



Welcome to STaR's November newsletter of 2007

An update from the STaR Project Co-ordinator

As you are aware, the STaR Project is a Federal Government funded project which is due to finish at the end of the year. The project was funded for three years to investigate a method of support for children with disabilities enrolled in childcare centres. Our aim was to ensure that children with disabilities were included in childcare and were provided with the best possible educational program within the childcare environment. The program was to be delivered in the most natural way through play and the everyday activities and routines of the centre. Our goal was to train centre staff to enable them to be more effective and self-sufficient in catering for the needs of children with disabilities in their centres. To this end, we trained a staff member as a special needs manager to assess the child and write an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for them. The IEP includes objectives to develop your child's areas of need indicated by the assessment, your priorities and therapy objectives where appropriate. The Special Needs Manager was also required to undergo further training in Early Intervention by completing a 3 subject (6 months full-time equivalent) postgraduate certificate in Early Intervention.

Now that the 3 years is drawing to a close our funding is about to finish and the external evaluation of the STaR Project will take place. As I indicated in my last newsletter update, we have been extremely pleased with the preliminary data regarding the children's development, which showed that our STaR children are making good, and in some instances, better than predicted gains, in many areas of development. To assist this continued development, we have collated all of our information regarding working with children with special needs, including workshop information, special needs strategies, resources etc. to pass on to your centres. We recently held a very successful workshop day with the centre special needs managers to discuss these resources (see accompanying photo). I would like to thank the relevant councils and centres for allowing their staff member to attend.

Whilst we are confident that our centre special needs managers now have the skills to continue to assess and program for your child, we would like to ensure that the staff at your child's centre receive the extra support they need to continue implementing your child's program. The STaR Association has, therefore, decided to apply for a small amount of available government funding and to top it up with Association funds, to continue the STaR support teacher role next year. This means that we will still be providing a special education teacher to visit your child's centre for half a day, fortnightly, to provide support and training for all of the staff working with your child and catering for his/her special needs.

We know that the project is working for the children, but we would also like to know how we can better cater for your needs. We will be sending home a brief survey, which will be anonymous, to try to determine how we can better support families. I know your time is limited but if we don't get feedback from you, the families, we can't provide the support you really want and we just continue to provide the support we think you want. So please, take just a few minutes to complete it (just a brief few words is fine) and pop it back to the director or teacher of your child's centre in the envelope provided. Even if your child is finishing this year, it is important in our planning of support for future families.

As the end of the year approaches, it is time to farewell some of our STaR children going off to school next year. So to Shyan, William, James, Sehaj, Noah, Jandeep, Emily, Tara, Chris and Alex we wish you every happiness in your new school environment and years filled with learning and fun. I would like to get these families together to chat about starting school, what you can expect and how you can help prepare your child. We will be in touch about this soon.

We are currently in the process of enrolling new STaR children for our current centres in 2008. Unfortunately we have many children wanting places who live in areas with no access to a STaR supported childcare centre. As funding has finished, we can no longer provide training or support to any new centres. We know there is a great need for support for families who have a child with special needs, to find an inclusive childcare centre where they know the staff is supported to provide an appropriate program for their child. We are therefore applying for new government funding to continue the Project and also, to establish a Centre of Excellence as a model inclusive childcare centre from which to base staff training in working with young children with special needs and research.

If you would like to support our application, a brief letter indicating how your child, their centre or you have benefited from being part of the STaR Project, would be very valuable. Just drop it off at your child's centre or mail/email to Dawn Chadwick, Special Education Centre, Macquarie University, NSW 2109. Email dawn@star.org.au

So, for our last newsletter of the year, I hope you have enjoyed reading the 'Early Links' early intervention magazine, which we have left for you at your centre over the year and I wish you all a very happy Christmas, a very safe and relaxing holiday break, and a very invigorating and fulfilling 2008.

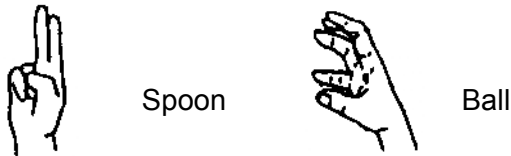
Best wishes
Dawn Chadwick
STaR Project co-ordinator



Our STaR Special Needs Manager (SNM) workshop day (L to R)
Coral Kemp (STaR Project Director), Jin (SNM Cressy Road), Ljiljana (SNM St. Anthony's), Sue (SNM Bob Sinclair), Sarah (SNM Joanne Sammarco), Dawn Chadwick (STaR Project Co-ordinator), Maureen (SNM Stepping Stones), Leah (SNM Banksia Cottage), Melissa (SNM Werrianda), Julie (SNM Carita), Kathy Hodgetts (STaR Support and Training Teacher).

STaR Caring for Carers

The two sign language workshops that were held in August were well attended. Everyone who came along learnt many signs to use with their children in everyday situations. The sessions were presented by Aileen Ryan, who has a great teaching style and most importantly a fabulous sense of humour. We are planning a signing workshop for siblings in the new year.



As we are rapidly approaching the end of the year, it is time to plan for 2008 and so we are seeking parent feedback/suggestions as to what workshops/information resources you would like us to organise for 2008. Please ring or email any suggestions you may have. Remember Caring for Carers is here for the families. If you need assistance with accessing resources or information, or simply to talk, please ring Elise on 9888 3717 or email elise@star.org.au

STaR Monthly Drop in Morning – **Wednesday 28th November**

If you feel like a chat over a cuppa, or are seeking information and resources please come to the STaR office between 10-11.30am. For some of you North Ryde is not a convenient location but if the idea of a drop in session appeals please let me know and we can try and organise a location more convenient.

Information for families

Tax Rebates

It is called – Net medical expenses tax offset (source www.ato.gov.au)

Net medical expenses are the medical expenses you have paid less any refunds you got, or could get, from Medicare or a private health fund.

You can claim a tax offset of 20% – 20 cents in the dollar – of your net medical expenses over \$1,500. There is no upper limit on the amount you can claim.

You can claim expenses relating to an illness or operation paid to legally qualified doctors, nurses or chemists and public or private hospitals. However, expenses for some cosmetic operations are excluded.

Medical expenses which qualify for the tax offset include payments:

- to dentists, orthodontists or registered dental mechanics
- to opticians or optometrists, including the cost of prescription spectacles or contact lenses
- to a carer who looks after a person who is blind or permanently confined to a bed or wheelchair
- for therapeutic treatment under the direction of a doctor
- for medical aids/equipment prescribed by a doctor
- for artificial limbs or eyes and hearing aids

- for maintaining a properly trained dog for guiding or assisting people with a disability (but not for social therapy)

In many cases, the expenses need to be incurred under the direction of someone in the medical profession so it is important to keep a paper trail to prove the referral as well as the expenditure.

Finally, seek advice from your accountant and let them know of this rebate if they are unaware of its existence.

(Source: Newsletter for the Association of Children with a Disability Issue 30)

Election News:

Carers Kick Off National Senate Campaign

Media Release

8th October 2007

A voice for the voiceless

Carers continue their unswerving march toward a Senate seat with the launch of the Carers Alliance yesterday, a political party vowing to represent all of Australia's 2.7 million carers and their extended family and friends.

In front of more than 150 members, the Carers Alliance vowed to fight to change the lives of Australia's largely ignored carers, carers of people with frailty, chronic illness, mental illness and disabilities.

Felicity Maddison the QLD Senate candidate said. "For carers a vote for the Carers Alliance is a vote for yourself, for family and friends -it is a vote for support for a fair go. For carers and for people with a social conscience - it is a vote for your future".

She said "Carers do have one very powerful right remaining – the right to vote, so, carers, lets make our personal lives the impetus for social and political change".

Mary Lou Carter the NSW Senate candidate said "Carers are coming, strong passionate and fearless, to rattle the cages of ignorance. We will not be denied a voice".

Robert Gow, the QLD convener, said "We do not forget our Vets, who fought for us, only to have this nation turn its back and ignore the inter-generational problems of disability amongst their families.

"The beauty of the Senate is that voting for the Carers Alliance will not change the outcome of the Federal election, but it is a vote that can change lives" said the National Convener of the Carers Alliance, Nell Brown.

For further information please contact:

QLD	Senate	Candidate	Felicity	Maddison	0409 599 131
NSW	Senate	Candidate	Marylou	Carter	0425 363 421
WA	Senate	Candidate	Tom	Hoyer	0408 195 351

VIC Senate Candidate John Newman

QLD Convener Robert Gow 0417 732 967

National Convener Nell Brown 0402 648 008

The “Someone to turn to...”™ Parent Support Network (through ASPECT) provides emotional and practical support for parents who, for example, have a child with a recent diagnosis of autism, and would like supportive contact with a volunteer parent who has had similar experiences. There are no fees involved.
Phone: 8977 8335

Autism Behavioural Intervention NSW (ABI NSW) - www.abinsw.org.au
Family Support Services.

A newly established service whose aim is to provide quality, practical services for both the family and child with autism

e-Bility – www.e-Bility.com

This is a website for disability information, resources, services and products. It includes a classifieds section for sale of second hand equipment and adapted vehicles; Access Travel spot has details on accessible travel accommodation, book reviews and an extensive links directory covering early intervention services, free or affordable assistive software and more.

Siblings Australia – www.siblingsaustralia.org.au

Siblings Australia is a unique national organisation committed to enhancing the wellbeing of the siblings of children with disabilities and chronic illness

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