



STaR Association

For children with disabilities and special learning needs.

A research based service offering inclusive child care placement to children with disabilities and additional needs.

Our mission is:

“To empower children with disabilities and/or special learning needs, and those who support them, through research based information.”

Our vision is:

“To be a highly professional organisation providing research-based education and support to children with disabilities and/or special needs, and those who support them.”

Welcome to STaR's December 2008 newsletter

The STaR Association would like to extend to all the STaR families our warm wishes for the festive season and 2009.

To all the STaR graduating children and families **congratulations**. We are of course sad to see you go but hope that you settle into your new schools quickly and without too much drama!!!

Remember that STaR is only a phone call away.

Great News - A New STaR Service

STaR has been selected to be one of the panel providers funded by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services & Indigenous Affairs (FaHCISA)'s Helping Children with Autism Package.

Under the early intervention component of the Package, all children aged six and under who are diagnosed with an ASD and are not yet at school will be eligible for a funding package of up to \$12,000 (up to \$6000 per financial year) to assist with the financial cost of accessing early intervention services.

We have named our panel **Autism Opportunity**. It is a 'one stop shop' for families of young children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. We provide educational and therapy services. These include:

- Preparation for school program
- Transition to school program
- Early literacy and numeracy programs
- Speech Pathology
- Occupational Therapy

Families will work with us (Autism Opportunity) to determine how they want to spend the funding to best meet their child's needs.

I have attached a FaHCISA information sheet, which provides an overview of the Helping Children with Autism Package. In the information there is reference to Autism Advisors. In NSW the Autism Advisor Program will be delivered by Autism Spectrum Australia (ASPECT) T: 02 8977 8345 E: autismadvisor@autismspectrum.org.au

If you are interested and want more information we encourage you to contact us on 02 9888 3717 and ask for Elise.

STaR Association

Supporters:

Oztech Intelligent Systems

The Australian Stockbrokers Foundation

Greenart Gardens P/L

Gilbert + Tobin Lawyers

Casey Bates Chartered Accountants

WebAngel P/L

The Epping Club

MonSTaR Cup

Daniels Automotive

Partners:

Macquarie University Special Education Centre

Access Macquarie Ltd

Funding:

Dept. of Families, Community Services & Indigenous Affairs

STaR Caring for Carers

In November we ran a family workshop focusing on communication using sign language. It was an excellent evening and the presenter Eileen Ryan had us captivated. We all went away being able to sign a number of different word/requests as well as sign and sing "Little Green Frog!!!"

We have booked Eileen again for next year.

Look out for our information flyers, which will be sent throughout 2009 detailing workshops and dates/times and venue.

Information for Families

This came across my desk, which may be of interest. North Shore Speech Therapy is conducting Social Skills Groups during the 2009 school holidays (January, April, July & October). Sessions are tailored specifically to suit children's needs. Social skills to be taught include greetings & eye contact, taking turns & sharing, listening/attention, understanding feelings, basic problem solving, news telling.

For further information call 9411 3727 or look at their website www.speechtherapy.com.au

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

The past few months have been very hectic but exciting. We have recruited 3 new childcare centres to commence with the STaR Project at the beginning of next year and have been busy enrolling new children. Our new STaR affiliated centres are Norwest at Baulkham Hills, Chilverleigh at Thornleigh and Midson Road at Epping. The new owner of our Cressy Road centre, which we thought we would lose, would also like to continue the STaR Project. All of these centres are very enthusiastic about joining the project and a staff member (or 2 in some centres) will be commencing their special education training at Macquarie University next year. STaR will be supporting 12 centres across Sydney next year.

The dedication of our STaR Project participating childcare centres is remarkable. The Directors and Special Needs Managers at our current 9 centres are committed to ensuring they are providing the best possible program for children with additional needs. The Director or centre teacher, who has agreed to be the Special Needs Manager at the centres your children attend, have now completed an 18 month university course in Early Intervention (at their own expense) in addition to their Early Childhood degree. They also spend many hours on top of their usual childcare centre duties assessing, programming and working with our children with additional needs. I'd like to thank our current STaR Special Needs Managers and Centre Directors and let them know how much we appreciate their commitment to inclusion and also to welcome our new STaR affiliated childcare centres.

The STaR Project is currently supporting 36 children. Thirteen of our children will be leaving to commence school next year. So to Braydyn, Jack, Shaun, Thomas Jalen, Jed, Logan, Liam,

Gianluca, Jayden, Hardik, Jeffery and Luis we wish a smooth transition to school and a happy and productive school experience.

We would also like to welcome our new children and families, Marjorie, Damien, Joshua, Jack, Alik, Edgar, Deagan, Jacob, Alex, Cassandra, Anastasia and Fletcher. We look forward to supporting you in 2009.

In late February 2009, we also hope to commence a supported playgroup for children 0-5 with additional needs. It will be held here at the Special Education Centre at Macquarie University on a Monday morning from 10.00 am. to approximately 12.00. Siblings under school age are also welcome to attend. If you know of any families who might like to attend please let them know. They do not need to be attending a STaR affiliated childcare centre. We will send home further details in the New Year.

To all of our STaR children and families Kathy and I wish you a very happy Christmas and a safe and restful holiday break. For those families returning or commencing with us next year we look forward to working with you and to those families leaving the Project we thank you for allowing us to support your children in their childcare centres.

Best wishes
Dawn

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