

# STaR Summer 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 TO STaR'S FIRST 2011 NEWSLETTER

I hope you have managed to survive the heat, which at times has been very challenging. Keeping our kids cool and entertained in extreme weather conditions can be very hard as all our energy levels are depleted. Fortunately, water play is usually popular and can be easily set up!

The start to the year is a shock and, of course, it's hard when it's all new, so I hope that you have all settled into your routines and that our STaR children in particular are happy. I am looking forward to a productive year for STaR. Our funding by FaCHSIA has been confirmed to continue till June 2014, which is excellent news. However, it has not increased. An important part of my role is to ensure that we fill the funding gap with corporate support. I will be busy working with the MonSTaR Foundation to organise their Annual Golf Day and Dinner event to be held on 18 March 2011. Last year \$70,000 was raised for STaR. MonSTaR's support over the past 5 years has been fundamental to our survival and growth. Recently the MonSTaR Foundation launched its membership and it is important that we support this where possible. If you are in a position to join the foundation or know someone who may be interested, please go to the website [www.monstarfoundation.com.au](http://www.monstarfoundation.com.au) for more information.

I'm sure you will agree that one of the best supports and sources of information is other parents. I still get together with the STaR families I met in 2001, and we have faced so many changes and challenges together! I notice Elise is organising some get-together dates. Whilst it is difficult to walk into a room of strangers, it may be the best thing you ever do, so I encourage you to attend. A more formal way to meet parents is to attend the information sessions. The School Choices is a good one as it offers practical, commonsense information about starting school. You will quickly discover that your concerns are shared by many, and we would love to help with that difficult transition.

Have a great year. May 2011 be good to you! As always, you're very welcome to contact me with questions, concerns or feedback.

Warm regards

*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  
Foundation

Daniels Automotive

### Partners:

Macquarie  
University Special  
Education Centre

Access Macquarie  
Ltd

### Funding:

Dept. of Families,  
Community Services  
& Indigenous Affairs

## STaR FAMILY SUPPORT (*from Elise*)

Welcome to all our new STaR families, and welcome back to our 'old STaR families'. I hope all your lovely children have settled into their childcare centres and are enjoying themselves. We look forward to a busy and productive year.

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](http://www.star.org.au)), where further information can be found. Family Support is here for parents and families. If you need resources or information, or simply want to talk, please ring me on **02 9888 3717**.

During March we are having a series of **Parent Get Together/School Options Discussions**, so that STaR families can meet each other and have a chat over a cuppa. We will discuss school options and the choices that are available for your child. Even if your child is not commencing school next year it might be interesting to hear what's ahead or just to chat with other STaR families.

The Get Together/School Options discussions will be held on

- Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2011 (day session), 1.00-2.30pm at Joanne Sammarco Childcare Centre, 24 Vardys Rd, Kings Langley

**OR**

- Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> March (evening session), 7.00-9.00pm at Macquarie University Special Education Centre (MUSEC) Building X5A (at bottom of X3 car park), North Ryde

**OR**

- Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> March (evening session), 7.00-9.00pm at Bob Sinclair Childcare Centre, 52A Grantham Rd, Seven Hills.

**RSVP 7<sup>th</sup> March**

**Elise de Jong**

**9888 3717 or [e] [elise@star.org.au](mailto:elise@star.org.au)**

### You may be interested in...

#### **URGENT: Respite Intake and Allocation Process (RIAP) – call 9841 9354**

RIAP is a centralised intake and allocation point for carers/parents (and referrers) wishing to access ADHC funded flexible respite services.

The annual RIAP is open from **Monday 17 January 2011 to Friday 4 March 2011** for all referrals regarding flexible respite services from 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012.

Referrals can be made by calling the RIAP phone line on 9841 9354, 9am-4pm. You may need to leave a message (your name, the name of the person you are referring, your phone number and the best time for your call to be returned). A RIAP representative will then contact you to complete the application.

Every message left and email sent **before 4 March** will be included in this year's allocation process; if you call after 4 March, you may not be included in the next allocation.

Applications will be prioritised during March and April 2011, and allocation meetings will take place from the end of March. The date RIAP receives the referral will not affect the way it is prioritised. You will be notified in writing of the outcome of your referral after the allocation meetings. If you have any concerns or questions, phone RIAP on 9841 9354.

Source: "Warringah Disability Newsletter" 16<sup>th</sup> December 2010

## Better Start for Children with Disability (Better Start) initiative

The Better Start for Children with Disability (Better Start) initiative aims to assist eligible children with developmental disabilities to access funding for early treatment, diagnostic and management services.

### What are the components of the initiative?

From 1 July 2011, eligible children diagnosed with a sight or hearing impairment, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy or Fragile X syndrome will have access to funding and Medicare rebates under the Better Start for Children with Disability (Better Start) initiative.

The initiative includes the following components:

- Registration of children under the age of six for access to funding for early intervention services and treatments
- Medicare items for the development of a treatment and management plan for eligible children under the age of 13
- Medicare items for up to four allied health diagnostic services and for up to 20 relevant allied health treatment services for eligible children up to the age of 15 (provided a treatment and management plan is in place before the age of 13)

The Australian Government has committed \$122 million in funding over four years under this initiative.

### Funding for early intervention

From 1 July 2011, children who are aged under six years and have been diagnosed with either a sight or hearing impairment, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy or Fragile X syndrome will be able to register to access early intervention funding of up to \$12,000 (to a maximum of \$6,000 per financial year).

The funding will be able to be used for services such as speech pathology, audiology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, psychology and orthoptics. Families will have until their child turns seven to use the early intervention funding.

This targeted early intervention in the pre-school years aims to complement existing Commonwealth and State and Territory services and to assist these children to have the best possible preparation for transition to school.

Further details about how to register a child for the Better Start initiative will be published on the FaHCSIA website as they become available.

[http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/disability/progserv/people/Pages/early\\_intervention\\_better\\_start.aspx](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/disability/progserv/people/Pages/early_intervention_better_start.aspx)

### 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

- Communication Strategies for you and your child – May 2011
- Managing your child's behaviour - Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> June (evening session 7-9pm) at Macquarie University Special Education Centre (MUSEC) Building X5A (at bottom of X3 car park), North Ryde
- 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.

### Resourcing Families

Resourcing Families is an initiative of Family Advocacy and helps families to: build a positive vision for the future, develop networks of informal support, make informed decisions, have confidence and skills to direct support, and learn from emerging practices and success stories. Have a look at their website for more information. It is an exciting initiative.

[www.resourcingfamilies.org.au](http://www.resourcingfamilies.org.au)

## Soccajoey's

This is a soccer-specific play program for boys and girls age 3-5yrs. Have a look at their website for more information – [www.soccajoey's.com](http://www.soccajoey's.com) .

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

*Elise*

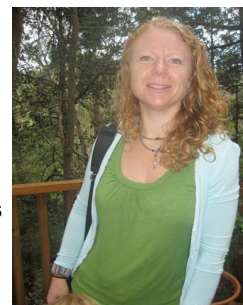
## CHILDCARE SUPPORT PROGRAM (*from Dawn*)

Welcome to our twelve new families who have joined the STaR Program this year, and welcome back to those families who are returning. STaR is currently supporting 10 childcare centres across the Sydney regions of Penrith (Werrianda, Stepping Stones), Blacktown (Bob Sinclair, Joanne Sammarco), Hills (Norwest) and Hornsby/Ryde (Chilverleigh, Midson Road, Thinking Hats, Top Ryde and West Ryde). We are currently supporting 38 children with additional needs within these 10 centres.

We are still fortunate to have our two STaR Early Intervention Support Teachers, Kathy Hodgetts and Megan Cooper. They support and train the childcare centre staff and monitor your child's IEP (Individual Education Plan) and progress. You may see them at your IEP meeting, but please also feel free to chat with them if you see them at your childcare centre.



Kathy Hodgetts supports childcare centres in the Penrith/Blacktown/Hills areas.



Megan Cooper supports childcare centres in the Hornsby/Ryde areas.

The STaR Program's role is to support the staff of your childcare centre in providing an appropriate inclusive program for your child. To ensure that we are providing the best possible program for your child's development, we like to work collaboratively with other early intervention services supporting your child. Thus we are all working toward the same goals.

If you have any other professionals working with your child (e.g. other early intervention services, speech path, physio), please let your Special Needs Manager at your child's centre know so that she can liaise with them regarding your child's objectives. You might also like to invite them to your child's Program Meeting (IEP).

STaR Family Support is currently organising get togethers for our STaR families and STaR staff. We would really like to chat with you all, and it is a great chance to get together with other STaR families. We are holding both day and evening sessions so please try to attend one of these. We will also chat about school options for those families interested in or thinking about the next step (or leap) in their child's education.

I hope to see you at the parent meeting.

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

Best wishes

*Dawn*

## STaR BOOK REVIEW

Families often comment on books that they have found useful. Here at STaR we also come across books that we would like to share with others, so we are introducing a quarterly book review. 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 Summer review:

**Siblings by Kate Strohm, Wakefield Press**

ISBN: 9781862545809

'Siblings' tells what it is like to grow up with a sister or brother who has a disability or chronic illness. Besides giving siblings their own voice at last, Kate Strohm also provides strategies that siblings themselves, parents and practitioners can use to support brothers and sisters of children with special needs.

Written by and for siblings, this book is both affirming and empowering. It is easy to read and powerful in its message. By raising sibling issues and openly discussing her own experiences Kate has provided individuals, families and professionals with an understanding and resources to help siblings cope and come to terms with their feelings.