

Take part in Anti-Poverty Week

Marrickville Council is encouraging residents to take a stand against poverty this Anti-Poverty Week, 11-18 October 2009.

In many inner city areas, rich and poor often live side-by-side. While the median income in the Marrickville local government area is now higher than the Sydney average and increasing, almost a quarter of residents are still struggling to make ends meet. More than 16,500 residents earn about \$250 per week, and a significant number of low and moderate income earners are renting and in housing stress.

Poverty and severe hardship affect more than a million Australians. In 2007, UNICEF's report on child poverty in OECD countries revealed that Australia had the 14th highest child poverty rate.

Globally, around 1.4 billion people live in extreme poverty, with women representing a staggering 70 per cent of the world's poor.

Marrickville Council will raise awareness of local, national and global poverty through a number of local activities for Anti-Poverty Week. These include:

- A free sausage sizzle and live entertainment at Marrickville Town Hall

- Health talks at Marrickville Library on growing your own food

- A donation of books to the Greek Welfare Association and a book, food and toy drive for local women's refuges

- A canned food drive at Council offices to be donated to the community

- Art therapy sessions for seniors at Seaview Street Hall

- The launch of the No Interest Loans Scheme for local residents

- Information displays on Anti Poverty Week across the Marrickville area

Mayor of Marrickville Councillor Sam Iskandar says poverty is a subject close to his heart. "When I arrived in Sydney as a refugee from the civil war in Lebanon, I struggled financially. But more than that, I was deeply shocked at the poverty and homelessness I saw on the streets of Sydney – people sleeping rough and going without food. Poverty is more than just economic; it can include social isolation and a lack of living and working skills.

"I urge all our residents to help the disadvantaged



in every way they can. I am asking everyone in Marrickville to help provide hope and assistance to those less well off," Councillor Iskandar said.

Residents can also help those in the community who are less fortunate by volunteering for local not-for-profit organisations. These include:

STARS – 9750 9344

May Murray Multicultural Aged Services - 9558 0999

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre - 9516 4755

Companionship Volunteers at Missionholme Aged Care Facility Sacred Heart Hospice – 8382 9444

To take part in Anti-Poverty Week activities organised by Marrickville Council contact 9335 2222. For more information on Anti-Poverty Week visit www.antipovertyweek.org.au.

Battle of Marathon remembered in annual Spartathlon

The 27th annual Spartathlon ultra-marathon race began in Athens on Friday, with 350 athletes from 33 countries participating. The first athlete is expected to cross the finish line on Saturday morning in front of a statue of Leonidas in Sparta, located in the southeastern Peloponnese. The reward for the athletes' super-human effort is a "cotinos", a wreath made of wild olive tree branches and water from the Evrotas River delivered by a young Spartan woman.



based on Herodotus' description of the Athenian 'Imerodromou', or messenger, who arrived in Sparta the day after he departed from Athens and also on well-known historical events of that time. It has, therefore, been considered the most accurate route in relation to Pheidippides' course.

The battle of Marathon in 490 B.C., one of the most significant military clashes in history, constitutes a milestone in western civilisation. The strategic genius of Athenian general Miltiades and the self-denial of his citizen soldiers defeated the invading Persians armies and preserved Athens and Hellenism from the utmost danger of subjugation to invaders of an eastern despot. Marathon was the first victory to deflect and eventually defeat the envisioned penetration and domination of the European continent by the powerful and developed Persian Empire, an event of momentous signifi-

icance. In the aftermath of the military victory, Athens became the pre-eminent Greek city-state and the epicentre of what is known as the eponymous Classical Age, during which the foundations for western democracy were laid. According to historians, the messenger Pheidippides left Athens heading west on the Iera Odos, or "sacred road," heading for the town of Elefsis. From there he followed the Skyronia Odos, a military trail on the slopes of the Gerania mountain range, travelling south through Isthmia, Examilia and ancient Corinth. He reached ancient Nemea, thus avoiding Epicratea of Argos, a rival of Athens, and he continued along the mountains between Argolida and Arcadia. Pheidippides climbed Mt. Parthenio (1,200 meters). Descending the mountain, he continued in the direction of Tegea, one of the locations mentioned by Herodotus in his account about Pheidippides. He

then proceeded south toward the martial Sparta. Upon his arrival in Sparta, he completed 1,140 "stadia" (with one 'stadio' equalling the length of one stadium), totalling 246 kilometres.

In 1879 the English poet Robert Browning wrote the stirring poem 'Pheidippides'. It is said that the poem so inspired Baron Pierre de Coubertin and other founders of the modern Olympic Games that they were prompted to create a foot race of 42 km which would be named the Marathon.

"Archons of Athens, topped by the tethix, see, I return!

See, 'tis myself here standing alive, no spectre that speaks!

Crowned with the myrtle, did you command me, Athens and you,

"Run, Pheidippides, run and race, reach Sparta for aid!

Persia has come, we are here, where is She?" Your command I obeyed,

Ran and raced: like stubble, some field which a fire runs through,

Was the space between city and city: two days, two nights did I burn

Over the hills, under the dales, down pits and up peaks."

Two and a half thousand years after that historical battle, a sports event, inseparably related to it, was born in Greece. The Spartathlon is inseparably linked with the Olympic ideals of friendship, peace, selflessness and fraternity.

The ultra-distance runners will be greeted by local residents of modern-day Sparta at the entrance to the municipality, while a lavish ceremony in honor of the winners will be held in the centre of the town on Saturday evening.