

**Aspergers Syndrome Support Group
for Families in Macarthur**

December 2007 News Sheet

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Would you believe that this is the **19th edition** that has been written – how time flies. Looking back over past news sheets I feel we have covered a lot of ground and provided a wide range of information and ideas. Personally I hope that I have been able to contribute to people's understanding of the issues surrounding Aspergers and linked people to ideas, information and resources.

I wish everyone a merry Christmas and may 2008 be a great year for your family.

December Meetings

Wednesday's coffee meeting was a fun affair with people talking a bout some funny incidences in their live that is touched by aspergers. The opportunity to share experiences and have a laugh about what has happened is important in coping with the many things that constantly happen in our busy family lives. Yes I know all men tend to snore– or so females say but Dick Van Dyke Show single beds may not be the solution (you had to be there to understand this fully)

One parent brought along her visual aids that she uses with children she works with as a teacher's aid at a local school. Check out the info later on that she has provided – thanks Teddy for all the good stuff you sent through.

Am I rambling on – probably but is nearly the end of the year for me at work and the sound of the Karate people grunting in the adjoining hall is not good for creative thinking.

Thursday night was attended by just one couple so we had a good talk about what is happening in their grandson's life. Other Thursday night parents come on Wednesday this month and it is a bit busy this close to the end of school etc.

One thing brought up - **do people who have aspergers understand the SMS language used by may people on phones and the internet?** Does anyone have thought on this? Another view point raised was the need for young people to have time to “do nothing”, just to be themselves without us adults wanting them to be doing something all the time.

Meetings for 2008

We will be continuing the regular support group meetings on the second Wednesday and Thursday of each month – except that **in January we will only be having the morning coffee meeting** at The Coffee Club on Wednesday 9th January. Bring the kids, return the unsuitable presents and have a cuppa and chat in the sunshine of Macarthur Square.

Julie the OT from Community Health has suggested we organise a speechie to come and give a talk on use of visual communication aids whilst another suggested speakers are on employment opportunities and the important issue of education and support funding.

If you have any other suggestions and/or contacts for guest speakers, please let us know so we can organise regular speakers at our meetings.

Tony Attwood coming back to town

Friday 29th February and Saturday 1st March 2008 at the Burwood RSL Club

As previously mentioned Tony Attwood will be the feature speaker at two workshops being organised through ASPIA. With a title of *Aspergers Syndrome grows up - adolescence through to Adulthood*, the separate workshops will provide people with information, awareness and a greater understanding of issues faced by individuals, families and partners.

I have sent details out to people on the email system and have attached copies of ASPIA's flyer to the ordinary mail out to families. It is reasonably inexpensive to attend what is a special opportunity to hear from a highly respected Australian and world wide person – even if he speaks with a “UK accent”. But be quick as tickets and places at both workshops will fill up fast due to their popularity and infrequency in Sydney

Talking of Special Opportunity!!!!!!!!!!

Families in Partnership Co-operative has four (4) tickets available to families with an older teenager, adult or partner with aspergers, to attend the workshops – two tickets for each day.

The Co-operative is keen to provide local families the opportunity to hear Tony and make this offer open to all people who are either a member of the Co-operative or who would like to become a member of the Co-operative. Not a big catch as membership is only \$5 a year.

If you are interested and can attend either of the workshops dates, please let me know by the 11th of January and I can put you in the draw. Remember to nominate which workshop you would like to win a ticket too.

Good luck

Social Stories and Visual Communication

Social stories are communication tools to assist people understand events and activities. They are usually a combination of words and pictures that describe an event and the behaviour that comes from it or behaviour that is expected to come from it. The story books we read to young children are a great example of how a story is embellish by pictures that give children a greater understanding of what the story is about and the meaning of words/behaviour described.

One of the Social Stories supplied by the parent at our support group meeting was titled "My hospital Visit" and told young children what to expected when going to hospital (and coming home again). Another was going on a school camp and what "Joey" likes about walking.

For those on the net have a look ay www.learningplace.com.au which is the web site of the Disability Services Support Unit for Queensland Education. Resources can be found under Teaching Strategies and their Community page.

A good site for kids that are going into hospital is a Victorian Royal Children's Hospital www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo

People without access to the net can contact me if you would like a copy of any of this information. Always remember you can go to your local library and access the internet there for FREE.

Autism Friendly Christmas

Tips for the eccentric or spectrum person by Donna Williams

The Christmas tree looks best when standing inside of the branches looking out through the lights.

- Don't forget to tap the decorations, they sound good too.
- Shiny decorations are wonderfully lick-able (but don't eat them).
- Glitter doesn't taste anywhere near as fantastic as it looks (what a mystery).
- There is actually something under the paper.
- Decorations are a far greater buzz when people want them put back on the tree.
- Christmas lights are best viewed through a strand of tinsel.
- We can all be Santa.
- Giving starts with what's invisible.
- The best Christmas gift is the genuine smile at one's own reflection.
- If nothing else, dare to whisper/hum/sing/type just for Christmas.
- Gifts are best appreciated in one's own space.
- The cat often can't eat well with people watching.
- You can make 'snow' from pretty much anything.
- Dressing up in tinsel makes you shine.
- Peace is having your neurotransmitters working for you at Christmas.
- Happiness isn't mania; I'd rather smile like Mona Lisa than grimace like Cheshire Cat.
- I resolve in the New Year to BE and DO and SEE and and and and... to calm down and chill out and actually keep up with myself (writing, art, sculpture and music composition are all acceptable artistic exceptions).

- I resolve to remember how lucky I am, to live in the moment, to walk the middle path (loving all my yuck and fabness equally as self acceptance), to love but not co-dependently, and to know that those mountains are really just molehills under a microscope.

Source <http://www.donnawilliams.net> <http://www.auties.org>

Asperger's Syndrome Gets a Very Public Face

By [TARA PARKER-POPE](#)

Heather Kuzmich has the neurological disorder known as Asperger's syndrome. She is socially awkward, has trouble making eye contact and is sometimes the target of her roommates' jokes.

But what makes the 21-year-old Ms. Kuzmich different from others with Asperger's is that for the past 11 weeks, her struggle to cope with her disability has played out on national television.

She is one of 13 young women selected by the supermodel Tyra Banks to compete on the popular reality television show "America's Next Top Model." The addition of Heather Kuzmich to an otherwise superficial show has given millions of viewers an unusual and compelling glimpse into the little-understood world of Asperger's.

A gifted art student from Valparaiso, Ind., she has a lean and angular look well suited to the fashion industry. But her beauty doesn't mask the challenges of Asperger's. The show requires her to live in a house with 12 other would-be models, and cattiness and backbiting ensue. Early in the show, she appears socially isolated, the girls whisper about her within earshot, and viewers see her crying on the phone to her mother.

She tried out for the show, she explained, partly to test her own limits. "It was a point in my life where I was thinking either Asperger's was going to define me or I was going to be able to work around it," she said.

To her surprise, she was voted the viewer favourite eight weeks in a row, making her one of the most popular contestants in the show's four-and-a-half-year history. "I'm used to people kind of ignoring me," she said in the interview. "At first I was really worried people would laugh at me because I was so very awkward. I got the exact opposite."

Heather made it to the top five, but flubbed her lines while filming a commercial. Later, she got hopelessly lost in Beijing, managing to meet with only one out of five fashion designers. She was eliminated last week, but has since made appearances on "Good Morning America" and "Access Hollywood." She says she hopes to continue modelling and eventually become a national spokeswoman for Asperger's.

Source A4 Newsletter December 2007

Remember

We are only meeting on Wednesday 9th January 10am at The Coffee Club

February meeting dates

Wednesday 13th @ 10.00 am Thursday 14th @7.00 pm

Until next time

Bob Lester 4648 1593 or 0400 481 520 or **email** coordinator@fip.org.au