

November 17, 2009

Media Statement

RESEARCH INSTITUTE PAYS TRIBUTE TO VOLUNTEERS ON "THANK YOU" DAY

In celebration of Research Australia's annual "Thank You Day" event, the head of WA's premier adult medical research institute has paid tribute to the group's volunteers, saying the organisation couldn't survive without their selfless contributions.

Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR) Director Professor Peter Klinken said "Thank You" Day was a time to reflect on the importance of volunteers to centres like WAIMR.

"Without volunteers, we could not exist – whether they are giving up their time to be part of one of our many fundraising events or serving on our Board, they really keep us on track to be able to make medical life-changing research discoveries," he said.

WAIMR will be hosting a morning tea in honour of its volunteers on Friday November 20 at its Nedlands campus, including running tours of their laboratories to give people an inside look at the life of a medical research scientist.

"We're thrilled to be able to pay tribute to our volunteers and ensure they know how grateful we are for their contributions."

Professor Klinken said Claremont's Yvonne Kirkbride was a prime example of the difference volunteers could make in medical research.

"Vonnie and her husband, Rob, founded the Scott Kirkbride Melanoma Research Centre – WA's only dedicated research centre into the deadly skin cancer – after the tragic passing of her 27-year-old son Scott from melanoma in 2004," said Professor Klinken.

"That's an enormous task that's made a big difference already with the Centre funding new research into the cancer and, after starting as a volunteer, Vonnie has now gone on to become a member of the WAIMR team – a role that's allowing her to build on delivering Scott's wish to help prevent others from experiencing the same devastation their family endured.

"She's the heart and soul of the Centre and has been there for many families who've needed a shoulder to cry on."

"Thank You Day" is Friday November 20, 2009 – the event aims to raise community awareness of the benefits of health and medical research.

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