

Aspergers Syndrome Support Group for Families in Macarthur

September 2007 News Sheet

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September Meetings

Wednesday's coffee meeting only attracted one parent this month, but we had a pleasant hour talking over coffee and hearing her son's new joke, the first one he ever tried to tell. He also enjoys swimming at the centre located at Macarthur Square that is improving his coordination and contact with a male adult – an important thing for all young kids.

Thursday night attracted a group of families that are becoming our regular attendees. We looked at the Information Kit that is being developed and outlined at the end of this News Sheet, along with a very wide range of topics across all age groups.

One family has an adult daughter who, whilst not officially diagnosed, displays many of the characteristics of Aspergers. Through the telling of their story other families gained an insight into issues and opportunities they may face in the future. Such discussions allow people to express their feelings and ideas without being discouraged and can give them a reference point for the dealing with the many different situations faced by families.

Before we knew it, it was nearly 9 pm and time to go home – two hours of great ideas and much food for thought.

Meetings for October

- **Second Wednesday** 10th October 10 am 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 and the kids can enjoy the playground. It's the school holidays but don't be put off – it's a chance for them to meet as well.

Julie Bullock, OT with Macarthur Health will be back to talk with families.

- **Second Thursday** 11th October 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 families.

Remember the Co-operative Web Site

www.fip.org.au Don't forget about the Co-operative's web site that is now up and running. A special page is dedicated to the Aspergers Syndrome Support Group with links to others.

Mental Health Week – Relationships in the Community

Proudly sponsored by Campbelltown City Council and the Macarthur Mental Health Promotion Network, an **Open Access Forum** is being held on Tuesday 9th October at the Campbelltown Civic Centre, next to the Council Offices from 9.30 am to 2.00 pm.

- Hear Professor Ian Hickie from the Brain and Mind Research Institute and Steve Moroni a consumer speak about building relationships in the community
- Come and enjoy a range of activities, displays, information, activities for the kids
- Gain a greater understanding of mental health and what is available to assist people in the local community

RSVP requested by Thursday 4th October to 4645 4579 for catering purposes.

Positively Macarthur Conference – a friendly reminder

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

ASPIA – Asperger Syndrome Partner Information Australia

Carol has let me know that they have Tony Attwood and Isabelle Hanault booked for 29th February and 1st March 2008. One of the days will be for teens/young adults and the other for marriage/long term relationships. More information to follow but mark these dates in your calendar now as a reminder. Check out their web site on www.aspia.or.au

Aspergers Syndrome Information Kit

Thanks for the feedback people have provided to-date on what should be in the Kit that is being developed with funds provided by Campbelltown RSL Club. However, if you would like to contribute and have not done so, send me your response to the following questions

1. What would you 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. Do you have something that can be included in the kit – fact sheets, recommended therapist contacts?

The Kits outline developed so far follows these headings

1. Introduction
 - What the Kit is about
 - Who the kit is aimed at
 - How to use the Kit
2. What is Aspergers Syndrome?
 - Aspect Australia brochure
 - Characteristics
 - Different viewpoints
 - Where to get assessed
3. Support available
 - Groups
 - Newsletter
 - On-line
 - Community Groups
4. Local Contacts
 - Quick reference sheet
 - Therapist
 - Health
 - Family Support
 - Carer support
 - Respite
5. Family Stories
 - News articles
 - Local Families stories
6. Resources and Books
 - Book in hand
 - Local Library
7. Websites
 - Key sites to get you going
 - When information is too much
8. Education
 - Opportunities
 - Role of Counsellors
9. Employment
 - Opportunities and support
10. Rights of families
 - Centrelink
 - Medicare
11. Tips and strategies
 - A few basic ideas for families

There is much to do to get the Kit completed but its getting there!!!

Branches of Learning Tuition Service

Mrs Michelle McKinnon, Mrs Lee Casuscelli and Mrs Samantha McGarrity will be operating in the Community Cottage 351 Welling Drive Mount Annan from 20th August 2007 beginning with a transition to school program

Tuition Services include

- Transition to school programs for 4 to 5 year olds
- Homework Supervision K-12
- Small group tutoring in response to students individual needs
- Social skills training
- Self Awareness for Teenagers with Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Sibling support for children living with disabilities
- Behaviour management programs
- And much, much more.....

We have over forty years of combined experience in education in our local area. We believe that learning occurs when children:

- Are having fun
- Actively experience learning and are engaged and interested in their learning.
- Are encouraged to challenge themselves and take risks.
- Work in small groups, learning from and with each other, supporting and receiving support from each other.
- Are focused on key concepts, important ideas and skills
- Have high expectations set which are consistent and regular.

Contact: Mrs Michelle McKinnon Mob: 0416 297755 Home (02) 46483725

Email michelletmckinnon@bigpond.com



They Understand Me – an Autistic Support Group



A local parent is seeking community interest in the establishment of a group for support and friendship for parents and carers. Her idea is to enable people to come together to lend their knowledge, support and solutions to issues that arise in their special children. She is also would like to see regular fun days for children and families.

If you are interested or know a family who may be contact Natalie on 0418 633 022 Families in Partnership will be assisting her with her idea and offering my resources and contacts.

Until next time

Bob Lester

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