Opening day: St Margaret Hall

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IMAGINE bringing together 285 teenagers, a DJ with sound desk and four speaker stacks that would bring down Sydney Opera House. Add passionate staff who work tirelessly to help these orphaned and disadvantaged youths develop skills to create their own future.

Then mix it all together in a building that many of them helped to create through funds provided by the congregations of St John's, Cowes and St Margaret's, Mooroolbark (as well as many other individuals) and what would you expect?

A party.

In God's time, between February 2010 and January 2015, a brand new hall grew to bring a new heart to RYDA Vocational Training Institute and the wider work of Rubaga Youth Development Association.

On Thursday 5 March the joyful celebrations to christen this monument to RYDA's past work and launching place for God's future challenges to RYDA and its supporters, continued from 8am to 8pm. Organised by a student committee, who were guided by a small staff team, the day included two hours of cleaning the compound, setting up the hall and lighting the wood fires under giant cooking pots to get the lunch under way. The other 10 hours were filled with singing, dancing, role play, dancing, ribbon cutting, dancing, speeches, dancing, karaoke, dancing, eating, dancing, a short break for soccer, dancing, drama presentations, dancing, conversations, dancing – and the free-flowing, generous, celebratory Spirit of God.

Believe me, St. Margaret Hall has been well and truly blessed.

As a representative of every donor who has ever sent a cent to RYDA through St Margaret's I was there to cut the ribbon and declare the building open. I was also able to present a Scrapbook of Blessings from St John's, St Margaret's and supporters beyond. The silence and absorbed attention as I read messages from sample pages cradled a sense of awe within the room. How can this place mean so much to so many people from so far away?

St. Margaret of Scotland, who is said to have fed the poor at the castle gate every morning before eating her own breakfast, would surely see RYDA's work and continuing support of it, as an inspired continuation of her own, indeed as evidence that Jesus continues to live.

As everyone settled after re-entering the hall following the ribbon-cutting ceremony, the RYDA Choir made their way in through the side door. They were singing:

"I will enter his gates with thanksgiving in my heart,
I will enter his courts with praise.
I will say this is the day that the Lord has made.
I will rejoice for he has made me glad."

Indeed, it was the day that the Lord had made. And we were glad.

Celebrations at RYDA