



Welcome to STaR's May 2008 newsletter

The STaR Association would like to extend a warm welcome to our new families whose children are attending St Anthony Long Day Care Centre. In the newsletter you will find updates about the STaR Association, and STaR Caring for Carers. We hope that you and your family will contribute with questions, ideas, suggestions or information you wish to share.

STaR Caring for Carers

It has been a busy couple of months.

We have submitted 3 funding proposals to DADHC (Dept of Ageing, Disability and Home Care) for the STaR Project, STaR Centre of Excellence and STaR Caring for Carers. Hopefully all 3 will be successful, which will mean lots of new and exciting projects benefiting STaR families and the community.

We are currently updating our parents'/carers database and seek your assistance with this process. In order to reduce administration costs and help the environment we would prefer where possible to email the newsletter and other resources/information. Please send your email address to elise@star.org.au

On March 18, 2008 the 2nd MonSTaR Cup was held at Pennant Hills Golf Club. It was organised by a small group of businessmen and raised over \$125,000. Half the proceeds went to the STaR Association and the other half to the Motor Neurone Disease Association of NSW – another worthy cause.

They have a website www.monstarcup.com, please have a look. We are very grateful to the MonSTaR committee for their generous support. Also thanks to Morgan from Werrianda who attended the event and represented our STaR kids beautifully!

On Wednesday 30th April Margaret Meaker and I attended the launch of ACD NSW's *Through the Maze* and *Helping You and Your Family*. The launch was attended by the NSW Minister for Disability Services, Kristina Keneally who officially launched the 2 information resources.

Both books are written for parents and carers of a child or young person with a disability and are designed to help readers navigate the service system. *Through the Maze* is a comprehensive guide to disability services covering the stages from infancy, up to and including adulthood. *Helping You and Your Family* is a shorter guide designed for families with a child who is newly diagnosed with a disability.

Through the Maze will be available shortly in electronic form on the ACDNSW website – www.acdsw.org.au

The STaR Association has ordered a copy of *Through the Maze* for each STaR family. They will be distributed as soon as we receive them, either by mail or a copy will be placed in your child's pocket at the childcare centre they attend. Both publications are excellent and will be helpful to many families. We welcome your feedback

Information for Families

School Information Update

29th August is the final date to lodge your 2009 Support Class Application forms.

These forms are now to be lodged with your local primary school if you fall under the auspice of Western Sydney Department of Education and Training (DET).

The local primary school is the point of contact to discuss all school options and lodge DET enrolment forms. Appointments can be made with the school principal or their designated representative. Please note that you can still ring the Student Services Consultant who can assist you with information and questions you may have about the DET school options for children with disabilities. Correne Astill, Student Services Consultant, Western Sydney will support parents to school appointments as necessary.

If you are interested in the 2009 Department of Education & Training Early Intervention Classes, the forms need to be lodged at your local primary school by 20th October 2008.

This new electronic centralised application process will be state wide from 2009.

Interrelate Family Centre - Carer's Seminar June 10th 2008 7pm

See attached flyer

Respite services for carers –

Riverlink Interchange Inc. providing flexible respite provision.

[P] 9858 3433 [E] info@riverlink.org.au

My Time Program at the Children's Hospital at Westmead – a support program for parents and carers of young children (0-6yrs) with chronic conditions and/or disabilities.

It is an informal support group, which meets on a regular basis. Group members can choose topics to discuss with a group facilitator, whilst a play facilitator looks after their children.

The Carer Support Program at the hospital has formed a partnership with Playgroups NSW, auspiced by the Parenting Resource Centre, to establish the first hospital based My Time group in Australia.

Parents/carers can attend on a one off basis or as often as they like. They can come from the local area or attend whilst their child is an inpatient.

There is no cost to the parent/carer and the group will be held over 8 weeks every school term on Wednesdays (starting 7th May) from 10am – 12 in the Parent and Carer Resource Centre at the Children's Hospital at Westmead.

Information/Tip Sheets

Please see attached 3 information/tip sheets that may provide some help with establishing routines and social stories, as well as some game ideas for your children that encourage different development areas prior to starting school.

- Information sheet #1 – *Scripted Stories for Social Situations* from the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/>
- Information sheet #2 – *Establishing Routines* BUILDING BLOCKS Early Intervention Service [Parent Information Sheet](#)
- Information Sheet #3 – *Starting School. What Can We Do to Get Ready? Games that Encourage Children's Development.* Learning Support Programme 2004, Department of Education and Training.

Helpful websites

- Parent Portal – www.activ.asn.au/parentportal/
A guide for parents to resources about intellectual disability.

- Interrelate –www.interrelate.org.au
Interrelate is the only organisation in NSW to be funded especially to provide counselling and mediation for families where there is a son or daughter who has a disability.
- New Website “What Carers Need” – <http://whatcarersneed.wikispaces.com>
Two mothers have developed a wiki space called ‘What Carers Need’.
The purpose of the wiki is to allow families who are caring for children or adults with disabilities and illness to voice their views directly to politicians/media, instead of having their views filtered through an agency or another third party
It is hoped that the wiki will eventually provide sufficient evidence for the Carers Alliance to use to improve many wrongs in Australia surrounding caring for people with disabilities.
- Children’s Hospital at Westmead website – www.chw.edu.au/parents/factsheets/
This parent website has a range of fact sheets covering a variety of topics from allergies, safety, sleep to common illnesses.

Remember we are here to help our STaR families as much as possible. If you need help with information, are unsure of anything or are simply having a bad day, please don’t hesitate to contact us on 9888 3717.

From the STaR Project Manager

Yes, you are right, in the last issue of the STaR Newsletter I said “farewell”. Well, “I’m back”, as a matter of fact I didn’t really go anywhere, just changed direction (or employers). As I mentioned, the 3 year funding through the Federal Government for the STaR Project finished at the end of February. We have applied for several new funding grants to continue and extend our support and these should have been determined by now however we are still waiting. Meanwhile, the STaR Association are battling on and whilst we are waiting, I will continue to be available so please do not hesitate to call me on 9850 8700 if you have any queries or problems about your child’s program or transition to school.

Last month we held several School Options meetings. For those families who children will be commencing school next year, it is time to enrol your child in your chosen sector – Public (Department of Education), Catholic or Private (Independent). It is best to have enrolled your child by the end of June (Catholic sector prefer May) to ensure all paperwork etc. can be checked before placement decisions are made. If you were unable to attend the School Options meetings and have not yet decided on a school placement please contact us if you would like some help. If you have attended the meeting but are still unsure and would like some extra assistance please don’t hesitate to call us. You can phone either Elise (STaR Caring for Carers on 9888 3717) or Dawn on 9850 8700.

Also, remember that you need to send assessment documentation with your school application (your psychological, speech pathologist reports etc.) The documentation needs to be less than 12 months old so if you need to book in for a new assessment you will need to do so quickly.

We are still continuing our training support for our STaR childcare centres. In April we held workshops for staff at Bob Sinclair and Joanne Sammarco on Developing Communication Through Use of Visuals and for staff at Stepping Stones on Developing Communication Through Shared Book Reading. We are happy to hold workshops for any STaR Centres or STaR families so please don’t hesitate to contact us if you would like a particular topic. Elise will be arranging some family workshops soon.

Part of STaR's support in several of our STaR childcare centres is to provide a release person (generally for 2-3 hours per week) for the Special Needs Manager (the teacher at your child's centre who is in charge of your child's program) to allow her time to assess, program, hold meetings or have a little extra time to work with your child. You may not see these staff as they generally relieve during the day.

Deb Drinan has been relieving for us at Joanne Sammarco and Bob Sinclair for the past 3 years but has needed to leave so we now welcome Nicole Lesley as the STaR release worker to these centres. The release teacher is in addition to Kathy, our Early Intervention Support Teacher, who visits the centres fortnightly.

The latest edition of 'Early Links' has just been completed so we will be putting a copy into your pigeon hole at your childcare centre soon. This magazine will keep you up to date with current research and topics of interest in the area of Early Intervention. It's well worth reading.

Accompanying this newsletter is a brochure and an Expression of Interest Form for a new Special Needs Supported Playgroup the STaR Association is establishing. Penrith Council have offered us the use of council pre-school premises at Erskine Park (near St Clair) on a Monday and Friday. We propose running supported playgroups on either or both of these days, depending on parent requests.

The playgroup is for young children with disabilities/developmental delay aged between 0 – 5 years of age. It will run for a two hour session 10.00 am – 12.00 noon. The session will include an interactive play session where families will be guided in the development of their child's skills through play or everyday routines and a family morning tea break time where families will have the opportunity to network with other families or to obtain information through formal and informal discussion sessions with other families and early intervention professionals.

These supported playgroup sessions are being developed in the hope that we will be able to better support our families and their child's needs. The STaR Project has been supporting your child's development at their childcare centre but has only been able to provide limited support to families. It is hoped that family involvement in playgroups will enable families greater contact with Early Intervention Specialists and greater support from other families. STaR would like to extend the Supported Playgroup Program to other metropolitan areas in the future.

STaR families who are currently attending STaR affiliated childcare centres are welcome at the playgroups on days their child is not attending their childcare centre. Families of children with disabilities/developmental delays who are not members of STaR childcare centres are also welcome so if you have friends of children with special needs, you are more than welcome to meet at our playgroup centre and mess it up rather than your, or someone else's, home.

If you are interested in joining the playgroup please let us know as soon as possible. As we can only operate on Monday or Friday and the groups will be small, places will be limited.

Best wishes and please don't hesitate to contact me still if you have any questions or problems.

Regards
Dawn

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