A laptop beats a hose in bushfire fight

By Lindy Brophy

An award-winning bushfire warning and prediction system from UWA could prove to be a lifesaver.

Aurora, a national bushfire prediction, detection, simulation and early warning system, will change the way bushfires are managed in Australia. Aurora was created with partners UWA, Landgate and the WA Department of Fire and Emergency Services with Winthrop Professor George Milne and his team at UWA developing the key underlying simulation technology, the Australis wildfire simulator.

Professor Milne and his colleagues in the School of Computer Science and Software Engineering won a national award last month for the simple system, which is in use by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES).

It is already making a real difference in the fighting of bushfires.

Professor Milne’s research group has been invited to demonstrate the system in South Africa this month.

“We’re really happy that DFES uses Aurora already to help predict the movement of active fires.

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A laptop beats a hose in bushfire fight

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“Our simulations of the Margaret River fire were very accurate. As part of our testing of the prediction capabilities of the system, we also did an analysis of the Boorabbin fire near Kalgoorlie in 2007 that killed three truck drivers and we were able to simulate that very well too.”

It is Australia’s first national bushfire warning and prediction system. It can be used to warn communities about possible fires, to predict the behaviour, speed and spread of a fire, and to manage the fire fighting and the alert systems.

“It’s totally automatic,” Professor Milne said. “You key in the fire location and push a button. Landscape and fuel loads are all pre-loaded into the system. Prevailing and forecast winds are input from the Bureau of Meteorology system and automatically entered into Aurora.

“Systems like this are used extensively in Canada and the US, primarily to help predict the behaviour of forest fires, though they need super computers to run them.

“Our system can be run with a laptop, in principle, even using a laptop in a fire truck! It is designed to be easy to use without specialist fire behaviour knowledge.”

“Wildfires occur on every continent except Antarctica and cause significant damage to life and property,” he said. “Aurora significantly minimises the impact of bushfires by predicting and simulating the direction, intensity and rate of bushfire spread in real time.

“This reduces the complexity of fire behaviour analysis and will change the face of fire management in Australia.”

Pat Dudgeon is definitely deadly.

Not in the way a red-back spider is deadly, but in the vernacular of Australian Aboriginal people, meaning excellent, the best.

Professor Dudgeon from the School of Indigenous Studies has won a Deadly – the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Music, Sport and Entertainment, and Community Awards.

A Bardi woman from the Kimberley, she was the first Aboriginal psychologist to graduate in Australia. Professor Dudgeon was feted at the Deadlys for her work in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and suicide prevention, and also in trauma, loss and grief.

Her Community Award, in the area of health, recognises the outstanding contribution Professor Dudgeon has made over many years and her passion for helping her people.

The first Aboriginal practitioner to become a Fellow of the Australian Psychological Society, Professor Dudgeon has been involved in countless organisations and initiatives and was the inaugural Chair of the Australian Indigenous Psychologists’ Association. She is also a National Mental Health Commissioner.

Professor Dudgeon is co-Chair of the Australian Psychological Society’s Reconciliation Action Plan executive management group.

Her most recent work has been with the National Empowerment Program, a universal strategy to promote social and emotional wellbeing and reduce community distress and suicide in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

She was Head of the Centre for Aboriginal Studies at Curtin University for nearly 20 years before joining UWA as a research fellow.

The Deadlys are supported by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

‘Professor Pat’ gets biggest pat on the back

Pat Dudgeon

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The Deadlys are supported by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.
Peter Davies has always enjoyed a good road trip.

After his first week as an undergraduate at UWA in 1973, he was on his way to the campus on his motorbike when he decided it wasn’t for him. So he kept on riding, only stopping when he ran out of petrol in the Goldfields. That was the start of years of travel around Australia and the world.

In his 10 years in Albany leading a UWA international water research hub, Winthrop Professor Davies commuted to Perth about once a week. He often flew, but when flights were cancelled, he enjoyed driving his old Porsche 911 (one of his two old Porsches) from the Great Southern to Perth.

Now back on the Crawley campus where he earned his undergraduate degree with first class honours in Zoology and his PhD, Professor Davies is excited about the next journey and still imbued with a sense of adventure.

He is the University’s newly-appointed Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research). Staff come to him with ideas for research projects and he, in turn, looks out for research opportunities and how to link teams together to address big questions.

After a decade of working with the community in Albany, including Landcare, local councils and State Government agencies, he is convinced of the value of community engagement and collaboration.

“It is the way of the future for research,” he said. “I want to create better links with other universities and institutions like the CSIRO, to collaborate with them, rather than compete with them. Bigger grants and better publications are just two of the advantages.

“Look at our new $62 million marine science research building: we are partners in that venture with CSIRO and AIMS: a perfect example of collaboration working to everybody’s benefit.”

When Professor Davies won funding for the Centre of Excellence in Natural Resource Management in Albany, it was the first centre of excellence outside a Perth campus. He built it up to 30 staff, all of whom were part of the decision-making process. “We recruited well and we had a great team of people.”

That is the spirit Professor Davies has brought with him – as well as the guitar that has been his constant companion in work and travel, and rests in the corner of his office “only played after everybody else has gone home.”

“One of the concerns I had with relocating from Albany was leaving the tight team of people I had there. But I have found an equally great bunch of people to work with in Research Services,” he said.

“I consider I have the best job in the University!”

“It’s all about talking to people, putting together teams and making things happen. I can see so many opportunities, It’s my job to join the dots.

“We need to look across faculties for the research of the future. In the past, research tended to be done with a narrow focus. Now big multidisciplinary groups are the way to go.

“Take my area, of water, for example. It brings water law, biodiversity and social sciences together with scientific research: it’s widespread rather than having a vertical or siloed focus.

“Institutes now offer new ways to do research, including UWA’s Institute of Agriculture, the Oceans Institute and the Energy and Minerals Institute. We’re developing plans for a Western Australian Biodiversity Institute, working with Kings Park, other WA universities, the Department of Environment and Conservation and the mining industry.”

In the meantime, he is enjoying working with people, finding out what motivates them, so he can challenge them to break new ground in research.
Last week saw the culmination of the University’s centenary year spring graduations, with 1,852 students celebrating the successful completion of their undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

One of the highlights of the six ceremonies – which took place over two weeks – was a speech by UWA graduate Tim Minchin, who was awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters for his contribution to the arts.

Tim Minchin, who is not yet 40, has won worldwide acclaim as a composer, lyricist, comedian, actor and writer. His smash hit musical Matilda received a record seven Olivier Awards – British theatre’s most sought-after awards. He teamed with fellow UWA alumnus, author, artist and film-maker Shaun Tan to narrate The Lost Thing, which gained the 2011 Oscar for best animated short film.

Our graduation ceremonies mark the beginning of the next stage in the lives of our graduands. An important feature of the ceremony is the Occasional Address during which the guest speaker imparts some words of wisdom to the graduating class.

In his Occasional Address to 225 Arts and Science graduands, their families, partners and friends, Tim Minchin not only delighted his audience, he inspired. He gave these nine life lessons that I want to share with you because they’re worth thinking about no matter how old you are or what your position on campus. In short, this is what he said:

One: Be micro-ambitious. Put your head down and work with pride on whatever is in front of you. You never know where you might end up.

Two: Don’t seek happiness. Keep busy and aim to make someone else happy and you might find you get some as a side effect.

Three: Understanding that you can’t truly take credit for your successes nor truly blame others for their failures will humble you and make you more compassionate.

Four: Exercise. Take care of your body: you’re going to need it.

Five: Be hard on your opinions. Be intellectually rigorous. Identify your biases, your prejudices, your privileges.

Six: Even if you’re not a teacher, be a teacher. Share your ideas. Don’t take for granted your education.

Seven: Define yourself by what you love. Be demonstrative and generous in your praise of those you admire. Send thank you cards and give standing ovations. Be pro stuff not just anti stuff.

Eight: Respect people with less power than you.

Nine: Finally, don’t rush. You don’t need to know what you’re going to do with the rest of your life.

If you would like to hear Tim Minchin’s speech in full, or read a transcript, it is available here: http://www.news.uwa.edu.au/201309176069/alumni/tim-minchin-stars-uwa-graduation-ceremony

Congratulations to everyone who had a hand in these graduations in whatever capacity. We value your contribution.

Paul Johnson
Vice-Chancellor

Sports hero supports research

More than 40 years ago, few people in Australia had heard of sport science. But UWA graduate, WAFL champion and State cricketer Frank Pyke knew it was the way of the future.

He began his academic career in the US, returning to Australia to take the helm of sport science, sports administration and elite athlete development in this country for more than 30 years.

Frank died of motor neurone disease late in 2011 and UWA has established the Frank Pyke Memorial Scholarship Fund to honour the man who pioneered the discipline of sport science, capping off a stellar academic career with the inaugural executive directorship of the Victorian Institute of Sport.

The scholarship is for an outstanding Honours student in the School of Sport Science Exercise and Health. It was presented for the first time this month to Kirsty McDonald, at a ceremony which brought together Frank’s former colleagues, his family, the academics and athletes whose careers benefitted from his work and the patrons who donated to ensure the scholarship is enduring.

Kirsty’s Honours project, supervised by Assistant Professor Jonas Rubenson, is in biomechanics. She is investigating the differences in energy transfer between forefoot and rearfoot runners, with the results likely to have application to both distance running performance and injury risk.

She is a State representative in women’s Gaelic football and coaches women’s soccer at junior level.

The scholarship carries a stipend of $4,000 with an additional $1,000 for travel expenses which Kirsty hopes to use to present the results of her research to a conference in biomechanics.

Her scholarship was presented by Frank’s widow Janet, supported by their son Don, a former West Coast Eagles player.
The theme of the UWA Future Farm 2050 Field Day was twofold – to show school kids that the science of farming is a fascinating goal they can aspire to, and show local farmers how UWA research can help them be more productive and profitable.

About 150 visitors filled UWA Future Farm 2050’s modern shearing shed after a sausage-sizzle lunch served by SNAGS – Students from Natural and Agricultural Sciences – to hear Winthrop Professor Graeme Martin explain that the world’s population was expected to grow by 50 per cent to 9.5 billion people by 2050.

Feeding an exploding global population with dwindling land resources while facing the effects of climate change and world market pressures was a critical challenge, he said.

Professor Martin, who is Deputy Director of UWA’s Institute of Agriculture, said UWA Future Farm 2050 aimed to develop clean, green and ethical farm technologies and practices that were designed to feed the world without destroying the planet.

Other talks included Is ‘More Efficient’ Food Production In Conflict With Animal Welfare by visiting Oxford University Professor Marion Dawkins and discussion of carbon farming options and economics by UWA Assistant Professor Marit Kragt.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Paul Johnson invited local growers and livestock producers to engage with UWA Future Farm 2050 as a local resource to address the challenges of modern farming.

Afternoon tea was served in a nearby work shed by volunteer fundraisers from the Pingelly Chaplaincy Group before visitors took bus tours of the property to see UWA Future Farm 2050’s new hi-tech farmhouse, paddock soils and a new Eureka Prize-winning saltbush that feeds sheep while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

UWA Future Farm 2050 is a working farm and multi-disciplinary research facility based on world-class expertise in agricultural science, resource economics, architecture and landscape architecture, electronic engineering, solar energy, wildlife ecology, and plant ecology.

The wonder of seeing tiny animals moving in soil samples proved irresistibly tempting for dozens of youngsters at UWA Future Farm 2050’s recent Field Day at Pingelly.

For 11-year-old local schoolboy Kynan Collard, the discovery of a hidden world of life in the ground may be the catalyst that sets him on the path to be a future scientist.

The Year 6 student was among about 60 children from Pingelly Primary School, Brookton District High School and Narrogin Senior High School who spent a fun-filled morning studying soils, plants and bugs at UWA’s 1600-hectare wheatbelt property.

They also learnt how to propagate plants from fresh cuttings by dipping the stems in honey and planting them in holes made by pens in soil trays in a nearby farm work shed.

Another highlight was a boisterous romp inside the world’s biggest, bounciest inflatable plant cell, developed by UWA to show barefooted children – and adventurous grown-ups – that science can be fun.
Jenny Rodger has always been fascinated by the brain and knew from an early age that she wanted to study neuroscience.

“But there were very few undergraduate neuroscience options in the UK in the late 1980s when I first went to university, so I chose to study biochemistry,” Associate Professor Rodger said.

“Luckily I was able to do my PhD in neuroscience.”

Things are very different for students 30 years later. Professor Rodger is the WA co-ordinator of the Australian Brain Bee Challenge, which encourages high school students to learn about the brain, tests them on their knowledge, then informs them about their options for studying neuroscience.

Linked to the international Brain Bee Challenge, the Australian chapter has been run by the Queensland Brain Institute for several years. They run the first round of the annual competition online for Year 10 students around the country.

“The results for WA students are sent to me and we invite the top 100 students to take part in the state finals here at UWA,” Professor Rodger said.

The winner goes into a national final, which was won by Western Australian Uma Jah at the age of 14 in 2010. Uma was mentored by three UWA scientists including Professor Rodger.

“I am amazed at the level of neuroscience understanding shown by these young students,” she said. “They have a depth of knowledge expected of university undergraduates in the UWA Neuroscience major.”

Last July, more than 60 outstanding students took part in the UWA final. They had beaten 465 teenagers from 21 schools in a multi-choice neuroscience quiz.

“We are hoping we can host the Australian final at UWA in January 2015,” Professor Rodger said.

She said most of the WA finalists from previous years had come to UWA to study science. Many of them do work experience in her lab while they are still at school and making a final decision about tertiary study.

“One boy came knocking on my door earlier in the year to thank me for organising and running the Brain Bee in which he was a finalist. He started the DPhil this year and said he had loved the challenge.”

Professor Rodger also initiated Brain Awareness Week in WA, which, like the Brain Bee Challenge, introduces school students to knowledge about the brain, mostly through activities at Scitech.
The idea of using electricity to stimulate the brain has been around since ancient times, when electric fish were used for the treatment of headache.

In the latest developments, Jenny Rodger and her colleagues in Experimental And Regenerative Neuroscience (EARN) have been working on a therapy that uses magnetic pulses to stimulate the brain. This treatment is already used on patients to treat conditions such as Parkinson’s disease, autism, depression, schizophrenia, epilepsy and stroke. But neither the practitioners nor the patients know how it works.

“There is a lot of research being carried out on the therapeutic effects of magnetic fields in humans, but in order to figure out how this works, and from there, improve treatment success, we are going back to basics and studying cells in a dish and laboratory animal brains,” said Research Associate Professor Rodger.

She and her team of graduate and postdoctoral researchers are working in a unique field. “Once we understand how magnetic fields affect brain cells, the translation to optimised therapies should be quick because it’s already an accepted treatment,” Professor Rodger said.

“We proved for the first time that pulsed magnetic fields promote changes in brain chemicals that correct those abnormal connections, resulting in improved behaviour and brain function,” Professor Rodger said.

“Once we understand how magnetic fields affect brain cells, the translation to optimised therapies should be quick because it’s already an accepted treatment.”

“Our research helps to explain how this therapy works at the cellular level. Previous evidence of usefulness was mainly from anecdotal clinical evidence. For example, some stroke patients are given magnetic therapy a week after suffering a stroke. Some are treated 10 years after! It’s very ad hoc and doesn’t always work.

“We have also just submitted a paper on the effect of magnetic pulses on calcium in cells. We showed that when we deliver a magnetic pulse to a neuron in a petri dish, the concentration of calcium ions increases inside that cell. In any biological system, calcium is a core part of the cells’ signalling system, so being able to upregulate calcium is really exciting. It sets the scene for all sorts of regenerative research,” she said.

Currently her lab is looking at the effect of magnetic fields in different cell types. Postdoctoral researcher Kristyn Bates is working on how pulsed magnetic fields can affect astrocytes, which are the most common non-neural cells in the brain and are important in regeneration after brain injury.

“Astrocytes are involved in a range of processes that keep brains working at an optimal level and we also know that these cells are important in the way that brain cells react to injury, but we don’t yet understand how,” Dr Bates said.

PhD candidate Kalina Makowiecki has a psychology background and is looking at changes in brain function after applying pulsed magnetic fields.

Her work characterising pulsed magnetic field effects in healthy humans is a necessary step towards tailoring treatments to specific neurological and psychiatric disorders.

PhD candidate Alex Tang’s research includes working with the School of Physics to design better delivery systems for the mouse models.

Tamasin Penstone is doing her Honours research on in vitro scratch injuries as a model for scars or lesions in the brain, and how they respond to magnetic pulses.

“We hope our work will help develop therapies that harness neuroplasticity and promote recovery from brain injury, in a safe way,” Dr Bates said.
It is not just AFL clubs that have been dabbling in performance-enhancing drugs lately.

But at UWA, it is all above board.

The benefits of different performance-enhancing substances have been tested in two recent studies in the School of Sport Science, Exercise and Health.

One of the studies, published in the *International Journal of Sport Nutrition and Exercise Metabolism*, compared the ergogenic benefits of caffeine with pseudoephedrine in the time trial performance of male cyclists.

(Anything described as ergogenic helps growth or strength or increases the ability to do work.)

Ten male cyclists and/or triathletes were recruited for the study.

Participants took part in three simulated 40km cycling time-trials after ingesting either 200mg caffeine, 180mg pseudoephedrine or a non-nutritive placebo.

The study found that neither caffeine nor pseudoephedrine significantly improved overall cycling time-trial performance. However, the cyclists who took the caffeine showed strong trends for a faster overall time by around 57 seconds, and the second half of the time trial was found to be significantly faster, by approximately 99 seconds.

The researchers concluded that the effects of a legal stimulant such as caffeine were likely to be better than that of the banned substance (pseudoephedrine), and that pseudoephedrine misuse in athletes may not result in a higher performance gain than that achievable with legal means.

Winthrop Professor Brian Dawson said the use of ergogenic aids was not a new concept and dated back to Ancient Rome. But it has become newsworthy recently.

Co-author Assistant Professor Peter Peeling said people were always looking for the edge or for the next big thing to help improve the limits of performance.

“Caffeine might add 0.5 per cent to a very well trained athlete’s performance, but it’s the 85-90 per cent benefits of good training and the 10-15 per cent benefits of good nutrition and recovery that make an athlete perform well,” he said.

Professor Dawson and his team have also investigated whether sodium phosphate is effective as an ergogenic aid.

Phosphate, the active ingredient in sodium phosphate nutritional supplements, is an essential nutrient absorbed from the food we eat.

“Sodium phosphate has been shown to improve aerobic capacity and, in some cases, endurance performance in male participants.”

But Professor Dawson said more research needed to be done on the use of sodium phosphate as an ergogenic aid.

It is believed that sodium phosphate works by increasing the capacity of the red blood cells to transport oxygen around the body, but it is not yet known exactly how this happens.

He said the primary mechanism by which caffeine was believed to work in the body to enhance performance was by blocking the action of the adenosine receptors.

They are present in all cells and important in regulating metabolic and neurogenic reactions.

“Most ergogenic aids are briefly the ‘flavour-of-the-month’ and consumers quickly look for the next product on the market such as beta-alanine or beetroot juice,” Professor Dawson said.
Three years of passion capture life and love

By Rhiannon Price

A book, an exhibition and the writer-curator who saw the potential for both in an unlikely suburban home crowded with extraordinary works of art...

They are Winthrop Professor Ted Snell, his monograph Stan Hopewell: Facing the Stars, and the upcoming exhibition Stan Hopewell: God is Love at the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery.

These three tell the remarkable story of yet another threesome: a love triangle connecting Stan, his wife Joyce, and his art.

“This is a love story. It is the story of Stan Hopewell and his beloved wife Joyce, a couple whose lives became intertwined during World War II and remained fused together during 62 years of marriage,” says Ted in his introduction to Stan Hopewell: Facing the Stars.

In 2007, Ted and his wife Mary Moore accompanied Robin McClellan, then the American Consul-General, to see the work of an amateur artist who was the father-in-law of her driver Tony Scurry. “The house was literally filled to the brim with oil paintings,” Ted said. “You could hardly move between the canvases and collages.”

Stan, a retired electrician, filled his house with paintings during the three years in which Joyce was ill. “He made a deal with God, that he would paint his love of God while Joyce stayed alive,” Ted said.

Joyce had also been an amateur artist but Stan, who was 80 years old when he started painting, had never before picked up a brush.

“God moves my hand, I do not have control,” Stan told Professor Snell.

Joyce died in 2006 and Stan immediately stopped painting. He also stopped writing in the huge journal that has helped Ted to write the book about this exceptional man, his wife, his life, his art and his deal with God.

“Stan slipped quite quickly into Alzheimer’s,” Ted said. “But we had some lively conversations in 2007 and 2008 before that happened.”

The paintings document not only Stan’s love of God, but his love of Joyce, his time in the Air Force in the Middle East and England during WWII and his life as a family man in Perth after the war, where his and Joyce’s lives intersected with many well-known local people including the Governor, Sir Charles Gairdner, and a young Alan Bond.

The University bought one of Stan’s paintings last year. The other 25 or so for the exhibition are on loan from Stan and Joyce’s family. They represent about one quarter of the total works he created during this period.

At one end of the exhibition will be a 7.5 metre by two-metre photograph of Stan and Joyce’s back room, which was cluttered with paintings.

“The work deserves the space and respect of an art gallery, but they will have that extra richness when viewed in the environment in which Stan worked and kept them,” Ted said.

The Gallery’s campus partner for the exhibition is the Geriatric Medicine unit (Medicine and Pharmacology) and Winthrop Professor Leon Flicker.

“I’ve been talking to Leon about late onset creativity, which is often seen in Alzheimer’s patients,” Ted said. “There is a body of literature about this phenomenon in which the neural pathways that once stopped people taking risks are changed, and patients often feel less restricted and uninhibited, with art sometimes the result.”

Stan Hopewell: Facing the Stars, published by UWA Publishing, will be launched at the opening of the exhibition on Friday 11 October and is open to the public from 12 October – 14 December.
Keep that cup

Don’t listen to anybody who tells you that coffee is bad for you.

Drinking coffee at UWA can benefit the world in three ways – and that’s apart from making you feel good.

KeepCups – reusable coffee cups – were introduced onto the Crawley campus this year, to reduce the impact of the 270,000 take-away coffee cups sold each year.

Dan Stone, Guild Environmental Officer, said the number of coffees sold in disposable cups had dropped by three per cent within a few months of launching the KeepCups.

“We’re hoping for a 10 per cent reduction by the end of the year,” he said.

That means 27,000 fewer disposable cups in landfill. It also means fewer trees cut down to make cups: 27,000 cups are equivalent to four trees’ worth of paper.

The swing to KeepCups will also save 80kgs of plastic lids and 28 gigajoules of energy.

“That’s enough energy to make 28,000 pots of coffee,” Dan said.

The Guild’s KeepCup campaign has won them an award that recognises innovation and excellence in recycling and waste reduction. The project was Highly Commended in the community category of the state’s Infinity Awards.

They are for sale for $10 at all Guild catering outlets. You can also buy your KeepCups online in a limited edition of UWA colours, depicting the peacocks, James Oval and the boathouse (www.sd.fm.uwa.edu.au). Unbranded KeepCups are also available at the Co-op in a variety of sizes and prices.

Trish Howard from Sustainable Development, which has worked on the KeepCup project with the Guild, said thousands of colour combinations were possible, so your cup can reflect your personality, as well as signal to everybody your sustainability credentials.

“The impacts of using a KeepCup (the carbon footprint of their life cycle) break even with disposable paper cups after just 15 uses,” Trish said. “This takes into account cleaning them after use.”

The cups are BPA-free, dishwasher and microwave safe, manufactured in Australia and recyclable at the end of their lives.

“Most paper coffee cups are not recyclable due to their inner lining,” Trish said.

(The other two benefits of drinking coffee on campus are environmental and social: all coffee from Guild outlets are certified organic and Fair Trade.)

Time off well spent

Jarrad Seng became distracted from his studies at UWA – with great results.

The Arts and Commerce student decided to take some time off to pursue his love of photography, before completing his double degree.

He has now combined his skills (honed initially as a volunteer for the Perth International Arts Festival) with humanitarian work in Africa.

This year he has been based in Tanzania, working in an orphanage and involved in mentoring initiatives with remote indigenous communities. The 25-year-old was a finalist in the WA Young Person of the Year Awards this year.

He has been delighting the children with his photography while working on his second exhibition, alltervatn, a collection of surreal aerial shots of Iceland’s volcanic rivers.

A Tanzanian orphan is delighted with his portrait

Jarrad’s exhibition is part of the launch of MYRE, a new temporary art space in the old Myer building in Fremantle. Visual artists, food makers, musicians, artisans and designers will fill the ground floor of the building in the centre of Fremantle from 9 October to 3 November.

Jarrad will be returning to WA for the exhibition and he hopes to return to UWA to complete his degrees next year.

To find out more about MYRE, go to www.myrefreo.com.au
Streams including Arts, Commerce and Design.”

Drugs that Changed the World was first offered as a Category A broadening unit last year. Following strong enrolments then, its popularity grew considerably, with more than 440 students enrolled this year.

Teaching such large numbers of first year students presented logistical challenges to the small Pharmacology, Pharmacy and Anaesthesiology Unit, but Professor Burcham said the experience generally proved exhilarating.

With input from the School’s pharmacologists, anaesthesiology academics from major Perth hospitals and the School of Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences and historians from the School of Humanities, a curriculum was developed that featured ten modules.

These include the Oldest Drug (Alcohol), the Kindest Drug (Ether), the Poisonous Drug (Mustard gas), the Horror Drug (Thalidomide), the Liberating Drug (Chlorpromazine) and the Explosive Drug (Nitroglycerin).

Professor Pixley said Professor Burcham’s 20 years’ experience in teaching pharmacology and toxicology to undergraduates in Perth and Adelaide and his internationally-recognised expertise in studying chemically-induced disease underpinned his introductory lectures on thalidomide toxicity and alcoholic liver disease.

“With more than 3,000 medicines in use, all of which differ in their precise chemical and medicinal properties, the pharmacology curriculum offered to science or medical students is highly selective, focusing on the main scientific and clinical factors accompanying the use of common medicines,” Professor Burcham said.

“Typically, this conventional approach offers little scope for exploring many fascinating issues surrounding the use of medicines, with one big question often overlooked: Where exactly did all the drugs in current use come from?

“Chat to a pharmacologist for any length of time and you will learn that the emergence of many medicines is delightfully unpredictable, involving a fascinating mix of astute observation, dogged scientific investigation, serendipity, confrontation with entrenched medical orthodoxy and intense corporate competition,” he said.

“Conventional courses can also minimise the unfortunate ‘underbelly’ of pharmaceutical innovation: the hunger for financial profit has sometimes led to the marketing of drugs that bring marginal benefits to patients or, even worse, do greater harm than good.”
A project to improve the renal health of people in WA’s Eastern Goldfields has resulted in new shops, vegetable gardens, music and visual arts projects – as well as better health.

The Western Desert Kidney Health Project (WDKHP) is an innovative project that grew out of the Aboriginal community in the Eastern Goldfields, and their desperation to do something to stem the tide of kidney disease and diabetes that was ripping apart their community.

Associate Professor and medical practitioner Christine Jeffries-Stokes and renal physician Dr Steve Wright have worked with chief investigator Annette Stokes, an award-winning medical researcher, on the project, out of the Kalgoorlie office of the Rural Clinical School of WA.

For the past three years a mobile team lead by Ms Stokes and made up of Aboriginal health workers, medical students, paediatric registrars, volunteer researchers and community artists have spent a few weeks a year in each of 10 communities in the region, with the aim of reducing renal disease and diabetes by at least 20 per cent.

They have offered health assessments, looking for the risk factors for kidney disease and diabetes, immediately referring people with abnormal results for counselling, treatment or further investigation.

“At the same time, we teach people about diabetes and renal disease and how they can be prevented or at least minimised,” Dr Jeffries-Stokes said. “The artists work with the communities, especially the children, to translate the health messages into appropriate and engaging forms.

Don’t just improve your health: change your life!
“We also have a community development arm to help communities to find ways to make positive change,” she said.

Rates of kidney disease and diabetes escalated with urbanisation and change to a western style diet and lifestyle in the communities in the Western Desert. Bush tucker disappeared and fresh fruit and vegetables were scarce but packaged foods and high sugar drinks became more easily available.

“The health assessments have resulted in more than 50 per cent of people being referred for further investigation or treatment,” Dr Jeffries-Stokes said. “About 40 per cent of people have signs of early kidney disease, including a significant number of children, some as young as two.

“More than 50 per cent of people are overweight or show signs of nutrition-related diseases such as diabetes, high cholesterol or anaemia. In some communities this is as high as 70 per cent.”

Rather than just treat the disease, the project set to work to treat the cause. With encouragement and help from WDKHP, changes in the communities have been made so that people have more access to fresh and healthy food.

Laverton has a shop after three years without one. Leonora also has a shop with good food and a hydroponic vegetable-growing project. Norseman School won a Stephanie Alexander kitchen garden grant.

Kurrawang, Coonana and Tjuntjuntjarra schools all have vegetable gardens, the Menzies community has planted fruit trees in the park and Mulga Queen is working towards a fruit tree windbreak for their community.

“After the arts project in Laverton this year, all the children in the community returned to school. Before this, there was a very high level of non-attendance,” Dr Jeffries-Stokes said.

One of the art projects was a sand animation, using traditional sand drawing to teach the health message. The children in each community made the animations, wrote the stories that went with them and edited and photographed each project, with the help of an animation artist, Steve Alton. Norseman School used their sand animation as part of their successful application for a kitchen garden grant.

The sand animations are being used by students at Latrobe University as part of a course in health promotion and cultural difference.

“Our team were authors for two editorials in the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health (ANZJPH): one on the difficulties of evaluating Aboriginal health projects, and another comparing scenarios of inequity in the Western Desert and South Africa’s Limpopo region,” Dr Jeffries-Stokes said.

“A century ago, south of the Limpopo River, mining companies bought large tracts of land from poverty-stricken farmers. Black tribal groups were dispersed and malaria was widespread. Public health campaigns distributed mosquito nets and subsidised quinine tablets,” she said.

“Mining has had a similar outcome here for the Aboriginal communities.”

The editorial in the ANZJPH last year said governments needed to ensure access to affordable fresh fruit and vegetables.

“They also need to take action against the purveyors of junk food – just as they took action against the malaria-carrying mosquito.”

Dr Jeffries-Stokes said the three years of field work would be complete in November. The team then has funding for a further 12 months to analyse and write up their data and to put together an exhibition of art works from the project.

“The project has been more successful than we had dreamed, with extraordinary benefits in community empowerment and the production of such beautiful artworks that tell important stories and have a reach far beyond the communities that created them,” Dr Jeffries-Stokes said.

The Western Desert Kidney Health Program has many partners and supporters including the Rural Clinical School of WA, Bega Garnbiringu Health Services, the State and Federal Governments, bhpbilliton Nicklewest, LotteryWest, and Healthway.
The Dampier Archipelago may be the best location for discovering submerged archaeological landscapes in Australia according to new research.

The group of islands are thought to be hiding 30,000-year-old submerged archaeological history and now the likelihood of identifying which sediments hold these archaeological sites has become a reality.

Ingrid Ward, an honorary researcher in the School of Social Sciences, says there has been no significant study of submerged landscapes in Australia until now.

“I believe this study represents an almost unexplored field of research,” Assistant Professor Ward said.

“One of the drivers for focusing on the Dampier Archipelago is the representation of rising sea-levels around the rock art of the area.

“So there is now a big interest in better understanding the formation of the archipelago itself through post-glacial sea-level rise, and the associated potential for marine cultural heritage in this region.

“There is little understanding of the impacts of natural dynamics or of modern development on archaeological records in the marine environment.”

Dr Ward’s research team used geomorphological data on the formation of Dampier Archipelago, combined with new palaeotidal modelling.

The study described potential for discovering submerged archaeological sites from the late Pleistocene (ending 11,000 years ago) and early Holocene (up to present day) sediments.

The work provided indications that past shoreline sequences exist on the sea floor along the WA coastline.

“These shoreline sequences provide the first indication of where to begin to look for submerged archaeology, and what archaeological periods these sedimentary deposits represent,” said Dr Ward.

“They are so well preserved here and all along the WA coastline.

“It represents the most amazing potential for palaeolandscape reconstruction – probably better than any other part of the Australian continental shelf.”

Dr Ward said the geoarchaeological approach was critical to identifying sedimentary units most likely to hold preserved archaeological sites.

“One of the keys of this research is to show how vast marine geophysical datasets, taken for commercial purposes, can be used to explore submerged archaeological landscapes and help progress exploration methodologies for the other parts of the continental shelf.”

(This story was first published online by Science Network WA)
Green is the colour of healthy

By Jason Boudville

A first ever study by UWA and Yale University has examined the relationship between neighbourhood greenness and weight status using satellite remote sensing.

Results showed that in neighbourhoods with greater greenness, there are lower odds of being overweight or obese.

Using self-reported height and weight (Body Mass Index) from 10,208 adults across three age ranges, researchers were able to reference this against Landsat imagery sourced by Landgate.

Dr Gavin Pereira from UWA’s Centre for the Built Environment and Health, and Yale Centre for Perinatal, Paediatric and Environmental Epidemiology, led the study which used satellite remote sensing of vegetation.

“Body weight is influenced by a range of factors such as genetics, diet and exercise,” Dr Pereira said.

“Previous studies have also linked weight status to socioeconomic position and social networks. But the potential influence of the built and natural environment on weight status is not well understood.”

The odds of being obese were 22 per cent lower for people in the greenest neighbourhoods in comparison to the least green when considering greenness as an absolute measure (mean greenness).

However, when considering variability of mean greenness, for example tree-lined streets connecting built destinations, this had the strongest impact on levels of obesity by a 25 per cent difference when comparing greenest versus least green.

“More striking was that the absolute level of greenness was not as important as the variability of greenness in a neighbourhood,” Dr Pereira says.

“Our results might indicate the importance of well-connected tree-lined routes to walkable destinations such as shops and services.

“Equally, it might reflect the indirect health benefits from the presence of well-maintained parks with sufficient road access and parking.”

While the study was able to assess greenness on a sheer numbers level, a limitation was the attractiveness of the greenness or ‘quality’—known to influence behaviour in populations.

Using a measure of greenness, NDVI (Normalised Difference Vegetation Index), map data was assigned lower numerical values for rock, sand, rooftops, and roads, and higher values for grassland, bushland and healthy green vegetation. Bodies of water were removed from the index.

Dr Pereira said further research was necessary to identify the specific attributes of greenness that indirectly promoted health.

Obesity in Australia continues to rise.

It is an important modifiable risk factor in preventing cardiovascular disease, hypertension and type II diabetes.

(This story was first published online by Science Network WA)
If the 280 school students attending UWA’s Science Café last month expected to see a naked scientist, they were disappointed.

But The Naked Scientist himself certainly didn’t disappoint.

Dr Chris Smith is one of the world’s most popular and most downloaded science presenters and UWA scored a coup during National Science Week to have him on the Crawley campus to talk to the students during the annual Science Café.

Rather than regale them with a prepared speech, The Naked Scientist simply asked the students what they wanted to know. He fielded questions from almost every area of science, from landing on Mars to the human body.

Dr Smith and his team of scientists broadcast a live show every week on the BBC, which is available as a podcast internationally. Their goal is to make science fun and enjoyable.

To support him at the Science Café were 70 local scientists and professionals working in science and engineering. About half of them were from UWA, the rest from industry and other universities.

At a ratio of one to four, and with the scientists moving around the tables every 10 minutes, all the students had ample opportunity to ask questions and learn something new.

UWA graduate Sarah Lau, Communications Manager for the ChemCentre, was the Master of Ceremonies. Helen Pedersen, a senior structural engineer with Sinclair Knight Merz was a great role model for the female students, talking about her traditionally ‘blokey’ job designing structures to support heavy mining machinery.

Students came from 37 schools and some from home schooling. They were joined at the Science Café in Winthrop Hall by two school girls from Indonesia.

Licia Winata from Surabaya had won an all-expenses trip to Perth for her and her sister at the UWA’s Science for Future Festival last year.

The festival, which celebrates what science has done for humanity and promotes the study of science, was launched by UWA in 2010, when it was held in Malaysia. In 2011, our scientists took the show to Singapore and last year to Indonesia.

More than 2,000 school and university students attended 10 events in Jakarta, Surabaya and Yogyakarta.

Licia was captivated by a discussion with Professor Tim St Pierre about osmosis and biomedical magnetic research. She said the overlap of biology, chemistry and physics was a revelation for her. An essay she wrote about it won her the week, hosted by the Faculty of Science.

She and her sister Michako visited the laboratories of many of the UWA scientists she met during the festival. Our presenters included professors Carmen Lawrence, Barry Marshall, Kadambot Siddique, Brendan Waddell and Tim St Pierre.

UWA’s ranking as 26th in the world for life sciences and agricultural sciences attracts students in the region to the festival, most of them hoping to study here.
You get more than just a modern residential suite when you move into University Hall.

Service learning and volunteering opportunities are as numerous and accessible as the different cultures represented among the students who live there.

The Hall’s Residential Life team is committed to community outreach in every form, on campus, in Perth, across Australia and overseas.

Residential Life co-ordinator Annaleis Martin said the Hall’s volunteer programs provided enriching opportunities that enhanced the University experience.

Thanks to funding through a UWA Diversity Initiatives Fund Grant, she initiated an Aboriginal Cultural Project which recently saw a team of eight international students spend two weeks in Geraldton, volunteering their services to a range of Aboriginal organisations, and learning about Aboriginal culture, language and history.

During the trip, they were trained in Aboriginal cultural awareness and radio technique, through Health Communications Resources and Radio MAMA, an Aboriginal-run radio station for the Mid-West.

The group visited schools, planted trees, helped sandbag part of the Chapman River as part of a school group’s restoration project, learned about Aboriginal health and art, and took a huge supporting role in the preparation and running of cultural celebrations for the Bundiyarra Aboriginal Corporation and other NAIDOC Week events.

“Our students were so eager and willing to help with absolutely anything that was given to them” Annaleis said.

“We sewed bunting, made badges, weeded the garden and tilled the soil. It took a serious team effort to wrap more than 1,000 potatoes in foil, ready to be baked in the fire. Tents were erected, concrete poured, signs made – all with big smiles on their faces.

“More than 1,000 people came from all over Geraldton and surrounding areas to celebrate the 15th year of Bundiyarra. Our group were machines on the barbecues all day, then braved the rain to pack away tents, chairs and tables and clean up rubbish. It was a massive day. The students learned so much and their efforts really made a difference. This was such a worthwhile and meaningful project.”

Annaleis said she looked forward to building on the relationship with the Aboriginal community in Geraldton in years to come. She thanked partners Health Communications Resources, Bundiyarra, Radio MAMA, City of Greater Geraldton, Geraldton Regional Aboriginal Medical Services, the School of Indigenous Studies and the Combined Universities Centre for Regional Health.

Meanwhile, another group from the Hall went in the opposite direction, to Busselton and Margaret River, for the second year of a student-led initiative in reforestation.

Student leader Brianna Bourke joined nine other students in beach clean-ups, tree planting, and mulching and weeding in Busselton’s community garden.

They planted 3,000 trees (in the rain) along the Margaret River, working with local farmers to restore river areas for native flora and fauna.

Then it was potting sedges and reeds for the Geographe community Landcare nursery.

“Despite the rain, the cold and the mud, the students voted it an experience of a lifetime,” Brianna said.
As the annual Staff Sports and Fun Day draws closer, you can save your energy for the event.

You don’t have to trek around the Crawley campus looking for your faculty co-ordinator to register and pay to take part. You can do it online for the first time this year, at: www.uwa.edu.au/sportsday2013. The sports day is on Friday 8 November.

Remember, this year’s event is just half a day, from lunchtime on. The opening ceremony starts at 12, but it too has been shortened. There will not be a grand parade of teams but there will be a surprise that will more than rival the Business School’s efforts at last year’s opening ceremony. So don’t be late!

Food will be supplied by the University Club at the end of the day. It will also be available earlier in the afternoon for staff who need to leave early to pick up school children.

Traditional competitive sports will be run at the same time as the Centenary Challenge, a fun set of team games. Get your teams together with as close a gender balance as possible, so nobody can complain about unfair advantages.

The charity to be supported this year is Guide Dogs WA and you can choose to make a small donation when you register online.

Look out for more information coming soon in all-staff emails.

Make time for your wellbeing

Next week is Mental Health Week.

From 6 to 12 October, there are free classes at UWA, an inspirational talk from former sports commentator Glenn Mitchell and a competition with a prize that’s sure to boost your mental health.

Throughout the week, staff are invited to free sessions of BODYBALANCE™, Flex and Flow or Paddling with UWA Sports to provide a taste of what’s on offer on campus to assist relaxation and to include some fitness/health time into your busy schedule.

A special staff mental health event is being held at the culmination of the week. Come along to the Winthrop Undercroft at noon on Friday 11 October to hear a personal perspective on mental health from former ABC Sports commentator Glenn Mitchell.

Having been at the top of his profession and with a life many would envy, Glenn’s life was turned upside down when he succumbed to mental illness. Like so many people, it took a lot of convincing for him to initially seek help, and when he did, it started a journey that was far from smooth, but which has had a positive outcome.

Also on this day, free 10-minute massages will be on offer to staff (please bring your staff ID card) from 11am to 2pm in the Undercroft area.

And finally, staff are invited to participate in a project to identify and celebrate what we can do to stay mentally healthy, whether it be at work or in our personal time.

Send in a submission (from today through to October 11) to wellbeing@uwa.edu.au describing or showing what you do for the chance to win one of five free passes to join UWA Sports for a relaxing Twilight Sail on the Swan River for yourself and a friend.

For more information on these initiatives see: www.safety.uwa.edu.au/health-wellbeing/well-being/whats-on-offer/mental-health/
The first meeting of UWA’s Convocation, on 4 March 1913, was deemed important enough to be reported in The West Australian. A hundred years later, it’s amusing to read the verbatim report: “I do not for the present know exactly the full duties of a Warden, but I will endeavour to learn those duties and to carry them through to the best of my powers and ability. (Hear, hear.)”

The words were spoken by the man just elected as the inaugural Warden of Convocation, the Reverend Dr Charles Riley, Bishop of Perth. A grand master of the Freemasons, described as an outstanding statesman, Bishop Riley made a great contribution to the founding of the University and St George’s College.

He was Warden of Convocation for three years, then Chancellor from 1916 to 1922. By this time, Dr Riley was an Archbishop and was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws degree. Several years later he was called upon to lay the foundation stone of St George’s College.

A century after making his stamp on UWA, St George’s is celebrating Bishop Riley and his leadership.

On Wednesday 16 October a three-part event will begin with a church service in St George’s Chapel at 5pm, with the current Anglican Archbishop, Roger Herft presiding. This will be followed by a lecture at 6pm about Bishop Riley and his achievements. The lecture will be presented by the Reverend Dr Rowan Strong, Professor of Church History at Murdoch University.

At 7pm, supper will be served.

Anyone is welcome to attend one, two or all three of the free events. To register your attendance, please contact St George’s on 9449 5555 or email admin@stgeorgescollege.com.au http://stgeorgescollege.com.au/our-community/events/uwa-centenary-archbishop-riley-celebration/

The newly-minted journalists were among 1,852 graduands to receive their degrees in six ceremonies in Winthrop Hall. This included 113 PhDs and professional doctorates.

The usually formal atmosphere of the graduation season was injected with some fun by musician and comedian Tim Minchin, who was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University.

Since graduating from UWA in Arts, his career has taken off, with his musical version of Roald Dahl’s Matilda currently running on both Broadway and in London’s West End.

Tim has won worldwide acclaim as a composer, lyricist, comedian, actor and writer. Matilda won a record seven Olivier Awards – British theatre’s most sought-after awards.

His career as a composer started at Christ Church Grammar School’s Midnite Youth Theatre Company and he also worked with Perth’s WA Youth Theatre Company and UWA’s University Dramatic Society. In the earlier days of his success, he was always keen to perform in the Dolphin Theatre when he returned to Perth – where he honed his skills. But as his fame grew, the little theatre became too small to contain his fans. His most recent Perth appearance was as Judas in Jesus Christ Superstar in May, at the Perth Arena.

Learn about the life of Riley

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Our youngest reader?

Most early readers prefer the picture books of Richard Scarry, but this one loves UWAnews.

Christopher Vernham-Tait (18 months) can’t quite make out the words yet, but he already enjoys settling into a comfortable chair with a favourite book or magazine.

His grandparents receive UWAnews every month and grandfather Christopher Vernham says that Risto (the Finnish short form of Christopher) often chooses it before he settles himself down for a read.

Risto’s mother, Shoshanna Vernham, who is on maternity leave from UWA, insisted they didn’t set up the photo. “For some reason he loves UWAnews,” she said. “He likes to interact with the photos!”

Centenary stories

Next Tuesday, 8 October will be a day for history buffs at UWA.

Following afternoon tea at 4pm, the UWA Historical Society and Convocation present their annual lecture at 5pm by the ‘Fly-Out, Fly-In Professor’, Emeritus Professor Reg Appleyard.

Both the lecture and the afternoon tea will be in the dining hall at St George’s College.

A tour of the College is on offer from 3pm.

To find out more or to book for this and other UWAHS/Convocation events, please go to: www.development.uwa.edu.au/friends/historical-society/events

Later in the same evening, Emeritus Professor John Melville-Jones will present The First Hundred Years of Classics and Ancient History at UWA. Professor Melville-Jones has been there for nearly 50 of those 100 years!

His lecture is at 6pm in the Austin Lecture Theatre in the Arts building. It will be followed by a reception at the University Club.

For catering purposes, please register your attendance with Richard Small, richard.small@uwa.edu.au

Centum Montreal

Centum’s had a busy year but he’s managed to squeeze in a few trips to let the world know about our Centenary. Here he is perched above an entrance to McGill University in Montreal.

The styrofoam numbers have taken on a personality and UWA staff feel quite affectionate towards Centum, who is invited to lots of events and functions on campus.
Are you 45–55 years of age?

Have you been experiencing signs consistent with the menopausal transition? We are looking for volunteers undergoing the Menopausal Transition to join a study designed to prevent depression through participation in a health coaching program.

If you are interested in participating call 9324 2855 or email wacha@uwa.edu.au
For more information visit www.wacha.org.au

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NOTICES

Friends of the UWA Library Talk
Tuesday 8 October 2013
Venue: Reid Library Meeting Room, (Ground Floor Reid Library)
Doors open and refreshments: 7pm
Talk commences 7.30pm

An Australian Diplomat in East Berlin – as seen through the eyes of the Stasi
Dr Sue Boyd

ABOUT THE TALK
This is in the nature of an introduction to a work that Dr Boyd is planning to write following her examination of a Stasi file on her when she was in the Australian diplomatic service in Berlin. It should be of interest not only to those working in the security services, but also to historians and those interested in what went on ‘behind the iron curtain’. She will talk about the file’s contents and aspects of the life of a career diplomat in East Germany at the time.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER
Dr Sue Boyd is a graduate of UWA (1969) and has an honorary doctorate from the university. She was the first woman President of the Guild of Undergraduates. Dr Boyd spent 34 years in the Australian Foreign Service, retiring from that in 2003 and returning to WA. She has been, inter alia, Ambassador in Vietnam, Consul General in Hong Kong and High Commissioner in Bangladesh and Fiji. Dr Boyd is currently a member of the UWA Senate, responsible this year in particular, for planning the University Centenary Celebrations. She is a board member of Volunteering WA and of the Pacific Regional Human Rights Organisation, based in Fiji.

Members: Free
Non Members: $5 donation
Further information: contact 6488 2354 or email susan.oconnor@uwa.edu.au

UWA’s Energy and Minerals Institute

presents a public forum

From offshore to onshore – The future of WA’s gas market

A world shift back to onshore petroleum exploration has implications for WA’s gas market. The new ‘gas rush’ has become a politically-charged issue for environmental campaigners. This seminar will explore questions about new sources of natural gas and the scientific, environmental, social and economic issues in developing them responsibly.

Thursday 3 October, 6pm
Social Sciences Lecture Theatre, UWA

This is a free event but registration is essential at: https://grattan-institute18.eventbrite.com.au/

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Brisbane-based Professor seeking a house-sit in Perth over the Xmas/New Year period. Non-smoker. Totally reliable. Traveling solo to visit family. Flexible with dates, and kind to plants, pools and pets. Either house or apartment would suit. References available. If you think this might fit the bill, please call/sms to 0478 815 099.

Classified advertisements are FREE for all UWA staff.

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LUMINOUSnight

photographs by Edwin Janes, YERBURY PRESS

Edwin Janes, architectural photographer, captured this historic event in a series of exclusive photographs, now available for sale at www.yerburypress.com

The evening of February 8th 2013 saw the power of two million candles transform The University of Western Australia’s landmark Winthrop Hall into a kaleidoscope of colour and sound. The projection was the centrepiece of LUMINOUSnight, a public celebration of art and culture to mark the University’s Centenary.

The show was conceived by the Director of the UWA Cultural Precinct, Winthrop Professor Ted Snell and produced by Event Manager Ian Lilburne while the work itself was created by Illuminart under the direction of Cindi Drennan.

This huge light projection, a form known as architectural storytelling, used ten powerful projectors and told a twelve thousand strong audience the story of the creation of the state’s first university. Utilising animation, photography, music and personal narration, the imagery was perfectly coordinated with the architecture of Winthrop Hall.

These stunning reminders of the extraordinary LUMINOUSnight celebrating 100 years of learning at The University of Western Australia are a fitting and collectible reminder of a great institution.

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This community saved a life

Susanna Wills-Johnson
University Marketing Manager

Last year, while waiting to be diagnosed with what I now know to be two rare, life-threatening diseases, I fell suddenly and critically ill. Some of you know this already, some of you don’t, but it isn’t really the story of my illness that is important.

What is important is what it showed me about the community in which we work and learn every day.

Many of my doctors and specialists were UWA-trained. There are several specialists and registrars who stand out in my memory as not only incredibly intelligent people, who are leaders in their fields, but people who are also extraordinarily caring and compassionate. Some of them didn’t leave their computers or phones or books or other resources, working long into the night to try to uncover what was making me so unwell.

I think there was more to their passion than just the search for knowledge: a problem to solve. These people cared about me and my family and they wanted to help. Their medical abilities saved my life at a time of need, but their compassion enabled them to work closely with my family, giving them reassurance and confidence.

Our university has, and fosters, a sense of community.

This sense of community was apparent in the UWA graduates I met in hospital and it is evident in our student base. Many of our students not only work part time, but also complete volunteer work with some amazing results for those less fortunate. We can look to people like Young Australian of the Year, Akram Azimi, and our Young Western Australian of the Year, Michael Sheldrick, for inspiration within the student population. Their stories are now well known, but among our students are many other are impressive people who commit themselves to helping others. Whether it is through social justice initiatives or through doggedly researching an area that will improve the lives of others, our students are focused on positive outcomes beyond their own academic achievements.

And then there is our staff. My experience showed me the depth and breadth of support we have for one another. Last year many people contacted me with cards, emails and other messages of support. Many people baked and cooked so my young family didn’t need to worry about food. The power of these acts of kindness is evident in my health today. And like our students, many of our staff spend countless hours working on projects with broad social enhancement agendas.

The sense of community at UWA presents opportunities and challenges.

It is easy to get lost in the busyness of every day. It is easy to gripe about tricky work situations or difficult clients. It is easy too to complain when it seems that consultation periods are too long or laborious. And these challenges are not small things.

But what also isn’t a small thing is the community of people who call this place home for the majority of the week. A community strengthened by its ability to work together. A community networked and integrated because of a culture of shared vision, responsibility and a passion to seek knowledge and act with kindness. With a staff body of almost 4,000 and a student body of close to 25,000 it is amazing that we have a community here that interacts and supports so strongly when people need it the most.

The stories of our people who save lives, change lives, build and create lives; those are the stories of UWA. And I think they should be told more often.