

STaR Spring Newsletter 2010



STaR Association

For children with disabilities and special learning needs.

A research based service offering inclusive child care placement to children with disabilities and additional needs.

Our mission is:

“To empower children with disabilities and/or special learning needs, and those who support them, through research based information.”

Our vision is:

“To be a highly professional organisation providing research-based education and support to children with disabilities and/or special needs, and those who support them.”

WELCOME TO STaR'S SPRING 2010 NEWSLETTER

What a disappointing start to spring! Whilst the gardens are well watered and dams are getting full, after such a long and cold winter some regular sunshine would be a welcome relief. It's been a busy few months with the end of the financial year, production of our Annual Report and holding of our Annual General Meeting on 12 October.

After four years Dr Frances Cunningham has resigned as President and Board member. Frances joined the Board when the Association was operating from my home and she has contributed enormously to our growth. With increased work commitments Frances is unable to continue on the STaR Board. Nicole Grantham, our Treasurer for the past four years, has also resigned. Nicole's daughter attended the STaR program for two years and Nicole's input, not only as a skilled accountant but also as a mother, has been invaluable. The Grantham family has moved to the South Coast and the logistics of travel and work have been very challenging. We appreciate that Nicole stayed on as Treasurer until we found a suitable replacement. On behalf of the STaR staff and families I thank both women for being part of the 'STaR Journey'.

We are very fortunate to welcome Diane Green to our Board as Treasurer. Diane brings a wealth of knowledge and experience, from the perspectives of small business to large corporations. Fiona Holmwood was elected as President and Catherine Putt as Vice President. I look forward to working with the newly elected Board.

As the end of year fast approaches all we can do is enjoy the ride and take each day as it comes. Good luck with all the end of year concerts, celebrations and demands. I hope its not too exhausting! I warmly invite you to contact me any time if you have any concerns, issues or suggestions.

Margaret
Margaret Meaker
STaR General Manager

STaR Association

Supporters:

The Australian
Stockbrokers
Foundation

Gilbert + Tobin
Lawyers

Robert Bates & Co
Chartered
Accountants

WebAngel P/L

MonSTaR Cup

Daniels Automotive

Partners:

Macquarie
University Special
Education Centre

Access Macquarie
Ltd

Funding:

Dept. of Families,
Community Services
& Indigenous Affairs

STaR FAMILY SUPPORT (from Elise)

I'm glad Spring has arrived. It is lovely to be outside. Fewer runny noses, maybe some hay fever, but it's spring fetes, kicking a ball, visiting the park, picnics, opening the doors and letting the fresh air in...

To families new to STaR, **welcome!** I hope your children are settling in well. A brief explanation for new parents/carers: Family Support is a service for STaR families. It includes carer information sessions and packages, 1:1 support if required and networking opportunities. The STaR Association has established a Family Support section on its website (www.star.org.au), where further information can be found.

For STaR families whose children are going to school in 2011 we have a 'Going to School' section which has some useful information and explains some of the school jargon.

You may be interested in...

Aspect

The '**Someone to Turn to...**' program is a parent-to-parent support program. It links volunteers who have a child with autism with parents or carers who are experiencing difficulties and need to talk with someone who has 'been there'.

For further information phone Pauline Hunter Knight on 8977 8335 or email phunterknight@autismspectrum.org.au

Aspect Autism Information Line

The Aspect Autism Information Line is staffed by professionals from a number of disciplines and has available a wide range of information about autism spectrum disorders, services and resources.

1800 069 978 or 02 8977 8377

New National Disability Parking Scheme starts in NSW

From 20 September people with disability in NSW will benefit from the introduction of the new national Australian Disability Parking Permit. New NSW applicants will be issued the permit from 20 September, and about 328,000 existing NSW permit holders will be mailed the new permit from 7 October to replace their current permit. The Australian Disability Parking Permit will replace over 100 types of existing permits currently issued by state, territory and local governments across Australia. The permit has enhanced security features (like holograms and bar coding), which will help reduce abuse and make it easier for enforcement officers to recognise permits when people travel across Australia.

To validate the new Australian Disability Parking Permit, the NSW Mobility Parking Scheme photo permit **must be inserted in the plastic sleeve**; otherwise it is invalid and can attract a fine. The white plastic holder previously issued by the RTA can no longer be used.

Education Rebate

You may have already heard about the Education Rebate offered by the Australian Taxation Office.

If you have full care of a primary or secondary school aged child you may be eligible to claim up to 50% of expenses up to \$750.00 (i.e., a return of \$375.00) for each eligible primary school aged child and up to \$1,500.00 (i.e., a return of 4750.00) for each eligible secondary school aged child.

The ATO website states that disability aids to help in the use of computer equipment for students with special needs are also eligible expenses. Other things you can consider when making your claim at tax time are "Associated Learning Materials" such as:

- PECS (Picture Exchange Communication Systems)

- Boardmaker software and other visual learning books and devices
- Sensory toys

For more information visit the Australian Taxation Office www.ato.gov.au
 Source: ACD NSW Newsletter, Issue #42 Sept 2010

Special Disability Trusts

Special Disability Trusts (SDTs) were introduced by the Commonwealth Government in 2006 to assist parents of a person with a severe disability (broadly defined in the legislation) in planning for the future care and accommodation needs of their child. The benefits of these trusts are that, to the extent the trust holds \$551,750 (indexed annually) or less in assets:

- assets held in trust for the person with a disability will not reduce their pension entitlements
- gifts to the trust by certain immediate family members will not be used to diminish the contributor's entitlement to a pension, i.e., they are exempt from the social security 'gifting rules'.

Usually gifts proffered within 5 years of a person being entitled to a pension would be counted as the assets of the person, even though the money had been given away, thus reducing the contributor's entitlement to a pension.

The principal home of the beneficiary is also exempt from the means test. Funds above these limits will be subject to the usual social security means tests.

On 24 June 2010 the Federal Government legislated to reduce the tax on the unexpected income arising under the trust from the rate of 46.5% to the beneficiary's personal marginal tax rate, effective from the 08/09-tax year.

Changes to the rules governing SDTs announced in the 2010 Budget have also made SDTs more attractive to families. There was a slight easing of the eligibility criteria, thus allowing people with a disability who work up to 7 hours a week to qualify as a beneficiary under an SDT. More significantly, some restrictions on the use of the trust fund were eased.

If you are considering establishing an SDT, contact Centrelink's Special Disability Trusts team on 1800 734 750 and seek professional advice from your lawyer and/or accountant.

Source: ACD NSW Newsletter, Issue #42 Sept 2010

New Federal Minister for Disabilities

Queensland Senator Jan McLucas will replace Bill Shorten as Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities. Jan McLucas was Shadow Minister for Ageing, Disabilities and Carers from 2005 until the 2007 Federal Election. During this time, the peak body National Disability Services (NDS) worked closely with her. She helped initiate the Senate Inquiry into CSTDA which produced a comprehensive multi-party report critical of the under-funding of disability services and the dysfunctional operation of the system. As parliamentary Secretary, Jan McLucas will focus on the following: delivery of the Government's election commitments (including early intervention for children and capital funding for supported accommodation), progressing reforms under the National Disability Agreement, implementing the National Disability Strategy (once it is endorsed by COAG), developing the National Carer Strategy and issues related to Australian Disability Enterprises.

Opposition Leader Tony Abbott has elevated portfolio responsibility for Disability by promoting Senator Mitch Fifield from Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to Shadow Minister for Disabilities, Carers and the Voluntary Sector.

FaHCSIA Minister Jenny Macklin will lead the Government's response to the Productivity Commission Inquiry regarding the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Source: NDS News update, 15th September 2010.

Family Funday Sunday (Train, bus and ferry travel)

Every Sunday the whole family can enjoy a fun day out for only \$2.50 per person, with unlimited travel on Sydney's buses, trains and ferries. The ticket will even take passengers to Newcastle and Wollongong. A family must include at least one adult and one child aged up to 15 years (or 16 to 18 years with a school travel pass). Children aged under four years travel free.

For ideas on what to do and where to go, visit the website:

www.visitnsw.com/Family_Funday_Sunday_p3480.aspx

All Abilities Playground at Kellyville

An all abilities playground has been built at Kellyville and can be found at the Bernie Mullane Reserve, Marella Ave, Kellyville. It is fully fenced, and the play equipment includes a liberty swing and an all abilities merry-go-round.

Official Launch of the Little Blue Gum Creek Wheelchair Track - Roseville

What? Ku-ring-gai Council invites all to the official launch of the track where cormorants can be spied drying their wings in the sun. The boardwalk accommodates wheelchair access direct from the parking bays on the corner of Lady Game Drive and Grosvenor Road. The wheelchair track is approximately 200 metres long with vistas of eucalyptus grandis towering overhead and pockets of Casuarina forests in between. The project was made possible through funding from State Government program Metropolitan Greenspace and Ku-ring-gai's Environmental Levy.

When? Friday 3 December at 11am to mark International Day of Disability.

Where? The track meanders alongside Little Blue Gum Creek

RSVP? Phone Mary Lou Lewis on 9424 0961 to register your attendance and for catering purposes.

Source: Warringah Disability Newsletter November 2010

Sizzle 2010 – an inclusive arts festival to celebrate International Day for People with Disability

Special event - Sensory Storytelling for children and their carers.

Come along to the Gallery with your child and enjoy a fun interactive story telling session that includes tactile and sound elements. Then explore a range of specially selected toys and talk to Alison Mitchell, Toy Librarian from Penrith Council. Morning tea is available for purchase at Café at Lewers.

Free admission but bookings essential.

Penrith Regional Gallery & The Lewers Bequest, 86 River Rd, Emu Plains 2750

Phone 02 4735 1100

Sports CONNECT Webinar*

The series is designed to provide more opportunities for people with a disability to participate in sport and active recreation. View the first webinar, Options in Sport and Active Recreation, on http://www.ausport.gov.au/participating/disability/get_involved/webinar_series, or sign up for future webinars:

4 November 2010 - Adapting and Modifying for Individual Difference

2 December 2010 - Benefits of being Involved in Sport and Active Recreation

3 February 2011 – Benefits for Sport by Involving People with a Disability

3 March 2011 – Creating Opportunities for Participation by Working Together

7 April 2011- Bringing it All Together.

* A webinar is an online presentation live on the internet and can involve presenters from all over the world. You basically view another person's computer screen and listen to their voice through headphones (iPod, mobile phone headphones are fine). Each attendee at a Webinar can ask questions through a live 'chat' function and take part in polls on specific topics. You will be able to communicate with various people from the disability sector and sport organisations, to see how others go about including people with disability in sport and active recreation.

Source: Spastic Centre – 13 October 2010

Other information

Margaret recently attended a session that focused on dental hygiene and returned with information on different types of toothbrushes and other handy hints that may be of interest to you.

The Surround Toothbrush is ideal for those who have problems in using a toothbrush or for those whose teeth are brushed by another. Soft, end-rounded bristles are automatically positioned at 45-degree angle for better cleaning at the gumline and the compact head makes brushing safe and comfortable. The wide handle is extra long and curved to permit an easy, controlled grip, particularly for those who have difficulty in grasping or controlling a toothbrush.

For further information contact Mobile Medical Systems International on 02 9252 4410 or email customer service infor@mobilemedical.com.au

There are also some DIY ideas for holding onto the toothbrush if there are some fine motor concerns, such as adding a tennis ball or bike grip to the end of the toothbrush or using an electric toothbrush. If your child refuses to drink water and/or milk and only drinks fizzy drink, then it would be better to use a straw as it stops the drink from dispersing through the mouth and flowing over the teeth. Interesting hints to ponder...

If you need assistance with accessing resources or information, or you simply want to talk, please phone me (Elise) on 02 9888 3717.

CHILDCARE SUPPORT PROGRAM (*from Dawn*)

Wow! It's the end of the year already and, as usual, we wonder where it has gone. Fourteen of our children will be going to school next year and over the past few months we have been busily trying to prepare them for their new school placement. Through funding support from the STaR Association our Preparation for School Program has been implemented with all of our children who are going to school next year. We are now ready to commence our Supported School Orientation Program for these children so that their transition to school will be as smooth as possible.

We have recently commenced supporting a new childcare centre, Headstart, at West Ryde. To our new STaR families at Headstart we say welcome, and please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns. We also welcome the staff of Headstart. We look forward to supporting you in your work with our STaR children.

Brianna, Wyatt, Ethan, Farzarna, Dominic, Edgar, Emily, Asmay, Dion, Serena, Lachlan, Dane, Jack and Arnav are commencing school in 2011. We wish you and your families a smooth transition to school and a happy and productive school experience. Commencing school is a very exciting time for children and, although as a parent you may have fears and concerns for your child moving into 'unchartered waters', it is important to try to hide your fears and share in and encourage their excitement. Remember, our STaR Parent Support program is there to contact if you would like someone to talk to now or after your child commences school – phone Elise 9888 3717.

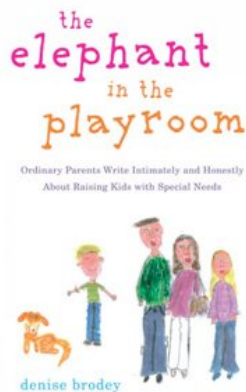
Best wishes

Dawn

STaR BOOK REVIEW

Families often comment on books that they have found useful, and here at STaR we also come across books that we would like to share with others. We hope you find it useful, and if you have read any books that you would like to recommend to other families, please let us know and we will include your book review.

Our spring review is on Denise Brodey's *The elephant in the playroom*.



I've come to the conclusion that "googleing" can be dangerous as there is so much information, often conflicting, and it only serves to confuse and sadden parents. Sometimes, however, it is a great way of finding information. We can read it at our own pace and absorb the bits that are useful or meaningful. Somewhere there is a balance, and I believe books such as this one bring that.

The elephant in the playroom is simply a book of stories written by family members of children with special needs. It's blatantly honest, sharing the raw emotions, incredible highs and lows, frustrations, hilarious moments and grief associated with having a child with special needs. It touches on issues often swept under the carpet; it discusses things we feel we cannot talk about. The beauty of this book is you can read a few pages and put it down, flick to stories relevant to you or work from cover to cover. Most of all it reassures that you are not alone, wherever you are in the world. It's a celebration of the human spirit. So when people ask what you want for Christmas, I suggest you get this book!

GOING TO SCHOOL

Starting school causes many emotions – pride in your child reaching another milestone, a sense of anticipation of new friendships, new beginnings, but also a sense of anxiety. Will my child manage? Is the school right for my child?

In this newsletter and the summer edition we will have some useful information that we hope will make the transition to school a little easier.

- Attached is a document listing some *Starting School Picture Storybooks*. Share a story every day. Let your child turn the pages. Talk about the pictures together. Ask your child questions about the story.

- Teach your child to recognise these symbols



- *Fostering Independence* - continue to assist your child to practise these personal/social skills:
 - ❖ use the toilet independently (and wash hands properly)
 - ❖ say his own name and address
 - ❖ adapt to unfamiliar settings and new experiences
 - ❖ play cooperatively with other children (e.g., share and wait to take turns)
 - ❖ sit still to listen to a story

- ❖ participate in imaginative play and encourage her natural curiosity
- ❖ share an adult's attention with several other children
- ❖ encourage your child to dress himself and put on his own shoes.
- ❖ teach your child to recognise her own belongings, such as her school bag (attach a special key ring or ribbon to the bag for easy identification), hat, lunchbox, drink bottle etc.

- *Kids + Family + Play + Fun = Learning*

Play is a child's world; it is how children explore and learn about their world. The **best games don't need batteries** and have little or no cost: ball games, word games, drawing, board games, cooking, play dough, craft, outdoor play (running, skipping, jumping), card games, dress-ups, music, singing, dancing, laughing, making a cubby house (with a big cardboard box). All are valuable experiences that develop skills that will help your child to learn at school.

- *Transition to School – Orientation Visits*

Orientation visits are not just great for your child. They will allow you also to

- ❖ become familiar with the school environment
- ❖ meet teachers, school staff, other children and parents
- ❖ find out about your new school and how children learn today
- ❖ ask questions. If adults feel prepared then children will too. Sometimes it's the 'little things' that can help children (and parents) settle into school.

- *Jargon – what does it mean?*

DET - Department of Education and Training

This NSW government department oversees public education from early childhood (preschool) through to Higher School Certificate (Years 11 & 12)

BOS - Board of Studies

The Board of Studies (NSW Government) develops the education curriculum and syllabuses that are implemented K-12 in all schools.

KLAs – Key Learning Areas (or 'subjects' at school)

English, Mathematics, Science & Technology, HSIE (Human Society & its Environment), Creative Arts, PDHPE (Personal Development, Health & Physical Education). Catholic Schools also include Religious Education (RE).

Outcomes – These are statements within the Syllabus that describe the knowledge, skills and understanding that is expected to be gained by most students in each stage of development.

Learning Stages – The curriculum is currently organised into different stages of learning to correspond with school year classes. Most stages cover two years of schooling.

Early Stage 1 (ES1) Kindergarten

Stage 1 (S1)	Year 1 & Year 2	Stage 4 (S4)	Year 7 & Year 8
--------------	-----------------	--------------	-----------------

Stage 2 (S2)	Year 3 & Year 4	Stage 5 (S5)	Year 9 & Year 10
--------------	-----------------	--------------	------------------

Stage 3 (S3)	Year 5 & Year 6	Stage 6 (S6)	Year 11 & Year 12
--------------	-----------------	--------------	-------------------

Learning Support – Children learn differently and at a different pace. Some students need extra support due to a diagnosed disability or learning difficulty. Schools have Learning Support Teachers (LST) & Learning Support Assistants (LSA).

COLA – Covered Outdoor Learning Area

Mufti – Out of uniform day; children can wear casual clothes

ICT – Information Communication Technology

School/Staff Development Days – days when school staff are involved in professional development and children do not attend school.

P&C – Parent & Citizens Association in public schools

P&F – Parents & Friends Association in Catholic schools

These are parent groups that help build community in schools.



STaR FEEDBACK FORM

Please update this form so we can ensure our information on our database is accurate.

Contact Details:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Mobile: _____

Contact Address: _____

Is there further information you would like to see in future newsletters?
We would love to hear from you.

Please select your preference for receiving our newsletters (please tick preferred).

EMAIL

POST

All information supplied will be strictly confidential and only used for distribution of STaR material. Please return completed form by either fax, post or email.
Many thanks for taking the time to update your information.

STaR Association

Suite 2.5, 56 Delhi Road, North Ryde NSW 2113
(PO Box 209 Thornleigh 2120)
[T] 02 9888 3717 [F] 02 9888 1475
[E] office@star.org.au [W] www.star.org.au