

Westlake Girls Alumni Association
First meeting held at WGHS Thursday 11th April 2013

Present: Gloria Kelly, Danielle Payne, Cathy Roughan, Lilly Peng, Jean Yang, Ronelle Tomkinson, Michele Larnder
Apologies: Helen Bowen, Julie Rutledge Meliza Deocales, Ray Gallagher, Jessica Miao, Roz Mexted, Jenny Chu

Welcome / Goals: Cathy welcomed the committee members to the first meeting of the WGHS Alumni Association. Michele Larnder (Deputy Principal), will attend our committee meetings and be a helpful liaison with management. Those who were unable to attend tonight's meeting hope to be part of the group and kept informed. Cathy acknowledged the efforts of an earlier group of alumni who worked towards the 30th reunion some 20 years ago.

One of the goals of the new WGHS charter 2012-2014 is to engage with the alumni community, so it is timely that an Alumni Co-ordinator has been appointed for the first time. Many secondary schools have active alumni associations, with some well-established, flourishing alumni networks amongst the older and private schools, in particular. We do have to be realistic and expect just steady progress in reconnecting with our alumni, as we have very few records to help us, and it is a harder task when dealing with name changes of many of our past students. But it is an exciting prospect, as we have a large group of alumni over 50 years, pursuing a wide variety of interests and careers in local, wider and international communities, and there has been a pleasing amount of support already for our new association. Some schools extend their association into a Foundation or Trust but this is not part of our plan at this stage.

Introduction

Cathy presented a brief update of the new association. All former students and staff, current staff, as well as friends of the school are most welcome to join. For consistency, we will refer to the alumni year (for students) as the year in which they completed, or would have completed their Year 13 year (7th Form), or as 'the (2012) graduates', or 'the class of (2012)'.

Founding alumni

There are 250 founding members of the Alumni Association, consisting of 222 former students and 28 former or current staff. These are alumni who joined at the time of the 50th jubilee.

Since December there have been 51 further members, joining through the school website

Since December there have been 290 'likes' on our new Alumni Facebook page.

There is likely to be a committee of around 12 -15.

There is also a broader group of members who want to be kept 'in the loop' and are willing to assist with activities from time to time.

Developments January – March

These include:

- contact with many of the 2009, 2011 and 2012 graduates of WGHS
- establishing an Alumni Facebook page
- an online membership form on the school website
- building up a database and contacts
- meeting with other co-ordinators for suggestions
- Seeking suggestions from alumni through surveys

Discussion - about ways of expanding the network

Ronelle: Suggestion of a newsletter to let alumni know what the association has been doing and what has been happening in the school. We hope to get these underway by mid year.

Lilly: Mentoring programme: new leavers talking to alumni members who have already been through the process. For example, students who are going to study law at university receiving advice from students who have already finished their law degrees. This would be invaluable. Lilly and Jean would both be keen to talk to the 2013 graduates later this year.

We also need to reconnect with our international students. Many of them would value this contact once they return to their home countries or continue their tertiary studies.

The school website – There is a need for photos, updates and links.

Ronelle: Is information being collected about what our alumni are doing now? This way we can offer ways for students to connect with other people in their industries and further their careers. It would also help with the mentoring idea. The jubilee website database didn't ask for this information so there is a gap in our data. Cathy will try to get this information gradually from current members. The new form that we have devised on our school website does request this information.

Cathy is asking for maiden names as well. Our data is patchy though because the original form used for the jubilee also didn't ask for this information.

Suggestions for alumni activities and events

A wide range of suggestions have already come in through the surveys.

These include; a wine and cheese evening, sharing of WGHS news such as upcoming sporting and musical events, alumni link ups before or after supporting current school concerts and sporting fixtures, class reunions, decade reunions, coffee catch-ups, an annual dinner, publishing the school history on the school website, a business network, community networks, environmental projects, sporting matches (alumni vs premier teams), an Australian chapter of the association, fundraising....

We are grateful for the interest in the new association and the suggestions of former students and staff that are coming in through brief emails or from the association membership form.

There was discussion on the type of activities we should have as our first event. There is a need for activities with broad appeal and of a low cost.

Michele Larnder: The Department Store – eager to get involved and may provide a venue for a fashion parade and wine and cheese evening. Or they may be willing to come to an evening held at the school. Ronelle suggested that if the shops are offering discounts for the occasion, then there is an incentive for people to come along. Timing: September? Cathy will follow this up.

Jean – made the suggestion of providing tours of the school for past students to show them the new buildings and facilities now available at the school. Her alumni year (2010 graduates) had left when the new facilities were built and many would enjoy a look around.

Jean is happy to set up a Facebook page for her year group. It is understood that the Year 2011 graduates have a Facebook page for their year and Jean is keen to link up with them to see how they are using their page.

Decade reunions will need to wait until we have our alumni association up and running. There needs to be extensive networks for these to have enough momentum from former students.

Jean: gaining a presence with the existing students at WGHS. We can organise events/presentations throughout the year from past students to existing students to talk about their different disciplines, jobs and university study. Make it a lunch time chat session and give the students our email addresses if they have further questions. Cathy will investigate what timing would be suitable and liaise with the Careers Dept at Westlake.

Using an 'event' page as part of our Facebook page so that people can see who is going and therefore have some incentive to catch up with friends or ex-classmates.

Facebook needs to be active with frequent and interesting posts.

Michele: Afternoon teas for ex staff would be something nice to do – early term 3

1. Next meeting

Not going to set the date for another meeting at this stage. Cathy will keep the committee updated via email. She will see what days are going to suit members and what's coming up.