. (Editor: I think many of us can relate to this).

Val’s final comment in the article is: *‘Because the people who are not listening and presume, they really set back the patients with these diseases’*. This makes me realise there needs to be a lot more education about myositis (and other little known illnesses); and better listening skills, particularly amongst doctors.

How to go about that is the next question.

Click here to read: <https://citynews.com.au/2024/dame-val-takes-the-challenge-of-myositis-head-on/>



June Meeting – Helen Cotter

Today we started off with our guest speakers – who also were our guest singers. Sonia Anfiloff (pictured) came along with two of her students, Wayne and Jim, to talk about singing and breathing. Sonia is a soprano who teaches voice at ANU and is Head of Choirs at Canberra Girls Grammar. She also spent 9 years performing in Vienna. Today she talked about singing for lung fitness the way singers do.

Sonia explained that breathing comes from the lower muscles/abdominals. The ones around the hip bones – above the hip joints into the groin – like a mankini! We need to release everything from the ribs down – which need to become lowered and wide. If you put your hands just above your hips and breathe you should feel movement. We also need to release the upper abdominals under the ribs so the diaphragm can work and fill the lungs better.

Sonia talked about **breathing and sitting**. She spoke about how important it was to keep good posture while sitting, otherwise the muscles are squashed and breathing affected. It's best to sit on the edge of your chair with legs slightly apart as this allows your muscles to work better (leaning back/slumping on the chair is not good).

Posture is very important. Head pushed out gives a strain in the voice as the air pipe is squashed. But military style posture is not good as the muscles are too tense.

This information was demonstrated throughout the session by Sonia, Wayne and Jim singing and talking about how they do it. Sonia began by singing **Somewhere over the Rainbow**. We were treated to a lovely, powerful operatic voice as she accompanied herself on the keyboard.

Sonia started work at Canberra Girls Grammar during the time of the bush fires and smoke-filled atmosphere, followed soon by COVID and its lockdown. During this period, she was trying to keep singing alive in the school through online sessions – a difficult act.

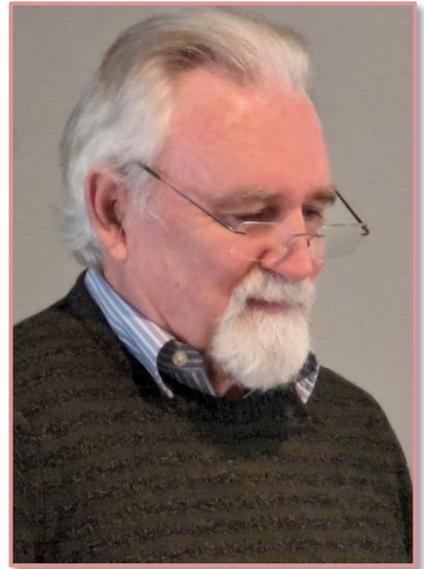
When school and choir resumed, she noticed that the sense of community needed revitalising, and with less activity during lockdown, the girls' mental and physical health had diminished. So, the school embarked on getting the whole school singing. They noticed that breathing improved – it became slower and more regular, and the girls' mental and physical health improved.

We were treated to Wayne (pictured) singing **Heather on the Hill** from Brigadoon. Wayne is a semi-retired tennis coach who is taking singing lessons because he loves singing. He said that music had always been a passion for him, but he didn't know how to breathe properly (i.e. what muscles in his body he needed to use to help expand his lungs).



Then we had a break with a singing lesson for Wayne, pointing out the things he needed to do. Fascinating.

After some explanation, Jim (pictured) sang **Blue Moon** in his lovely bass voice. Jim is also a mature age student who wanted to improve his singing just for pleasure. Jim is a 'proper bass' which means he can sing very low notes. Sonia pointed out that the extremities of voice – either high or low - take more capacity than the speaking voice which is generally in the middle and so the singer has to have good breathing techniques and control.



Later, Jim sang from **Mozart's The Magic Flute** showing his powerful singing voice – and his technique and control. Interestingly, Jim has hearing aids, but he doesn't wear them when he's singing as it holds him back.

We returned to Wayne who sang a lovely piece taken from Yeat's poem, **The Lake Isle of Innisfree**.

Our final musical entertainment was Sonia singing **Waltz of my Heart** by Ivor Novello, filling the room with her powerful voice.

And the final message is '**It's not what your voice is doing; it's what your muscles are doing. Sound is the end product**'.

Research is showing that singing is beneficial in many ways.

The British Lung Foundation (www.blf.org.uk/singing) writes that it's especially good for people with a chronic lung condition.

It helps reduce feelings of being short of breath.

It helps them to feel more in control of their breathing.

It helps them to manage their symptoms better.

June Meeting Other Business – Helen Cotter

Sonia, Wayne and Jim kept us beautifully entertained and informed, and the session whizzed by. So much so that the only business Marina dealt with was a reminder that the next lunch **on Friday 28 June** was at the **Mawson Club**; and the **Christmas in July Lunch on Friday 26 July** will be at the **Jamieson Southern Cross Club**.

Effective Breathing Exercises for Singing – Helen Cotter

Here's an exercise for singers that you might recognise. You might be doing it yourself, maybe a few times every day. Maybe not with a straw but with something similar.

The Straw Exercise

The straw exercise, also known as the straw technique or straw phonation, is done by humming through a straw. It's an excellent breathing exercise, as you learn how to feel your breath concentrate in the straw while focusing on your breathing and keeping your face and body completely still.

To start, inhale, then as you exhale through the straw, hum the song you're currently working on. Pros typically begin at the bottom of their range and reach higher notes slowly first, then attempt to hum the entire song this way. To inhale, breathe through the straw as well or outside of the straw if you begin to feel lightheaded.

For a fun twist, try practicing this exercise with the straw in a half-full glass of water. As you hum, you'll blow controlled bubbles in the cup. It adds a layer of fun for singers of any age.

[12 Effective Breathing Exercises for Singing \(zinginstruments.com\)](http://zinginstruments.com)

By George

Winter has come and George is on his annual road trip north. He has shared some of his experiences.

'Hi from Augathella. Just arrived and had a walk to stretch the bones and came across these two photogenic items which may be of interest. The weather is fine for a pleasant change. All good. Please say hi to our members. Regards George.'

Augathella is a community of around 300 people located about 80 km north-east of Charleville.



George also stopped off in Blackall, a little further north. Blackall is a bit larger than Augathella with a population of around 1300. It is located on the Barcoo River.

This sculpture of an eagle and nest represents life along the Barcoo River.

The sculpture is made from discarded materials collected from properties along the river, and the 'tree' is constructed from the old Barcoo Bridge timbers.

Richard Moffat was the artist who created this sculpture, and it has been part of the town since May 2007.

Editor - *Thanks, George, and enjoy your trip.*



PACT (Pulmonary fibrosis Clinical Trials) – information supplied by Maureen Bell

There is a research study entitled “**Refreshing the research priorities for pulmonary fibrosis Study**” being led by Professor Anne Holland at Monash University /Alfred Health in Melbourne and funded by the Centre of Research Excellence in Pulmonary Fibrosis (CRE-PF).

In 2019, Professor Holland and her team undertook a study that identified the top 10 research questions for pulmonary fibrosis based on the views of people living with the disease, caregivers, healthcare professionals and researchers. The study found that research aimed at prevention, development of interventions to improve lung function and reducing the symptom burden were most important.

Five years on, they are looking to review and refresh the top research questions to check if they are still the most important questions that people with the disease and their caregivers feel research should be addressing.

A person living with pulmonary fibrosis, or their caregiver, may participate.

You will be invited to complete a short questionnaire asking you to review the current list of top 25 research priorities and indicate which priorities you think are still relevant. Then, from the list identify the top 3 priorities that you feel are most important.

The questionnaire should take about 10-15 minutes and will be open until **SUNDAY 30th JUNE 2024**.

For more information, you can click on the link to access the [Participant Explanatory Statement](#).

If you are interested in taking part in the study, we ask that you complete the survey by accessing the [QR code](#) or complete the survey directly via [Qualtrics Survey | Qualtrics Experience Management](#).

If you would prefer a paper copy of the Participant Explanatory Statement and questionnaire with a reply-paid envelope, please contact the Study Coordinator Gabriella Tikellis on 03 9903 0948 or via gabriella.tikellis@monash.edu

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact the Study Coordinator or Professor Anne Holland (anne.holland@monash.edu; phone 03 9903 0214).

More information on PACT can be found at <https://pact.lungfoundation.com.au>