

STaR Autumn Newsletter 2011



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 ((from Margaret))

Not so long ago we were complaining about the heat, and here we are freezing when it's not even winter yet! In cold weather we tend to stay by the home fires a little more so perhaps there are advantages in that we are forced to slow down. I hope the cold weather doesn't present too many challenges for you, as our children don't always embrace the 'slow down' lifestyle. My daughter finds winter very boring, as she cannot swim all day!

We are very fortunate to be supported by the MonSTaR Foundation as I discussed in the last newsletter. The 5th MonSTaR Cup was held on Friday 18th March and was incredibly successful raising \$80,000 for STaR. The all-day event started at 6am when the first round of golfers teed off. A total of 208 golfers played in the morning and afternoon fields. The beautiful course was covered in flags to acknowledge the generosity of 26 event sponsors. There was no room to spare for the dinner as 308 guests enjoyed a very entertaining comedian, beautiful meal, and listening to Peter Overton, who is the MonSTaR patron and kindly agreed to be MC. Peter's commitment to MonSTaR is significant and he is so generous with his time. Have a look at his introduction on the MonSTaR website; it is so heartfelt and we are very fortunate to have his support.

Our STaR families were represented by Simone Garland, whose boys Tommy and James attend Top Ryde Early Learning Centre. Simone, very bravely, stepped well outside her comfort zone and spoke about her boys, the challenges she and Steve face having two sons with autism and what STaR has taught them. It is not easy to share your story, let alone in front of 308 people, yet Simone gave people a rare insight into the joys, challenges and dilemmas we face as parents of children with disabilities. She received long and loud applause and I thank her for putting so much time and thought into her speech, because the impact of this can never be measured.



Margaret Meaker & Amanda Stubbs on the course in style!

STaR remains grateful to the MonSTaR Board and the whole MonSTaR community of supporters because without them we wouldn't be where we are today and daring to dream as we do.

Stay warm and don't hesitate to contact us at STaR if you have any questions, concerns or simply feel like chatting to people who "get it"! Have a productive autumn.

Warm regards

Margaret

Margaret Meaker
STaR General Manager

STaR Association

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& Indigenous Affairs

STaR FAMILY SUPPORT (*from Elise*)

I can't believe it is May already. Where has the year gone? As Margaret has said, one minute we are enjoying the sun and the next minute we are pulling out the winter woollies!!!

Welcome to our new STaR families. I hope all your lovely children have settled into their childcare centres and are enjoying themselves.

For new families I've included a brief explanation about STaR's Family Support program. The STaR Family Support program provides a variety of support and information to STaR families and the general community. This support is provided on a 'needs and wants' basis and is very flexible. Our aim is not to encroach or impose on families but to assist them to understand, cope with and manage their child's disabilities and the implications for the whole family. There is a Family Support section on STaR's website (www.star.org.au), where further information can be found. If you need resources or information, or simply want to talk, please ring me on **02 9888 3717**.

You may be interested in...

Every Australian Counts Campaign & National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

Every Australian Counts is the campaign for the introduction of a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The NDIS would revolutionise the way people with a disability, their families and carers are supported in this country. The Scheme would provide people with a disability, their families and carers with the regular care, support, therapy and equipment they need. As a Medicare-type scheme, it would provide a secure and consistent pool of funds for these services and support. It would be fair, efficient and effective. It would focus on early intervention and delivering those supports that produce the best long-term outcomes. It would maximise opportunities for independence, participation and productivity. Support would be individualised and person-centred, based on the choices of a person with a disability and the family.

The Every Australian Counts campaign is headed by John Della-Bosca as the National Campaign Director. As Australians we need to show the government that there is widespread community support for change – and that the time for action has come. At STaR we encourage you, your family and friends to support the campaign by -

- Visiting the website www.everyaustraliancounts.org.au to register your details
- Finding and "liking" the Every Australian Counts Facebook page
- Sharing the website www.everyaustraliancounts.org.au and Facebook page with your friends and family

I have attached to the newsletter ten reasons why we need an NDIS. Please read the information and support the Campaign.

Parent Line

CatholicCare has been funded by Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) to include the Early Childhood Intervention Information Service within its current information service, Parent Line NSW. This funding will enhance the service provided by Parent Line to address the information, counselling and emotional support needs of families with a child or young person with a disability, aged 0-18. Parent Line operates for 24 hours, 7 days per week, and is staffed by a team of trained professional counsellors with qualifications in social work, psychology, education, health and social welfare.

Parent Line NSW can be contacted on **1300 130 052** and information about the range of services provided by Parent Line can be found at www.parentline.org.au

Luke Priddis Foundation My Time Play Group (Doonside)

My Time is a facilitated peer support program for parents and carers of children with complex health needs (disability or chronic medical condition). The groups, funded by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), are for parents and carers who want to connect with others and share their experiences. They provide unique support from other parents and carers who have 'been there' or are 'there right now'. My Time groups help parents and carers of young children with disabilities to share experiences, information and ideas, to connect with their local community and offers parents and carers support while their children are entertained by a play helper.

The Luke Priddis Foundation has established a My Time Play Group at Doonside, which runs on Wednesdays 9.30am -11.30am, during school terms. To register your interest please contact Kari Potter at the Luke Priddis Foundation

Ph: 4736 0309. E: kari@lukepriddisfoundation.com

Companion Card

The NSW Government has introduced a 'Companion Card' for carers. If your child has a significant life-long disability and requires attendant care for the rest of his or her life, a Companion Card will allow your child to participate in certain community activities and events without incurring the cost of an additional ticket or entry fee for the carer.

In order to be eligible, your child's need of support must be significant and life-long. Eligibility is limited to those who are unable to participate in most community-based activities without significant assistance with mobility, communication, self-care and where the use of aids and other technologies does not meet those needs. The Companion Card is not provided to people who only require social support, assurance or encouragement.

To apply call **1800 893 044** or visit the website www.nswcompanioncard.org.au

Grandparent Advisor in Centrelink

The Grandparent Advisor is a newly created role that has been implemented in specific locations to provide help to grandparents who have full time caring responsibilities for their grandchildren. Services a Grandparent Advisor may provide include:

- an assessment of your circumstances
- providing appropriate information on Centrelink payments and services
- providing information on other services and support available
- arranging appointments for you with specialist Centrelink staff such as Social Workers, Financial Information Service Officers, Indigenous Service Officers, and Multicultural Service Officers
- arranging referrals to appropriate external agencies or organisations

To speak to a Grandparent Advisor, call **1800 245 965**.

Information about Nappies

I have had some enquiries about nappies in terms of size, cost and funding. Below is some information that I hope will be of help.

Aldi stock larger nappies under their brand Mamia, and these have been recommended by a parent. The funding option falls under Enable NSW (www.enable.health.nsw.gov.au). Have a look at the website which explains the application process, and you can fill out the forms online. Briefly, there are two forms. You complete the Enable NSW Consumer Application Form yourself. The other form is under the Aids & Equipment, SEED and YPIRAC forms link. It is the Continence Request Form, which must be completed by a community nurse, registered nurse or a continence nurse. It is probably better to have a continence nurse complete this form. You can find a continence nurse at Children Hospital at Westmead or through the Continence Foundation of Australia (www.continence.org.au).

New Website – www.ispybaby.com.au

Take a look at this new website which has all the practical essentials for babies and children. There is also a section specifically designed to help parents choose toys and equipment for their children with additional needs.

CityRail: Making Boarding Trains Easier for Customers

CityRail is introducing new train boarding procedures on CityRail **suburban** train lines to make it easier for people who need help getting off and on the train. Intercity boarding procedures will remain the same.

A boarding assistance zone is now marked on every wheelchair accessible platform or Easy Access station, around where the 6th carriage stops. This will provide customers in wheelchairs or scooters and parents with prams with more space and seating, located near the toilet (for trains that have toilet facilities). For more information pick up a brochure at your local train station, visit www.cityrail.info or call 131 500.

Source: ACD NSW Newsletter March 2011

STaR workshops for families

STaR will be conducting workshops for parents throughout the year. Some workshops that can already be added to your calendars are:

- Managing your child's behaviour – end July 2011
- Shared Book Reading - September 2011
- Preparing Yourself and Your Child for School – October 2011

Dates will follow in the next newsletter and individual reminder flyers will be mailed closer to the date.

The workshop **Communication – it is not just about talking** was held on Tuesday 17th May. I would like to thank Michelle Hughes who presented the workshop for an extremely informative and entertaining evening. We will run a repeat of the workshop (date to be confirmed soon) as it is a must, providing lots of worthwhile information about creating communication opportunities. It is worth the hassle of getting out the door. Hope to see you at the next Communication workshop!

STaR School Preparation Corner

If 2012 is the year your child is going to 'big school', it is now time to begin the enrolment process.

- Catholic Education System – enrolment forms must be lodged with the local diocese school by May.
- Department of Education & Training (DET) – your local school is the point of contact to discuss all school options and complete DET enrolment forms. You will need to take your child's diagnosis report, which may include assessment reports (less than 12 months old) from a psychologist or paediatrician. The school counsellor will then submit an Access Request form to the Disability Programs Consultant.
- Don't forget to use your STaR 'Countdown to School Calendar' as a reminder of what needs to be done in the countdown to school.

Remember, talking and reading with your child will give a great start to school. It is good to read the same book many times. Talk about the pictures together. Let your child TELL you the story even if he or she can't read the words. Also if you need support in visiting schools, liaising with school staff, or are unsure about the 'going to school' process please ring me and I am more than happy to support you through the journey.

For those children commencing school in 2013, you might like to consider enrolling in a DET Early Intervention Support Class. Applications should be lodged at your local school.

In the upcoming newsletters we will jot down some useful information about preparing your child for school

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

Elise

CHILDCARE SUPPORT PROGRAM (*from Dawn*)

Welcome to our 3 new children – Lauryn, Gavin and Tyler - and their families who have joined our program (and welcome back, Jesse). We are currently supporting 42 children across our 10 participating childcare centres. Our exciting news is that we will soon commence supporting a new Blacktown Council Childcare Centre – Jim Lynch at Rooty Hill. We have been supporting two Blacktown Council centres for 5 years now and appreciate the support Blacktown Council gives to STaR.

During March/April we held our School Options meetings and I hope that families whose children will be commencing school next year have enrolled their child in their chosen sector – public (Department of Education and Training), Catholic or independent (private). If you have not yet enrolled your child and would like some help, please contact us. You can phone either Elise (STaR Family Support) on 9888 3717 or Dawn on 9850 8700. The Department of Education and Training will be holding the first of its placement meetings at the end of July so it is important that they have your child's details.

Families of children who are not commencing school until 2013 are eligible to enrol in the Department of Education and Training's Early Intervention classes for 2012, and this should also be done now. If you would like further information about this please contact Elise (STaR Family Support) on 9888 3717.

We have recently held workshops for childcare centre staff on Interaction and Communication. Dr Kerry Hodge (Research and Development Manager for STaR) spoke with staff about interactions in childcare environments, and Michelle Hughes (Speech Pathologist) led families and staff on a fun-filled journey into communication. Thank you to the childcare staff and families who attended after a long day's work.

For those children commencing school next year, your Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting will now become an Individual School Preparation Plan (ISPP) meeting. Kathy, Megan and Elise are beginning the school preparation process for our school starters and will discuss this at your next meeting with them. We intend to have your children as well prepared for school as they can be.

We are also more than happy to liaise with or have input from any other services working with you or your child, so please feel free to invite them to your STaR meetings. Please pass on your STaR IEP to these services and also please pass any of their reports, assessments or information on to us. If we are all working together it is best for you and your child.

Remember, Kathy and Megan (STaR's Childcare Support Teachers) are at your child's centre at least once a fortnight at some time during the day. If you would like to chat with them please just ask your centre director or classroom manager to let them know.

Please don't hesitate to contact me on 9850 8700 if you have any questions or problems.

Stay warm!

Dawn