

MEDIA INFORMATION:

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RUOK? Miss Maud encourages families and friends to commit to a year round habit of having conversations with family and friends

RUOK? The inspiration for RUOK Day was Gavin Larkin OAM who, following the suicide of his father recognised one simple fact: 'A conversation can change a life' - and that conversations need to happen regularly with family, friends, colleagues and neighbours so they know you care.

Reinforced time and again by social workers, the concept was also emphasized by David Woodroffe MSW, social worker and founder of Samaritans of Western Australia in his book *Coffee Cup Counselling* (published in 2003 and 2007) when he said, 'the greatest gift you can give another is your attention'.

Now with social media a major part of the way we communicate, one person who has been encouraging people to enjoy face to face conversations for almost fifty years is Perth hospitality leader Maud Edmiston - better known as Miss Maud.

She said RUOK Day was the ideal time to commit to having meaningful conversations with family and friends. She is encouraging her customers to revive the age-old tradition of reaching out and having conversations with others, urging them to make the tradition a year-round habit of their own.

"Last year we decided to create RUOK? cupcakes for the first time as simple way to help people start a conversation helping them to overcome concerns that they might be being intrusive," said Maud Edmiston. "To our delight we found that many customers used our simple little cupcake to start a meaningful conversation and show they cared. We even found employers using the RUOK? cupcakes to prompt conversations in the workplace," she said.

The leader of the well-known hospitality chain which carries her name said our lives are made up of habits, routines and traditions. "One tradition we seem to be losing is having face to face conversations around dinner tables and at work and home. Yet we recognise the power of conversations in helping us clarify and sort through anything from the simplest issues to what can sometimes feel like the most difficult," she said.

Ms Edmiston whose commitment to encouraging community conversations has seen her ask her customers to have their say and express what's on their mind ahead of state and federal elections through her Miss Maud Coffee Bean Polls said family and work worries, study issues, family troubles, feelings of anxiety and depression – were all issues faced by most of us at some time and a conversation with a friend could be of immense help.

"I would love to encourage more of our customers to take on the messages of RUOK Day and spread the coffee house tradition of having face to face conversations to talk through issues, with the simple message on RUOK Day that helping friends and family in distress often starts with a conversation. We hope our RUOK? cupcakes will again be helpful in spreading the word and helping start conversations," she said.

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The WA hospitality leader said it had always been a privilege to her to see the heart-warming effects of people having conversations in her coffee houses whether catching up to find out about the latest events in the lives of their children or sporting team, exchanging ideas about projects, talking about their favourite shows or exchanging thoughts on their dreams or concerns.

“Since I started Miss Maud more than forty six years ago what has always been evident is that when people share their thoughts, ideas and concerns and create a connection with others it can change lives for the better, stimulate ideas and reduce loneliness,” she said.

“I hope that RUOK Day with its powerful messages will foster even more conversations and warm connections way into the future.” (ENDS)

Further information:

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