

Aspergers Syndrome Support Group for Families in Macarthur

August 2007 News Sheet

This news sheet is provided for information and awareness purposes only. People should make their own enquiries and judgement concerning any service or product contained within. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the FIP Co-operative Board or its members.

August Meetings

Wednesday's coffee meeting was again held at The Coffee Club in Macarthur Square with three families coming along. By coincidence, two families had children suspended from school that day and we discussed some of the issues associated with this. Julie Bullock the Occupational Therapist at the Wollondilly Community Health Centre was on hand again to talk about how OT's can assist people. Julie provided a number of booklets for families and I will make these available at future meetings for those who would be interested in them.

On **Thursday night** we were joined by Steve Walker who runs a practice called *Brief Therapy Solutions*. He provided a very informative talk on why and how behaviour affects children and families and led discussion on some strategies that families could implement. A few of the notes I took down (not necessary Steve's words) included:

- Behaviour occurs in a context – it happens for a reason
- Many people of all ages have not learnt to behave otherwise, lack skills to enable them to handle the environment/incidents/situations they find themselves in
- Also the impact on them of their “label” can lead to different behaviours
- Impact of family on the person and how they behave
- Many children who have aspergers hear what is said, respond to it but don't really get it
- People become overloaded, sensory and emotional feelings become too intense to control
- It's a case of not having learnt yet, not being able not to learn. Children and young people need to be given the opportunity and time to learn behaviour appropriate to a situation. We all need to practice behaviour and given the opportunity/situations to do so.
- Be practical in your approach – what works for the here and now and what resources do I have to work with
- Work on a theme overtime not changing every particular incident or situation
- People with aspergers often have difficulties transferring skills and knowledge from one situation or environment to another – need to learn how to behave when it is different
- Behaviour is not about poor parenting but some parenting factors are an issue or influence behaviour. Family structure and relationship of a child's parents can influence their behaviour - have difficulties understanding how relationships can change like separation – does not fit into their often black and white world
- We react to their action/behaviour. Remove your reactions, show empathy, and match their language speed and intensity (but not the volume). We need to also practice this way of reacting to behaviour

Steve offers families a range of services and can be contacted on:

Meetings for September

- **Second Wednesday** 12th September 10am at The Coffee Club at Macarthur Square next to Border Books, where all the new coffee shops etc are. Free parking is available on site and it is a good location as it offers plenty of space where we can sit outside or inside.

Julie Bullock will be on holidays by said she will be back in October to talk with families

- **Second Thursday** 13th September 7pm at the Harrington Park Community Centre Fairwater Dr next to the shopping centre Follow up on what Steve spoke about and general discussion on family life.

I do encourage all families and community supporters to take the opportunity to attend one of our monthly meetings, meet other people and hear how other people have handled certain situations.

CARC - a free and confidential service for families

Together with Macarthur District Temporary Family Care, Brief Therapy Solutions are implementing the **Crisis Assessment and Referral Clinic for Families**

This service enables families experiencing challenging behaviour or disruptive behaviours with short term access to counselling and therapeutic support. You will see a qualified Counsellor, Social Worker or Psychologist overseen by Steve Walker.

An appointment would take about one hour where you can discuss your concerns and seek some direction as to where to now. It's about offering families short term (up to three sessions) or single session's contacts as a crisis support and initial assessment measure.

To find out more contact the Family Connections project Worker at Macarthur Temporary Care on 9607 7011. Initially the service will only operate on Fridays at the Harrington Park Community Centre, strictly by appointment.

Remember the Co-operative Web Site

www.fip.org.au Don't forget about my Co-operative's web site that is now up and running. A special page is dedicated to the Aspergers Syndrome Support Group – have a look at it and tell me what you think. The information is not intended to be all encompassing but rather a starting point for parents and family members.

Talking about web sites a couple I have looked at in the past month are:

www.aspect.org.au the site for Autism Aspect Australia. It has a Forum page that you can check out what people are discussing, make a response yourself or even start up a new issue for discussion. Seems a well monitored site but remember everyone has a different viewpoint on issues that may appear be a bit radical at times.

www.counsellingforall.com a private counsellor who has a specialty in the Autism Spectrum Disorder. Has some good information on what counselling is about and who would seek counselling. Counselling services are available in the Macarthur area – have a look in the phone book for details or enquire at your local Community Health Centre.

Library Resources

A few of our books are getting a bit dog eared with use, which is the way it should be. Will have a few more available in September with the return of outstanding borrows.

Remember to ask your local library for books you would like to read – they also like to have books that people want to read on their shelves. I know the Children's Librarian at Camden is seeking titles of books that have special needs/disabilities as a theme. Reading is a great way for all children to gain an appreciation of the differences that they will encounter in the world in which they live.

Did you get my puzzle out? I had to do it in reverse but I did get through the maize after a few dead ends – a bit like life I think!

Positively Macarthur Conference

Tuesday 16th October 2007 9am to 4 pm at the Campbelltown Arts Centre

This one day conference is being put on by the *Macarthur Disability Network* to showcase all the positive things that people who have a disability do, and can do in the Macarthur area, along with services and action by carers that are taking place further a field.

I will be leading a workshop with a theme around Carers with other workshops looking at Recreation and Lifestyle, Advocacy, Learning for Life, Access and Community Involvement, and Universal Design. It's a way of hearing about services and opportunities for people and a way to have your say in what should be happening in the Macarthur region.

Information stalls will also be available on a range of local services and activities.

The Conference is FREE for people who have a disability, carers and community members with a fee of \$30 for professionals and services.

Numbers are limited so please register early. For more information and registration details contact Karen Simpson at MDS Ltd on 4621 8400

The Conference is supported by the Department of Ageing Disabilities and Home Care, Campbelltown City Council, MDS Ltd and the Macarthur Disability Network.

Aspergers Syndrome Information Kit

We have the money so we need to get going with this Kit, which is targeted at families who need basic information on aspergers and what support and services are available to them in the Macarthur region.

Campbelltown RSL Club has provided a grant of \$1,300 through the ClubNSW's Community Development and Support Expenditure program, to assist with the kit's development and printing. I have received a few ideas and suggestions on what should be included, but would welcome more before we get to the production stage.

1. What would you have like to have known about aspergers when your family member received a diagnosis or you suspected that they may have aspergers syndrome?
2. From your experience what information, contacts etc should families have to help them and their family member?
3. Is a loose leaf ring folder suitable to contain the information, or do you suggest something else?
4. Do you have something that can be included in the kit – fact sheets, recommended therapist contacts?

At September's Support Meetings, I will ask for people's involvement in developing the Kit with the information I have now and what people respond with from the above questions.

Hope you see this Kit as being worthwhile and can contribute in some way.

Until next time

Bob Lester

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