

STaR Winter Newsletter 2010



WELCOME TO STaR'S WINTER 2010 NEWSLETTER

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.”

I take comfort knowing we are half way through winter. What a cold one it's been! Life seems much easier when the doors and windows are left open and we can walk around in bare feet. Fortunately the seasons don't impact on STaR and we continue to grow and strengthen at a steady pace.

I'm very pleased to advise that we have recently appointed two new Board Directors, Fiona Holmwood and Catherine Putt. Fiona has a background in business and strategic management within both government and private sectors and Catherine in strategy consulting and program management within the financial services sector. I welcome both women to STaR and look forward to working with them to grow this wonderful organisation.

Whilst STaR receives funding from both state and federal governments, there is a significant gap in meeting our costs each year. We therefore rely heavily on corporate sponsorship and donations. Over the past three years The MonSTaR Foundation has played a fundamental role in enabling STaR to continue delivery of quality programs and support to our STaR families. The MonSTaR Foundation was established in 2007 by three very generous businessmen, Mark Golding, Greg Hargreaves and Hamish Pearce, who simply wanted to make a difference. At this year's MonSTaR Cup event held on 19 March \$70,000.00 was raised for STaR. This makes a significant difference to how we are able to operate and what we can offer you, our STaR families, without placing pressure on you to fundraise. We can return our thanks by becoming a member of the MonSTaR Foundation and I ask that you consider this. Please have a look at their website www.monstarfoundation.com.au for more information.



MonSTaR Foundation cheque presentation at Thinking Hats, Beecroft

I warmly invite you to contact me any time if you have any concerns, issues or suggestions.

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 can't believe we are half way through the year already. Where has the time gone?

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.

During March we held a series of Parent Get Togethers/School Options Discussions. These discussions provided the opportunity for STaR parents to meet one another and also to discuss school options and the choices available for their child. Please don't hesitate to phone if you need any information or support in regards to any aspect about starting school. A new STaR resource, the 'Countdown to School Calendar', will be sent to families soon.

In June Dawn, Kathy and I represented STaR at the Western Sydney Early Childhood Intervention Services Expo. The Expo was open to families and services providers, and it showcased a range of early childhood intervention services in the Western Sydney region. This was an opportunity to network and exchange information and ideas.

You may be interested in...

A new campaign called '**Mad as Hell**' has been launched to support a National Disability Insurance Scheme (<http://ndis.org.au/theplan.html>), which is a no-fault insurance scheme designed to fund essential services and supports needed by people living with a disability. This would transform Australia's broken disability support system and finally give real hope and control to millions of Australians affected by disability. Full details of this electoral campaign are available now on the campaign website – <http://australiansmadashell.com.au>

Disability Rocks – a very special concert and political rally

The Australians Mad as Hell Campaign is proudly presenting entertainment from Jim Conway's Big Wheel, The James Valentine Quartet, Studio Artes dance troupe and singers and the following special guest speakers: The Hon. Bill Shorten MP, Senator Mitch Fifield, Ian Cohen MLC, Kelly Vincent MCL, Marylou Carter and Bill Moss AM. James Valentine is MC. You can show you're Mad as Hell about Australia's dysfunctional disability system and support lasting change for people with disability, their families and carers at a great afternoon of jazz, blues, dance and politics.

Where - Everest Theatre, Seymour Centre, Chippendale, Sydney

When - 3pm Sunday 1 August

Info. - See www.australiansmadashell.com.au

Source: 'Warringah Disability Newsletter' 11 June 2010

New National Continence Aids Payment Scheme (CAPS) replaces CAAS on 1 July

The CAPS provides a payment to assist eligible people who have permanent and severe incontinence to meet some costs of their continence products. The CAPS will provide greater choice and flexibility for clients to purchase the most appropriate continence products from the supplier of their choice. The scheme will be delivered by Medicare Australia, and payments will be made directly into a client's nominated bank account.

The application form is available at www.bladderbowel.gov.au/furtherinfo/caps.htm, from the National Continence Helpline (1800 330 066) or any Medicare Australia office. It is important to apply now to avoid any delay in supply.

Just a thought...if you have been using a particular supplier and intend to continue doing so, perhaps it would be a good idea to open an account with the supplier and deposit the CAPS money into that account. This way you have already put money aside to pay for the continence products.

Pensioner Energy Rebate

Energy Australia offers a Pensioner Energy Rebate for families who care for a child with a disability under 16 years of age. Energy Australia will provide you with the rebate through your bills. On average the rebate saves a family around \$30 each quarter or \$120 per year.

You just have to phone Energy Australia (13 15 35) with your CRN (Centrelink Reference Number) and ask for the Pensioner Energy Rebate. If you are a carer you should have a CRN number. This is not your child's CRN but your own. If you haven't got one, phone the Family Assistance Office on 13 61 50.

In order to get the rebate:

- You have to be a customer of Energy Australia – have your account number handy when you ring
- The bill has to be addressed in your name (or the name of the carer who has the CRN – Energy Australia can change the name for you if necessary);
- You have to be a carer of a child under 16 years of age with a disability;
- Have your child's health care card ready so you can provide the expiry date.

Counselling Support Groups (for parents of children with special needs)

Carers NSW funds these groups to enable parents to meet, to tell their stories and to gain support from, as well as give support to, other families and carers. The focus is on how parents can take better care of themselves and avoid 'burn out'. The groups deal with issues of family and relationships, the grief process and how to cope on bad days. They can help with the feelings of loss, isolation, exhaustion and the parenting role when a child is different.

The groups run for 2 hours over 8 consecutive weeks and are led by a counsellor who is a mum of a child with Autism.

Commences: Wednesday 28th July 2010

Groups: Group 1 is 9.30am – 11.30am, Group 2 is 12.30pm – 2.30pm

Venue: Lizard Centre (conference room 2), 126 Greville St, Chatswood NSW 2067

For further information and to secure your place contact:

Justine 0414 237 383 E: Justine@counsellingforall.com W: www.counsellingforall.com

NSW Ombudsman

The NSW Ombudsman, Mr Bruce Barbour, wants to hear from families who have a child with a disability living at home. He is interested to hear from families about specialist disability services and services for families in the community. I have attached a flyer with more detailed information.

Playvan Playgroups

Playvan is a fun playgroup for children with additional needs in the Baulkham Hills and Blacktown areas. The playgroups are facilitated by an early childhood worker, an occupational therapist and a speech pathologist who support children and their parents or carers to develop skills through play.

Playvan playgroups are located at Plumpton Neighbourhood Centre, Tuesdays 10am - 12noon; The Activity Centre at Dural Baptist Church, Wednesdays 10am - 12noon; Doonside Community Centre, Thursdays 10am – 12noon.

If you would like to have more information about Playvan or to book into one of the playgroups, please contact Playvan staff on 9625 0422.

Penrith Community Toy Library

This toy library provides:

for children under 8

- A variety of sturdy toys
- Family games
- Opportunities for interaction through play

for children with special needs

- Switches and switch toys
- Communication prompts

- Literacy and maths resources for early concept development
- Extended borrowing period
- Home visiting service for housebound families (referral required)

Please contact the following libraries for session times and more information:

Penrith City Library Ph. 4732 7891

St Marys Library Ph. 4732 7455

St Clair Branch Library Ph. 9670 6853

Emu Plains Branch Library Ph. 4735 5577

Family Advocacy – a free workshop

Let's get started...getting ready for school and life

This is a workshop about inclusive education for children with developmental disability. It provides information about how families can prepare for their child starting school as well as tools and ideas for those who have started school in recent years. Practical tips, strategies and ideas will be shared.

Workshops will be held in Wollongong (27 July), Burwood (28th July), Bankstown (29 July), Penrith (30 July), as well as Hornsby (11 August), Gosford (12 August), Newcastle (13 August).

For more information about the workshop, venue details and to register phone (02) 9869 0866 (within Sydney) or 1800 620 588 (free call for NSW callers outside the Sydney metropolitan area).

Ability Books (www.abilitybooks.com.au)

Ability Books is a disability specific bookstore and is owned and operated by Leanne and Christian, who founded the online business in May 2009. Leanne and Christian understand the frustrations of finding appropriate disability specific reading material first hand.

The aim at Ability Books is to provide useful material to people with a disability, their families, service providers as well as any other professionals or individuals interested in gaining more knowledge.

The book prices are marked below the recommended retail prices, so the books are always on special.

Have a look at the website and sign up for their newsletter.

Support for Siblings Australia

Kate Strohm, Executive Director, requests that letters be written to local and/or national parliamentarians telling them why support is important for siblings of people living with disability or chronic illness. In the 12 years since Siblings Australia was established, it has gained a national and international reputation. Despite loss of funding in 2007, several valuable projects have supported siblings, families and providers. Fortunately Families Australia has recently included Siblings Australia in their election proposals - see the National Action Plan for Siblings, and a Briefing Paper about the work of Siblings Australia at www.siblingsaustralia.org.au/news.asp. Details of Families Australia's 2010 election proposals, including those relating to siblings, are at www.familiesaustralia.org.au. If you wish to support this campaign, email kate@siblingsaustralia.org.au to ask for parliamentarians' addresses and a template which you can adapt as you wish to suit your own situation/experience. Phone 08 8357 1214, or mail to 23a King William Road, Unley, SA 5061. See www.facebook.com/pages/Siblings-Australia/178545022595?ref=ts.

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*)

It's July already! I hope the second half of the year does not go as quickly! The STaR Program is currently supporting 40 children across our 11 participating childcare centres and we hope to commence support of another childcare centre in the next couple of months.

During March/April we held several 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.

Also, remember that you need to provide assessment documentation with your school application (your reports from psychologist, speech pathologist etc.) The documentation must be less than 12 months old, so if you need a new assessment you should make an appointment quickly. We will be commencing our STaR Preparation for School and Transition to School Programs in Terms 3 and 4 and I will be contacting you regarding these very soon.

Families of children who are not commencing school until 2012 are eligible to enrol in the Department of Education and Training's Early Intervention classes for 2011, 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 recently held several workshops for childcare centre staff on Inclusion. Margaret Meaker, our STaR General Manager, spoke with staff about the importance of inclusion from a parent's point of view and the STaR Program team then discussed how centre staff can help support children with additional needs to be more included in their daily centre activities. Thank you to all of the childcare staff who attended after a long day's work. The dedication of childcare staff in our STaR affiliated centres is very much appreciated.

We currently have an intern student from the USA with us. Erica is from Michigan State University and has worked with children with special needs in her country. She will be supporting Midson Road and Thinking Hats childcare centres until mid August so please say hi to her if you see her.

I am currently taking new enrolments for our STaR Program for next year. If you know of anyone who has a child with additional needs and may be looking for childcare in 2011, please ask them to contact me on 9850 8700. If you are attending any early intervention services, would you mind placing the enclosed flyer on the notice board there in case families are looking for childcare?

Please don't forget that you are more than welcome at any time to ask to meet with the Early Intervention Support Teacher (Kathy or Megan) who supports your child's childcare centre or with me (Dawn). Just ask the centre director to contact us or you can phone me on 9850 8700.

We hope the winter 'bugs' stay away from your family!

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, 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 first review is –

Always Liza to Me by Cecilia Rice, Allen & Unwin (Review – Jodie McEwan)

Cecilia Rice's sister, Liza – the eldest of six – was born with an intellectual disability. *Always Liza to Me* is Cecilia's experience of growing up in a family that has been dramatically impacted by Liza's needs and the resulting effects on those around her. Through her story, the tangled emotions of frustrations, anger and rejection are apparent, but acceptance, loyalty and love are also interwoven with time.

This book is compelling reading, authentic, warm and insightful. Rice has written a memoir for her 'silent sister'. In doing so, she has given Liza a voice.





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

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