

Cathy Papandrea

Always see the good in people

Cathy migrated to Campbelltown from the Marche region of Italy when she was 16.5 years old. From hairdressing to managing salons and a restaurant Cathy's warmth, love of people and desire to help people has shaped her career and her life. She has managed the Marche Club in Paradise for 30 years.

Cathy's 6 siblings were already living in Adelaide when her Mum, Dad and herself got on a boat for 23 days to commence their new life in Australia. Her sisters had told her 'become a hairdresser, that's where the money is at!'. On arrival in Campbelltown in 1965 Cathy remarked it was the 'saddest thing of my life'. It was at this time the stark contrast from her home in Marche to Campbelltown became obvious. There was one tiny delicatessen in Campbelltown and the only social outing was to dress up on Sundays, walk down Lower North East Road to Church. Back home every Sunday 'passeggiata' was common where you went for a leisurely walk outside to talk and socialize. It took 6 months for Cathy to adjust to Australian life which was helped through friendships at work and a relationship.

Cathy's early career was in hairdressing. She recalls dressing for her interview in pantaloons, button up cardigan and wide heeled shoes to which her sister said 'I am not coming with you, you look ridiculous'. However, her employer Joseph's Gallery of Beauty took one look and described her as 'Bellissima'. She started working and studying at trade school to have her hairdressing qualifications recognised. Working at the salon helped Cathy develop her English by learning a new phrase each day 'Come with me' and 'Please follow me' being some of the first to get her by.

Cathy bought and ran a restaurant for 6 years in the City. Her husband then became ill with cancer and was given 6 months to live which inspired Cathy to start studying alternative health. Her husband lived for 22 years before succumbing to his illness. Cathy has since remarried and is close to her 2 children including being a loving nonna to her daughter's two children

Cathy's passion is the Marche Club and how the Club welcomes people. From the time she arrived in Campbelltown, Cathy has been involved in providing opportunities for people to meet, eat and enjoy each other's company. She set up a program for older people to socialise and this still happens monthly at the Marche Club.

Cathy is heavily involved in Community with the Marche Club, Radio Italia program, live streaming tv program back to Italy, a representative of her Marche region on the Council for the Marchigiani Abroad, President of Regional Clubs Australia and has previously been nominated for Woman of the Year. Cathy has been awarded the high honour of Cavaliere (Cav.) for her services to the Italian community, awarded by the Italian Government. Only 5 women in South Australia have a Cav.

Cathy mentioned retiring one day, when asked when she planned to do that her response was 'NEVER!'. Being busy, being connected and helping people is something she loves too much she doesn't consider it work!

"Marche Club is my home and I greet everyone as though they are coming into my home."

Celebrating International Women's Day with the Women of Campbelltown project – inspiring stories of local women, their achievements and contributions to the Community'.

Thank you to the women who participated and the volunteer interviewers Di Booker and Katrina Spencer for their time.