

5. FOUNDATIONS

OPEN FAMILY AUSTRALIA

Open Family originated in St. Kilda in 1978, when it began working in the streets among homeless and drug addicted adolescents who were alienated from the community. By 1981 the operation had become more organised when a street team had developed.

Fr Bob Maguire approached local business people with a view to forming a charity and the Open Family Foundation was established. As Open Family's chairman, Fr Maguire has been an outspoken advocate of the disadvantaged since the 1960s when he first began working among the poor and dispossessed in his parish.

The history of Open Family is also inextricably linked to Nathan Stirling Open Family's CEO. Nathan initially taught in the private school system, at the time mainly concerned with the middle classes, but felt the need to work with young people on the fringes of society. In 1988 he established a branch of Open Family in Canberra. Under his direction, Open Family expanded into Queensland in 1993 where it worked in Logan City for four years, and then to Albury/Wodonga at the beginning of 1995. Open Family was invited to the Albury/Wodonga through the combined efforts of local community leaders, Rotary and other service clubs.

The local community highlighted street youth as a growing problem and requested that Open Family investigate and develop local strategies at a practical level. From its base in Albury, Open Family soon developed a greater presence throughout the Hume Region. In 1997, Open Family established an operation in Cabramatta, Sydney and now has several experienced outreach workers around that area and in the Sydney CBD.

Since its inception, which grew out of a cry for help from one of society's least powerful groups, Open Family has itself had a precarious existence. Funded almost entirely with cash donations from the public and with support from the corporate sector, Open Family has faced closure several times, but each time has managed to survive, and presently has street outreach workers in Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra, Albury/Wodonga, Shepparton, Benalla, Seymour and Wangaratta.

EMERALD HILL MISSION

Emerald Hill Mission has served the needy communities within the Cities of Melbourne and Port Phillip, including the Central Business District and Southbank since 1989.

Its goal is to see alienated youth change their lifestyle and lead more productive lives, to bring some hope to the poor in this area and to offer the lonely somewhere to come and be made welcome.

A Committee of Management represents a cross-section of local community leaders, and working Groups develop day-to-day program activities and seek to raise the funds to support the Mission.

A team of volunteers provide food parcels, food vouchers and counselling to various disadvantaged individuals and families between the hours of 10:00 am and 3:00 pm Monday to Friday.

The Mission undertakes various activities targeted particularly at disadvantaged families and older single people, e.g. weekly barbeques, overnight emergency accommodation, family mediation, counselling for drug and alcohol problems, and assistance with job seeking.

A fully fitted bus operated by the Mission provides food and services to various disadvantaged groups, such as supporting alcoholics, compulsive gamblers, drug addicts and those with behavioural and mental problems.

Outreach Workers provide local families with food, financial support, furniture and accommodation. Henry often either represents or appears as a character witness for local youth at the Melbourne Magistrates' Court.

The Mission also organises recreational activities for local youth such as football, cricket and basketball teams.

Father Bob Maguire Foundation

This began in 2003 in an attempt to gather various social investments under a single Board of Governance.

Futile Care provides urgent, flexible and 'classified funding for about a dozen former clients of Open Family. These former wards of state have each survived difficult adolescence, only to be faced with adulthood without personal, family and community support

Another initiative are the *FBMF Scholarships*. These provide further schooling for disadvantaged students at various learning institutions in the Melbourne area. The Foundation provides for the cost of books and uniforms as well as tuition fees.