

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

May 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.

May's Coffee meeting at Macarthur Square was a full three tables, two prams and plenty of people kind of morning. Thanks to Pauline from Aspect's **Someone to turn to** support program people left with plenty of information and contacts. Pauline outlined the way parents are buddied up with another parent who volunteers to be part of the program providing mutual support and awareness of ideas and information.

More parents are needed for this style of support with training provided and back up support from Aspect. Pauline can be contacted on 8977 8335 for more details.

Thursday night happened this month with new families along and a couple of regulars. We discussed a wide range of issues facing families that may yet to have a diagnosis for their family member and how different issues come up as a person who has Aspergers Syndrome moves through life.

While it is great having access to more information now, primarily via the internet, this wealth of information can be over powering at times. How do you get time to read it and take in the various viewpoints? What do you believe or take as fact? Down which path do you go? The Support Group is a way for parents and other family members to hear how others have dealt with the aspergers world.

June Meetings

- **Second Wednesday's of the month** 11th June 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.
- **Second Thursday of the month** 12th May 7pm at the Harrington Park Community Centre Fairwater Dr next to the shopping centre. We do need a few more people attending to make our meeting viable.

Getting new enquires each week from local families interested in joining the support group and coming along to our meetings. This is great and I hope everyone makes them feel welcome and shares their knowledge with them.

Adults who have Asperger Syndrome

A recent phone call from a young man living in the Macarthur region, who wanted information about aspergers and any social groups he could joined prompted me to check up on a bit of information. As usual a web search turned up a mountain of information, sites and often conflicting information.

I did turn to www.aspia.org.au site run for partners of aspzie adults that contains a lot of information and the opportunity for partners to join a support group. Keep up the good work Carol who lives in the Macarthur Region 0408 817 828.

A good site for information was www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au where they have range of Fact Sheets on health issues including Aspergers in adults. Another one I found was www.aspires-relationships.com which is an American site with a number of books and links to Youtube sites.

The Aspergers organisation in Queensland provides and on line forum for all to find out information and raise issues www.asperger.asn.au/forums

Off the Aspect Web site

Social Club for Young Adults Meets fortnightly on Mondays from 7.00pm - 9.00pm

A social club has been set up for young adults (18 years and over) who have Asperger's or similar communication difficulties.

You are invited to come along and share experiences with other people who are keen to make new friends. There will be opportunities to sit back and chat amongst friendly people, and have a drink or a bite to eat. There will also be organised activities and events.

There will be a facilitator at the meetings to help everyone get along and organise what people want to do. Please bring some ID with your address on it. We participate in a varied range of activities, such as:

- Guest speakers
- Movies
- Ten pin bowling
- Games nights
- Barbecues

For general enquires about the social club contact Jane Cotter at Aspect on 8868 8504 or for activity details call Ben Black the club mentor on 0413 990 904

Check out www.aspect.com.au for a link to the Clubs Activity Diary for 2008

The Future of the Families in Partnership Co-operative

The Co-operative had a Good News Week in May with officers from DADHC making an offer to the Board of the Co-operative of a one off grant that will enable its Community Development Program to continue until June 2009.

This will enable me to continue to facilitate the Support Group along with the other activities and work I do with many other families and disability services across Macarthur. The extra time till June 2009 will enable the Co-operative to seek further funding and set itself up for the future.

Thanks for all the people who supported me in our campaign for funding, who advocated to their local member of parliament and in the local papers. It did work and was much appreciated by all concerned.

What is Occupational Therapy?

Occupational Therapy is a health profession concerned with an individual's ability to function within their daily roles and carry out everyday occupations (tasks and activities). When working with children, Occupational Therapists aim to improve the child's ability to function within their daily roles of player, learner and self-maintainer. Upon assessment, Occupational Therapists identify the factors that are impeding a child's performance in these roles and provide service according to the individual needs of the child.

How can Occupational Therapy assist your child?

Through play and activity based interventions, an Occupational Therapist individually designs and implements programs to assist children in the development of:

- Gross-Motor Skills
- Fine-Motor Skills
- Visual Perceptual Skills
- Cognitive Skills

- Improved Focus and Attention
- Independence in Daily Living Skills (ie: toileting, feeding and dressing)
- Social Interaction

Occupational Therapist also works closely with parents to assist in:

- Addressing sensory processing issues
- Implementing behaviour management strategies
- Adapting the home environment to suit the sensory needs of the child
- Prescribing equipment

I recently meet up with a local OT Robert Payne who runs a mobile Paediatric Occupational Therapy Service. He stated that he visits most locations across Macarthur and specialises in working with children with moderate or severe impairments. He works in the family's home to ensure that the child is more at ease in an environment that they are familiar with and are more willing to participate in therapy sessions.

Robert's contacts are 0411 711 993 email robert@rpayneot.info and you can get more information on his web site www.rpayneot.info and follow the links.

The Macarthur Community Health Service also has Occupational Therapists and a number of other private providers can be found in the phone book. Check that they are a registered Medicare provider and see your GP about an Enhanced Primary Care Plan that will enable you to claim benefits for use of therapy services – including Psychologist.

Sibling Support Program

The Sibling Support Program is for children and adolescents (8-17years of age) who have a sister or brother with a disability. It aims to help siblings identify and use positive strategies for living with brothers or sisters who have a disability. Often many siblings may experience loneliness, isolation, and low self-esteem. This program will assist siblings and give them opportunity to:

- Enhance coping skills
- Meet others siblings in similar experiences
- Improve their self-esteem
- Have fun
- Reduce isolation and increase social networks
- Share and gather information
- Develop a better understanding of their siblings disabilities

If you are interested in The Sibling Support Program, any activities that will be running, or any information regarding the program, please do not hesitate to contact myself on 46 248 333 or 0409 049 353.

Training on the Autism Spectrum and Challenging behaviour – continued from last month's news sheet

The second day of training presented by Aspect provided a number of strategies in dealing with children generally within a childcare setting, where the majority of people were from. Some of the key points from the second day were:

Make Autism Spectrum Disorder Friendly Environmental Changes

1. Visual Supports
 - Structure time
 - Structure Activities
 - Structure Environment
2. Clear Communication
3. Behaviour Rules
 - Developing replacement behaviour – give a high five instead of pushing someone
 - Choosing the right reward including rewards along the way to the required behaviour

4. Sensory Supports
5. Family Supports
6. Build a positive rapport

Prioritise a skill to teach

Choosing a skill that can replace a challenging behaviour and is useful to your child

Choose a skill that is achievable

Build on skills they already have – check what the child can already do

Teach less, more thoroughly and often

Pick your battles – all behaviour is not challenging or can be ongoing. Can be just being a kid!!

Source: Autism Spectrum Australia 2008

The training provided to workers is also provided to parents through the **Recipe to Success** program conducted by Aspect. They are planning to hold one in Campbelltown in 2009. More details as they come to hand or you can do to their web site or call their Information Line on 8977 8377

Everyone Can Dance

I attended this event on the 17th May at Narellan which gave over 150 child and young people the opportunity to socialize and have a good time. They certainly did this with plenty of dancing, face painting, eating and general good fun had by all.

The organisers were local young people who wanted to put something on in the local area and they must be congratulated for this. I met a number of families who I knew and a few new ones, enabling me to pass on information about aspergers and the support group.

Community events are a good way of assisting kids with their social skills and have a good time as well – next event I am involved in is the annual **Kites for Kids Day 23rd August** at Koshigaya Park in Campbelltown. Always well attended by families from our support group, so put into your diaries now. More details in later news sheets

Remember

"We each have our own way of living in the world, together we are like a symphony. Some are the melody, some are the rhythm, some are the harmony. It all blends together, we are like a symphony, and each part is crucial. We all contribute to the song of life." ...Sondra Williams

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