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Inspiring community effort in Junee helps rebuilds kitchen and hope

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TEAM EFFORT: Junee Correctional Centre's Chris Moor, Junee Senior Citizen's Centre Marg Schubach and Junee Men's Shed's Barry Breen.

IT WAS a gesture that would restore even the deepest cynic's faith in the power of the Junee community.

A group of inmates and a bunch of battle-hardened old blokes have teamed up to lend a hand to a cherished community organisation.

It all came about when Junee's Senior Citizen's Centre sent out an SOS for help to upgrade its ageing kitchen.

Enter Junee Correctional Centre.

After hearing the request, jail management decided to throw the challenge over to inmates in a shopfitting course run by Riverina TAFE teacher Ken Lander.

The 10 inmates worked feverishly and passionately to complete the new kitchen, with the new facility finished in extraordinary detail.

But there was still a problem – the kitchen had to be installed.

That's where the blokes from the Junee Men's Shed came to the fore.

The team of big-hearted retirees installed the kitchen this month, much to the delight of the centre's users.

"It's just wonderful, we really appreciate everything they have done for us," Junee Senior Citizens Centre president Shirley Bennett said.

"We have no government funding to help us so we wrote to the jail and asked them to donate some help, and they obliged."

The centre had been in operation for half a century and the kitchen had barely changed in that time, she said.

Junee TAFE campus manager Peter Guy said the project also offered some valuable hands-on experience for the inmates.

"The students appreciate the opportunity to gain skills and knowledge in order to facilitate their rehabilitation and improved prospects for future employment," Mr Guy said.

Junee Men's Shed treasurer John McLaren said the group was proud to be a part of the project.

"We do a lot of little jobs like this and it's just part of our community service," Mr McLaren said.

He said members completed the job on site, doing the tiling, fitting cupboards and even calling in plumbers and electricians for the specialist works. "It was a real team effort," he said.

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