

## LORINDA WILKES

Health professional and social savant



## Reasons to be Cheerful Part 1, 2, 3...

Lorinda reckons Braidwood's a funny old place

NOT SO LONG AGO I was asked by *BWD* editor Paul Cockram to write something for the magazine. I was a little reluctant as he was after a piece on the professional life I lead which is fraught with the potential for someone in the community to raise their hand — or their ire — and shout “she’s talking about me” which could see me out of a job, so here is my parallel story. Life when I’m not at work.

I’ve been in Braidwood since 1988 moving here with my first husband Andy and our 10 week old daughter Ella. Andy was the first male RN at Braidwood Hospital, which was quite an interesting time. Moving here

wasn’t in our plan but, unable to get a job on the south coast, we landed here and when the matron discovered we were both nurses she said, “you won’t get out of this town in a hurry” and for me she was absolutely right.

‘Blow-ins’ is what we were and I remember being told very early on that you have to die here before you’re considered a local. I also recall Andy saying about the eclectic mix of people in the area that you could be a six out of ten weirdo here and no-one would take any notice. Not sure if that’s entirely true, I’m sure someone would notice and have something to say about it.

I was lucky enough to meet a great

group of women at playgroup and we formed a bushwalking group affectionately known as the ‘dirty mothers’. Our creed was ‘no guilt and no talking about our kids or partners’ when we walked all over this beautiful part of the country. Once a month or so we met at the Monkey Duck Café (now the Albion) and took off for a day of fun, laughter and food and then once a year off for an overnight walk to various longer walks such as Pigeon House mountain (slept in the caves up the top) Nadgee Nature Reserve and up Mt Gulaga behind Tilba Tilba. These women were part of the reason I settled so well here and came to love this place. My second daughter Peta was born here in 1993 during my involvement with this group and I wasn’t quite so much of a ‘blow-in’ then as her father was a fourth generation local. Thanks Mel, Robyn, Cheryl, Rita, Suzanne, etc.

Arts and culture were the alternate lifestyle around here as opposed to farming and I love that side of town too. Cafes; galleries; festivals; interesting people and events. The second major group attachment I would make here was with the Talla Dancers. Six women who loosely formed a dance troupe doing belly dancing at different places around the area such as National Folk Festival, Cobargo, Illawarra and of course our very own Music at the Creek. We were known as Talla Belly as there was also Talla Folk who covered traditional folk dancing. We had a hoot, made our own costumes (most of the time) and enjoyed each other’s company every Friday night for ‘girlies night’ which always included good food, champagne and laughter. We persisted for 10 years, finally hanging up our shimmy belts in 2008 and calling it a day but we remain good friends still. Thanks Lesley, Michelle, Erica, Lesley and Sonia.

2BRW provided another outlet for me to have a bit of fun. My good friends on ‘Gloomy Sunday’ were the amazing hosts of an excellent program and they happily let me join them once a month to talk shop. We started with body parts, then playing themed music, eg. knees and then me chatting on about things that could go wrong with them. We soon progressed to the show ‘Disease de Jour’ first Saturday of the month which went for many years as I worked my way backwards through the medical dictionary picking out all the things that were either interesting, disgusting or just plain hilarious. Pity the wowers who thought it was all a bit beyond the pale and got us thrown

off the air. Educational radio at its best. I don’t know if I’ve ever had so much fun and learnt so much. Thanks Chris, Michael, Saul and Tina for the best music ever.

Scrabble group was another delight which kept my brain exercised in the nicest possible way. The Paris end of town would host the boards and the competition was fierce especially when the annual word-off went down. I am the proud holder of all the trophies Erica Mordek made for the annual scrabble championship. There are four on my shelf; consecutive years; but I am now a little less practised in the fine art of wordplay. What a lot of fun we had though, laughed our heads off every time. Those times were precious and still make me smile. Thank you to the players who provided another great group to be involved with. Dirty word scrabble was a particular favourite for me. Thanks Paris, Reg, Sue, Erica, Pat, Robyn, David, Chris, Michael and others.

The latest group to bring a smile to my face is the ‘Dig-hers’ which formed amongst great friends at Mongarlowe where I moved in early 2007. We gather at each other’s houses every three to four weeks and garden. It’s amazing how much can be achieved when six or seven women put fork and shovel to the dirt for 2 hours and dig-hers garden. We are also happily taking off for weekend escapes to the coast to indulge in favourite pastimes of good food, champagne and fun. Bit of a repetitive theme I hear you say but something has to balance the job I do for a wage — not always a lot of fun I can tell you. Thanks Kath, Carol, Hannie, Cindy, Ali, Michelle and Sky by default.

My three grandchildren are another reason to be cheerful — when they’re not running Richard and I ragged. Ella’s boys — Dante and Marius visit regularly from Canberra and they love it out here. Room to run and shout and throw things and play in mud and bird watch and have adventures and stay off their devices and ride their bikes and just be boys. Peta has a daughter called Ruby who I wish I saw more often but Melbourne is just a little further away.

So find reasons to be cheerful in your life; some things aren’t a lot of fun and certainly don’t make you cheerful but other things are good. Look for the little things that make you smile. I get it looking at my garden, hanging out with my friends, getting out into the bush, all sorts of ways.

## JEMMA SLUSSER

Young mother, teacher’s aid and student

## Back to school

Jemma explains how she’s back in the classroom

As part of my studying for a Diploma of Community Services I need to do 240 hours of work. I am studying online through Sydney TAFE. I chose Braidwood Central School where I work as a teacher’s aid. I love it so much I am now thinking about becoming a teacher.

I have been a single mum for six months too so I have been extra busy. But it’s good to get out of the house sometimes, you know, even to go to work, it’s good.

My son Elijah goes to day care at the Purple House in Wallace Street.

I love the daily routine of being a mother, it’s fun. Hectic, but fun.

My job as a teacher’s aide is pretty much setting up for daily activities,

helping the kids with their basic writing, maths, just basically whatever the teacher wants me to do. I just help out. I am thinking of going to uni to do a Bachelor of Education. I am thinking of doing it part time from a Canberra uni. It will take me longer, but it is a bit hard to do full time with a little one — I hope it works out. I think with part time you go one or two times a week or a fortnight, and then the rest is all online, so yeah, a bit of juggling to figure it out.

I am either going to do education or counselling — but I am still thinking about it, because I would like to go welfare-related, you know as in welfare worker, working with children.

But — I am still thinking, it’s all up in the air I suppose.

