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LIVERPOOL

Musicians spread cheer

Volunteer carollers share festive spirit and bring smiles to palliative care patients



Jenni Sawell, Rita Cordina and Georgina Makdessi. Picture: Robert Pozo

Stacy Thomas

CAROLS are often heard around the palliative care ward at Liverpool Hospital for Christmas.

This year, a harpist was added to the mix. Jenni Sawell is in the midst of a harp therapy course, which explores the way harp playing can help with healing.

She said it was a different way of playing but focused on motor work, changing rhythms and tempos.

It's the fourth year musicians have gone from room to room, taking requests from patients and playing their favourite carols.

"I wish they could sing for me all day," one patient said.

Margaret Jackson, 82, who has terminal cancer, has been in the palliative care ward for three months.

Her favourite carol is Silent Night and the carollers played it for her.

She sang along and then described a typical Christmas for her.

"I'm English, so you can imagine - turkey and sweating, and slaving in the kitchen all day just to take a few bites and be full," Ms Jackson said.

"Christmas is like that for me, because that's how I grew up. It's something my parents did when I was little. "I can't do all of that this

People forget that it's (Christmas) not always a happy time for everyone

year, but hearing the carols, that was really beautiful."

The St Johns Park resident said there should be more Christmas cheer.

Organist Rita Cordina said it was her third year playing at the hospital.

"It's a way to give back," Ms Cordina said.

"People forget that it's (Christmas) not always a happy time for everyone.

"In palliative care, there are lots who won't make it to Christmas, so it's nice to come here and see them, sing for them. It can be therapy for family and staff, and it helps lift the ambience."

Would you like to volunteer? Call 8738 9755

Health resolutions need the support of family and loved ones

Stacy Thomas

THE holiday season is a time for people to celebrate then plan to live a happier or healthier year ahead.

Creating New Year's resolutions isn't all that bad an idea, according to GP Michael Tam.

As the head of the GP unit at Ingham Institute in Liverpool Dr Tam said committing to quitting cigarettes or reducing alcohol were great ideas in theory.

"But you need the behaviour management changes to back up and support you," he said.

"It's good to want to

change but don't make it a quick decision.

"Diets aren't long term and taking out a gym membership is often not enough to change your behaviour."

He said planning, thinking and talking with family and loved ones so they can support you in your decision was equally as important as the resolution itself.

"And, if you fail, that is part of the experience of trying to quit," Dr Tam said.

"Think about why you want to change and know that change doesn't have to occur on January 1 - it can be before or even after."

Dr Tam said many saw diabetes as a sugar-based

condition, but he said a diabetic smoker after a year of quitting, halved their risk of a heart attack.

Dr Tam said GPs were there to empower people to make change.

"People need to make changes on their own, but we can encourage sensitively," he said. "It's good to want that change. No one wants to be beaten over the head about something they know they need to change."

Dr Tam is part of the Ingham Institute which is a not-for-profit research organisation. It is changing the way medical research is done in Australia, benefiting south west Sydney residents.



Dr Michael Tam. Picture: Robert Pozo

KFC advertisement for Christmas Day. Includes KFC logo, 'Finger lickin' good', 'OPEN FOR XMAS DAY 10.30am - 8.00pm', and '342 Hume Hwy, Liverpool'. Contact number 9602 2557.

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