

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

June 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.

An important point in time – Two years of New Sheets

This edition marks two years since the first information was sent out to families and professionals working and supporting families. In the 24 editions since a wide variety of news, views and ideas have been provided that I hope has assisted people better understand the world of Aspies and enable their child or young person reach their full potential.

The FIP Co-operative is continuing to receive enquiries from new families, local services and government agencies about aspergers generally and on the support group in particular. Some families have gone onto our mailing list for information and hope to join other parents at one of our meetings, whilst information on the support group has gone onto a number of databases held by agencies and information services.

Always encouraging seeing the word spreading about the Support Group and increased awareness within the community on Aspergers. Remember to play your part by passing on information to your extended family members, your school, doctor, or local community organisation.

Why not make it a habit of forwarding on this newsletter to your friends and people who you make regular contact with – their increased awareness can provide you and your family with understanding and support.

A big **THANK YOU** for all those who have contributed to the success of the News Sheet either through articles or letting me listen to you at support meetings and capturing your thoughts on paper.

Support Meetings

June's Coffee meeting at Macarthur Square saw two new parents along who shared their experiences and ideas with both their children and partners who have aspergers. Not much need for me to try to get conversations going as we enjoyed the brief spell of winter sunshine. Plenty of talk on schooling, when is too much therapy too much and the joys of spending the weekends at Sydney Airport doing a bit of plane spotting.

Julie the OT from Wollondilly Health Service turned up for the last hour (thanks for the book return) and helped parents understanding the roll of OT's in writing and improving the learning environment. Being able to concentrate could be the issue with poor writing, than all about fine motor skills – often the case when writing is good at certain times. Use a favourite activity or interest to provide motivation to practice writing skills eg numbers, lists of types of planes, trains etc.

Thursday night was an opportunity for the two parents who came along to do a bit of “debriefing, getting it off their chest, saying a few truths about things” which we all need from time to time. I saw a good discussion on what I would call relationships and how the world today is made up of many different relationships and family situations that can be difficult for us adults, let alone children and young people looking at it from an Aspie's perspective.

July Meetings

- **Second Wednesday's of the month** 9th July 10 am at The Coffee Club Café at Macarthur Square, next to Border Books, down stairs and outside where all the new coffee shops etc are. Yet to be encounter problems with rain and there is indoor tables if it does.
- **Second Thursday of the month** 10th July 7pm at the Harrington Park Community Centre Fairwater Dr next to the shopping centre. Opportunity for those who work or are busy during the day to meet other families and share their experiences and ideas.

Resource Library

A few more additions including books donated by one of our family members – thanks Allison. Brought the new book titled Australian Autism handbook written by two parents with children on the spectrum. They recently featured on the ABC Radio talking about their experiences and the need for families and the community to understand more about Autism in all its different characteristics.

Got a book and want to return it?

We do need people to return the books that they have borrowed. I am happy to pick them up from you - no questions asked – so they can be available for other families. Books and other resources can be expensive so a good resource library is important for providing information and help for families who cannot afford to pay for them.

Thinking of going to TAFE

It is a policy of TAFE that vocational education and training should be accessible to everyone. The TAFE Disability Program Unit helps to make sure people with disabilities have access, support and equal opportunities while studying at TAFE.

Teacher/Consultants are available to help with study needs, organise services to enable you to participate in courses and provide information on the different ways you can study. Talking with them before you enrol, that way you can look at all the options and assistance available before you start.

Remember students in year 11 and 12 at school can also do TAFE courses as part of their HSC Talk to your school careers advisor or school counsellor.

For information call the TAFE Disability Programs Unit on 9244 5557 or email disability.programs@det.nsw.edu.au

A short booklet is available from TAFE – a Guide to services for students with disabilities in TAFE NSW, along with a DVD where students with a range of disabilities talk about their experiences and how TAFE courses have assisted them. Copies are available in our Resource Library for loan.

Swimming is your go?

A couple of people have asked about where they can send their kids to learn to swim. The Rainbow Club operates out of the Bradbury Pool for people who have a range of disabilities; contact Leanne Cross on 9605 2310.

One of our families have recommended the swimming centre at Macarthur Square where her son goes – small classes and one on one instruction available

Managing an Angry Episode

1. Stay calm.
2. Be assertive.
3. Feel confident.

4. Clear the decks – remove anyone who is not needed. Get people to safety.
5. One person to take control.
6. Don't touch.
7. Give a lot of personal space.
8. Say "Take a deep breath and close your eyes please". or give solitude – an area to him/herself.
9. Give the reason before the direction and don't say "No".
10. Give a clear direction of what to do.
11. Acknowledge the emotion and then say the direction.
eg, "I see you are feeling stressed. Now is time to calm down."
12. Keep the role of the adult – stay calm and don't justify – be firm and in control.
13. As soon as they start to calm down, encourage 'that was the smart and the right thing to do'.
14. If in doubt – write – don't talk (eg when severely autistic).
15. One adult to be in control.
16. Give person a timeframe – you will come back in 10 minutes.
17. Don't talk about consequences. Can give new information (ie what has to happen next) 30 minutes later (after he has calmed down). When giving information, sit to side and look away from his face (ie mid-distance, to side, and down).
18. Find a calming activity for him to do, eg Lego.
19. Give the person an emergency/calming-down box – twiddly toys, puzzles, trucks, catalogues, radio to listen to, stress balls, spinning things.
20. Ask the person to sit down.
21. Body language is calm – not imposing.
22. Join with the client, eg, "I like cricket too".
23. Do not match mood – slow speech.
24. Speak to the person as if you are talking to a 2 year old, regardless of size but not a patronizing tone.
25. Appeal to the Special interest, even get them to write a list (eg list of cricketers).
26. Give a compliment.
27. Access a good memory.
28. Praise when you get compliance. "That was the smart thing to do. I think you made a good choice".
29. If in doubt – listen.
30. Use natural distractions.
31. Avoid arguments.

Source

Minds & HeartsQld Ph 07 3844 9466

email: info@mindsandhearts.net

www.mindsandhearts.net

Off the Web

Learning difficulties is often an issue for many people, with or without a disability. Here are a couple of websites and contact details of organisations that provide information on this important issue

www.idonline.org an American site with a wealth of information and ideas on learning difficulties and ADHD.

www.learninglinks.org.au has programs and training available to families and professionals on a number of topics, and is active in the South West of Sydney for ease of access.

Phone Number at Miller office 8783 7111

www.speldnsw.org.au gives advice, resources and pointers to remedial teachers and families on Dyslexia. Phone Number 9451 9477

www.users.bigpond.com/hyperadd/ Hyperactivity Attention Deficit Association of NSW provides information and support. Association members have access to a good resource library and a regular newsletter Phone Number 9411 2186 – office only staffed part time.

Kites for Kids Day

23rd August at Koshigaya Park in Campbelltown

This community event is always well attended by families from our support group, and across the community. Come and decorate your own family kite and see how well you can fly it. Last year we have over 150 kites painted out by families with most reaching the skies over Campbelltown – as well as a few in the kite eating trees.

There is plenty of room to spread out the picnic blanket and watch the entertainment being organised. Lions Club of Campbelltown will be along to feed you if you forget your picnic lunch, with Streets providing that all important favourite – Paddle Pops. Face painter, clowns and other activities can be enjoyed and you can pick up your free information bag including C91.3 giveaways.

Kites for Kids is a celebration of National Early Childhood Intervention Week and is organised by services from across Macarthur

Need a cheap Computer?

Well cheap in terms of cost but a professionally refurbished computer and ready to go. Workventures currently offers “Quality Pentium 4 computers from just \$250. Available to Centrelink cardholders, schools and not-for-profit organisations.

Call them on 1800 112 205 or on www.workventures.com.au/connectit to see how they can help you get a better PC package.

Provided as information only and no recommendations given

Until next time Bob Lester

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

Check out www.fip.org.au for more information