

Department of Education

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Students have the courage to care

It's a seemingly innocuous rug. Yet it is woven with priceless memories and stitched with the symbolism of survival.

This rug kept an 18-month-old Peter Baruch warm as his family fled Poland to Japan in 1939, escaping the invasion of the Nazis. It remains the only tangible memory of his brief time in Poland.

Now in his early 80s, Peter recently shared his story, and his precious rug, with a completely absorbed and engaged group of Stretton State College students who listened intently about ordinary people who did extraordinary things.

Peter is a volunteer for [Courage to Care](https://couragetocare.com.au/) (<https://couragetocare.com.au/>) – an educational program that addresses issues of racism, discrimination, injustice and hatred through the lens of the Holocaust. It focuses on the power of one person to make a difference. And that one person for the Baruch family was Chiune Sugihara, a Japanese diplomat who saved 6,000 Jews by providing them with transit visas for Japan, despite the country's refusal to do so.

This is the second time Stretton State College has hosted Courage to Care and, according to Humanities Head of Department Sasha McDonald, it is an extremely important program because it provides students with a unique opportunity to hear from survivors themselves.

"The best thing about the program is the relevant, real world experience that it delivers to the students," Sasha said.

"The Courage to Care program shifts their learning off the page and into actuality as they get to listen and question a person who is part of history themselves," she said.



Woven with memories – Stretton State College students listen intently as Courage to Care's Peter Baruch shows off the rug he was wrapped in when his family escaped from the Nazis

"We remind our students that they could be one of the last generations who get the chance to hear a Holocaust survivor's testimony first-hand. This is a fading opportunity to hear about the power of purpose and meaning in the face of discrimination and injustice."

Sasha said students clearly gained a greater appreciation of the importance of tolerance, and confronting racism and hatred when they see it.

"We find that the students come away with a more concrete understanding of the devastating effects of discrimination and prejudice," she said.

"They often reflect on their own experiences and behaviours, and immediately think about what they could change to become a better version of themselves in support of others.

"Our hope is that by participating in the Courage to Care program our students now feel empowered to take positive action against discrimination in all forms – not to be passive bystanders, but to make a difference whenever possible.

"We want our students to recognise the positive contribution that they can make to our school community, and the world, and encourage them to support one another despite their diversity," she said.

Gandel Holocaust Scholarship for Australian Educators

Courage to Care was introduced to Stretton's Humanities program after one of their teachers, Alyce Lyon, participated in the [Gandel Holocaust Scholarship for Australian Educators](https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/international_projects/australian_educators/index.asp) (https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/international_projects/australian_educators/index.asp). The program was initially run with their extension class; however, on seeing the profound influence and overwhelming reaction from their students, they decided to expand to the whole Year 10 cohort.

Stretton State College - Courage to Care

