

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

January 2008 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, its members or staff.

We met in January with some deep and meaningful stuff talked about. After I showed my latest purchase from the Hobbyco shop (a XH150 Jag car and a model of the first car I ever had, a Triumph herald Coupe – for those who may be interested!!!) we discussed the contents of the three new books purchased for the resource library, what info on apprenticeships a family had obtained whilst on holiday at Port Macquarie and how the world may be evolving where aspies may be able to fit in better.

Check out later items in this newsletter for information on books and apprenticeships.

Meetings for 2008

- **Second Wednesday's of the month** 10 am at The Coffee Club café at Macarthur Square, next to Border Books, downs stairs and outside where all the new coffee shops etc are. A great opportunity to have a relaxing cuppa or one of their more creamy refreshments, a bite to eat, and have a talk with other parents about what is happening in your world.
- **Second Thursday of the month** 7pm at the Harrington Park Community Centre Fairwater Dr next to the shopping centre. Come along and see what you can gain from listening and talking with other parents or family members.

February Wednesday 13th Thursday 14th **March** Wednesday 12th Thursday 13th
April Wednesday 9th Thursday 10th

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.

We still have two tickets available to attend the workshop on the 1st March which is a more interactive, question and answer format.

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 contact me ASAP. The tickets will be given out on a first call first taken basis.**

Advocacy Workshops for families

Sponsored by the Families in Partnership Co-operative and in conjunction with the MDS Training Centre, a series of workshops is being held in late March early April on Advocacy, to provide skills and knowledge you can use to better advocate for your family member.

See the Information Flyer attached to this newsletter for more details. The Workshops are free and there is a special **Information Session being held on the 14th February** where you can get more information on the workshops.

The Key to Confidence

In an article in the November 2007 *Sydney Child*, Clinical psychologist **Renee Mill** explained that praise needs to be combined with opportunities for children to learn and master tasks.

Parents of a boy called Ben were concerned about his timidity and that praise and verbal encouragement that they gave did not seem to work. Renee said that another vital ingredient for building self-esteem and confidence in children was 'self-efficacy'.

She explained that self-efficacy is the feeling that you get when you do something successfully – "I can do this". Renee said that it is a feeling that arises from action and that Ben needs to actually do something and experience success at a task in order to feel adequate.

The article went on to tell the parents to:

- Allow opportunities for a child to master skills
- Provide opportunities to complete tasks that can be realistically achieved and then to slowly increase the difficulty of the tasks.
- Use household chores and everyday activities as teaching opportunities
- Use play in the home backyard to master skills before having to use them in the school playground
- Don't do everything for the child as every skill learnt will boost self-esteem in a meaningful way

Renee also said that parents can gain more self-efficacy as a mum or dad through the same process.

The *Sydney Child* is a free monthly magazine full of interesting information and ideas. Usually available at most Libraries and community centres.

Found on the Web

www.donnawilliams.net

The website of a married woman who was born in the 60's but not diagnosed as being on the Autism Spectrum until she was in her 20's. Have a look at her life story, how she views the world and what she is now up to – painting, public speaking and enjoying a wonderful marriage.

Information Kit on Aspergers

Where is it you say? Well, it is under way and being compiled as we speak following input by a number of families and people who support our group. All going to plan I will have it available at the February meetings for people to look at and pass final comment before it gets sent to the printers.

This Kit, funded by the Campbelltown RSL Club via a Community Development and Economic Support grant, aims to provide basic information and resources to families where they may have recently received a diagnosis. It will be a leg up for people seeking a greater understanding of Aspergers and where to gain information, support and local services.

It will be provided in a folder so that families can add to it as they travel along the Aspergers pathway and make copies to provide information to other family members, their school or community group.

Apprenticeships

You may be able to start an Australian Apprenticeship while you are still at school. Australian School-based Apprenticeships enable you to gain a vocational and technical qualification while completing your school studies. Many schools now offer the option for students to start Australian Apprenticeships while at school, and the first point of contact for information is your VET Coordinator or career advisers at your school.

Australian Apprenticeships provide nationally recognised qualifications and competencies and offered at all certificate levels up to Advanced Diploma. Once completed the qualification can lead to continued employment, self employment; further training or education. Students are paid while training; it is structured and can take the place of casual work the rate of pay varies depending upon the industry, the year level, the qualification and whether industry or national awards are used.

Australian Apprenticeships are an Australian Government initiative and you can find more information on www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au or call

MEGT is an employment agency that has approximately 62 offices around Australia, employing local people with local business knowledge. They are involved with **Australian School-based Apprenticeships** program to help young Australians step into a career stream while gaining credit for their years 11 and 12 studies. To help make the transition to work, MEGT provides ongoing coaching for students, mock interviews and taking students to interviews. (Taken off their web site)

Their nearest office is at Liverpool 8778 8988 or on liverpool@megt.com.au

A good website for people to checkout for information on employment after school is www.careeradviceaustralia.gov.au

Books on Aspergers

Three new additions to the Resource Library that are for loan to families (as long as you return them so other families can access them)

Aspergers and Girls - featuring Tony Attwood, Temple Grandin and seven other experts relating specifically to females with Aspergers. Includes chapters on dating and marriage, education, transition from school to work, puberty, friendships and more.

Available through www.bookinhand.com.au or ring toll free on 18900 505 221

If anyone has read this book please let me know what you thought of it!!!

This is Asperger Syndrome –written by Elisa Gagnon and Brenda Smith-Myles with a number of illustrations by Sachi Tahdra highlighting different behaviours that could represent Aspergers.

It was one of the very first books I read and helped explain Aspergers very well, in a very visual manner!!

Building Foundations, Autism: Your Child, Your Family - A Manual and DVD produced by Autism Spectrum Australia through a grant from the NSW State Government. A great resource to start people on the journey dealing with a diagnosis of Autism.

A must for all schools, preschools and child care centres and available for only \$9.95 by calling Aspect's Autism Information Line on 1800 069 978.

Until next time

Bob Lester

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