



## **Welcome the Stronger Families Alliance e-newsletter,**

The Stronger Families Alliance is an open network of that fosters collaboration between organizations and networks with a stake in the development of children living in the Blue Mountains.

The Alliance works to promote child well-being and resilience through a range of collaborative initiatives linked to the implementation of the Alliance's Child and Family Plan (attached to this email).

The 28 Alliance members include all levels of government, business networks, NSW child and family organizations and the community and university sectors.

The newsletter reports on activities occurring under the three different parts of the Alliance's Child and Family Plan:

**A: Strengthening families through neighbourhood service networks**

**B: Moving families beyond vulnerability**

**C: Creating child friendly communities**

This newsletter contains news from the sub groups and programs participating in the Alliance network. You can use it to link your own staff, volunteers, clients and programs to other professionals, initiatives and services across the Alliance network.

## **A: Strengthening families through neighbourhood service networks**

### **White Ribbon Day focuses on impact of domestic violence on children**

This term the annual White Ribbon Day focused on the impacts of domestic violence on children.

The mayor, Women's Health Centre, Integrated Violence Prevention and Response Services, Community Health, Rotary and BMCC's Community Outcomes team combined forces to deliver a single coordinated message about the impact of domestic violence on children's development.

This was done through speeches at the Mayor's White Ribbon Day breakfast and Gazette coverage that spanned three weeks.

The key messages at the breakfast speeches and Gazette coverage were taken from Part A, objective 4, of the Child and Family Plan:

- There is an increased, helpful response to children and families experiencing child abuse and neglect and family violence.
- Increase empathetic understanding and change in attitudes towards children displaying symptoms of abuse and neglect.

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Thank you to Jane Ley, Integrated Violence Prevention and Response Services, and Peter Carrol, Rotary, whose speeches and comments to the Gazette clearly communicated how domestic violence impacts on children and what the community can do to better support these children and their families.

## **NEWS FROM HUBS**

### **School Centred Community Hub Executive**

This group is convened by Blue Mountains City Council and involves the lead agencies in each of the School Centred Community Hubs involved in the Stronger Families Alliance.

The Mid Mountains Community Hub, coordinated by Mountains Outreach Community Service, joined the Stronger Families Alliance School Hub program this quarter. The executive welcomes Lyn Bevington, Manager, Mountains Outreach Community Service to the group (More about the Mid Mountains Community Hub below).

The Executive has changed its name to the 'Neighbourhood Service Networks Executive' (beginning 2012). The name change reflects a new commitment in the group to support the growth of service networking at a neighbourhood level using both the School Centred Community Hub model, and other approaches to neighbourhood service networking occurring in the Blue Mountains.

The purpose of the group in 2012 will be to provide an enabling governance structure that oversees resource allocation, evaluation, replication, sustainability, funding and interdisciplinary learning and development across the neighbourhood service networks in the Mountains.

Contact: Tanya James: Blue Mountains City Council: Tel (02) 478055742

### **Blaxland, East Blaxland & Warrimoo Steering Committee development**

This term the school principals involved in this 3-school Hub met for the first time to begin forming the steering committee that will oversee this Hub. A second meeting, extended to

all interested services & organizations in these neighbourhoods, is now planned for Term One, 2012.

At Warrimoo Public School the school's existing successful Transition to School program was expanded last term to include information for parents. Parents will continue to meet as part of this program into term one next year. Plans to provide Hub orientation information to the staff are under way.

The supported playgroup at Blaxland Public School was under threat after the demountable the playgroup is held in was unexpectedly scheduled for removal. After successful lobbying from the P&C the department of Education agreed to put a stay on the removal of the demountables and involve the school and community in further discussion about use of the buildings.

To discuss how you can be involved this new service network for children and families contact Kerry Thomas, Gateway Family Services, Tel: (02) 4739-5963

### **Winmalee Hub**

Over 40 families attended the recent Transition to School Program which will continue into Term One next year. The program included a 'Play Date' series of meetings where pre-kindergarten parents and children met at the school play equipment over several weeks to start making new friends.

The teachers at Winmalee School are sourcing funding to do the train-the-trainer *Kids with Courage* course next term. *Kids With Courage* is designed to strengthen primary aged children at home, school and with peer relationships. It provides an opportunity for major change in their thinking, processing of emotions and in their behaviour. While the program would benefit all children, it has been sourced to respond to middle years boys who are becoming disengaged from school.

The Hub is creating a notice board for the school that will promote Hub activities and provide key services and recreational groups for children and families in the area. A TAFE outreach program for parents is also being investigated.

Jill, the Hub Facilitator, took leave from work this term. Despite Jill's absence, the Winmalee Hub Steering Committee continued to deliver their planned program for this term which included a Term 3 Community Breakfast which had a focus on engaging fathers.

To explore ways for your service to participate in these events or to discuss making a referral, contact Jill Carlson-Beardall, Gateway Family Services, Tel: (02) 4739-5963

## **Mid Mountains Community Hub**

The Mid Mountains Community Hub is coordinated by Mountains Outreach Community Service (MOCS). Hub activities are planned in partnership with the Steering Committee which at this stage comprises Mid-Mountains Neighbourhood Centre, Lawson Public School and P&C, Lawson Community Preschool, Connect, Hazelbrook Public School and P&C, and Child and Family Health. Activities and programmes are delivered by MOCS (3 playgroups: one at Lawson PS, one at Hazelbrook Scout Hall and one at Golden Horizons Park, Hazelbrook) and in partnership with other services, so far, Mid Mountains Neighbourhood Centre (MMNC), Gateway Family Services and TAFE Outreach.

A very successful fifteen week Parent Mentoring program run by TAFE Outreach has just been completed by nine adults, five of whom are now engaged in different volunteering activities to support mid-Mountains families. Eleven parents also completed a First Aid course organised by the Hub and run by TAFE Outreach. Plans for next year are progressing well and include Kids and Confidence led by Barry Palm in partnership with Gateway, a TAFE Outreach Native Gardening course, an April School Holiday Fun morning in partnership with MMNC and the opening of the Community Room at Lawson Public School on Tuesday mornings. All families with children 0-12 from the Mid Mountains are welcome to participate.

To explore ways for your service to participate in these events or to discuss making a referral, contact Liz Smith, Mountains Outreach Community Service. Tel: (02) 4758 6811

## **North Katoomba Hub**

A vegetable garden has been started with a \$1000 grant from Coles/Landcare. Children helped make the no-dig beds and the families have cooked their first produce from the garden.

Three school holiday events were held on the school oval and included craft, games, kite making and flying, face painting, cooking and pony rides.

The Hub contributed to the FootLight Festival children's activities instead of holding a big Fun Day in October holidays. The festival, organised by P&C members, was a huge success. A BBQ was held for Father's Day. A father, Victor Peralta, helped children and families with a mural which displays the new Hub logo. Two single mother families came and felt that the way the event was advertised welcomed them.

Koori Club: An excursion to Dubbo was organised for Koori Kids Club. The Hub also assisted in raising funds for basketball scholarships. Hub Funding was also used to employ Jacinta Tobin for a Darug language day.

Next year we plan to offer Parent Mentor and Café Skills courses. Planning will be done in conjunction with the Katoomba Hub and courses will be offered through both Hubs. Chris Harrison, TAFE adult literacy officer, is working with the Hubs, Katoomba Neighbourhood Centre and Blue Mountains Family Support multicultural playgroup worker to provide a workshop showing parents how they can help their children with literacy and numeracy while building their own skills in these areas.

To explore ways for your service to participate in these events or to discuss making a referral, contact Sue Fick, Connect Child and Family Services, Tel: (02) 4758 9966

### **Katoomba Hub**

We have run two courses: First Aid and The Importance of Play. Hub parents completed a First Aid course run in partnership with TAFE Outreach. A positive outcome is that some parents from the wider community who did the course are now intending on coming to the playgroup. The Hub contributed to the School's Kitchen garden party by providing craft activities. The playgroup continues to attract more families, including some Dads.

Next year we are planning to run a weekly sewing class – venue to be decided.

To explore ways for your service to participate in these events or to discuss making a referral, contact Sue Fick, Connect Child and Family Services, Tel: (02) 4758 9966

### **Hub at the Top (Blackheath / Mt Victoria)**

Thanks to the wonderful offer of voluntary assistance, the Blackheath School Playgroup will not close at the end of the year. We are very grateful to Maaike and Ran for stepping up to enable this wonderful group to continue. The playgroup will continue to have limited support from Connect Child and Family services and BANC in the form of advice and as a connection to the Hub network.

We are also pleased to announce that Sydney Western Area Health Service will start a playgym at the school on Thursdays, as of school term 1, 2012.

Over 130 people attended the Teddy Bear's Picnic in the Memorial Park in October, and the Movie Night at Blackheath Public School was well attended, given the competing events on the local community agenda during Rhododendron Festival month.

Speaking of the Rhododendron Festival, Billy and Billie Booksie made a special appearance during the Rhodo Parade!

The next Hub At The Top meeting will be held at Mount Victoria Public School on 6<sup>th</sup> Feb at 3.15pm.

For more information contact Jo Davies (Community Development Worker) on 47877770.

## **B: Moving families beyond vulnerability**

### **SFA Vulnerable Children Sub Group**

Next year the group will develop a communications strategy focusing on how services can build the community connections and social capacity of vulnerable children and their families. The Child and Family Plan's 'Moving Children and their Families Beyond Vulnerability' section focuses on the importance of social connections in moving children

beyond vulnerability. The group will first target professionals in Community Health. Paul Cole, School Education Director, Blue Mountains, has indicated that involving schools in this communication strategy as a second step would be useful for school teachers. A meeting is planned for next year to explore how the increasing representation of Community Health staff in the Alliance can be best structure to enable the implementation of the Child and Family Plan.

To discuss how you can be get involved in this group contact Kerry Thomas, Gateway Family Services, Tel: (02) 4739-5963

### **Blue Mountains Consortium**

The Brighter Futures Program in the Blue Mountains continues to be at full capacity with a waiting list. The new FACS service operation guidelines for the program will be implemented from December 19 when all Brighter Futures families will be case managed by the NGO sector. The scope and aims of the Brighter Futures program will largely remain unchanged and our targets and service provision will remain the same. The major change is that a new program known as Stronger Families will be implemented by FACS caseworkers and families included in this program (which are those at higher risk) will have access to parent group work and early childhood advocacy through the consortium - this already happens with the BF families that FACS currently manage.

To discuss contact Jenny Stockley, Brighter Futures intake worker, Connect Child and Family Services. Tel: (02) 47589966.

## **C: Creating child friendly communities**

### **SFA Creating Child Friendly Communities Sub Group**

The group has been working on survey questions for the children's consultation. The survey is called Child Consultation Project 1 – Self guided outdoor play. It is hoped that this will provide a snapshot of children's habits and preferences for self-guided outdoor play across the Blue Mountains. The survey will be delivered in March 2012 with the survey and analysis by June 2012. The survey is linked to implementing objective 9.2 of the Child and Family Plan, "children are actively engaged in opportunities to play and participate within the community".

Danielle from Hazelbrook P&C has had a meeting with Roza Sage armed with the support letter from CFC group which empathized the need to a pedestrian crossing at Hazelbrook. We will keep this issue on the radar and hope for changes.

The group has been actively forming links with Council's Recreation and Environmental Management Team this term. A sub group of interested players from a variety of agencies and Council departments have been creating synergies and supportive networks to start forwarding the implementation of Child and Family Plan's aspirations around children's

outdoor play and freedom to explore natural and wild spaces. Specific projects include a parks upgrade at Leura Cascades and the Bush Walking Guide for Kids (see below).

First meeting of 2012 is Thursday 9 February at 9.30am at Bungarabee. At that meeting the dates for the remaining meetings will be decided.

To discuss how you can be get involved in this group contact Toni Quigley, Springwood Neighbourhood Centre, Tel: (02) 4751-3033

### **Paint the Blue Read (PTBR):**

Convened by Mountains Outreach Community Service, the PTBR committee includes village representation from businesses [such as Megalong Books, Pinerolo Children's Book Cottage] community organisations [Rotary Lower Mountains], the BMCC library, and a myriad of neighbourhood and children's service organisations across the mountains.

We now have two beautiful Booksie [Billy and Billie] increasing appearances at community children's events. The mascots' capacity to build recognition of the PTBR program requires the development of some supporting products as well as endorsement by organisations throughout the mountains.

To this end the PTBR committee is currently making plans for 2012 [National Year of Reading] which include:

- Making Billy Booksie (our mascot) toy patterns which could be knitted or sewn to increase the outreach of the 'reading is fun' message.
- Designing and conducting storytelling workshops for parents
- Building local teams to promote the early literacy message-
- Increasing the use of social media to promote events and share the message – PTBR Face book page is already well visited.
- Design and production of Booksie business cards, business participation certificates and badges.

To explore ways for your service to participate in these events or to join the group contact Lyn Bevington, Mountains Outreach Community Service. Tel: (02) 4758 6811

### **Library Summer Reading Program**

Blue Mountains City Library is running the 2011/2012 Summer Reading Club from December 1, 2011 to January 31, 2012. This year it is called 'The Amazing Read'. When children read 20 books they will receive a \$5 book voucher to redeem at Megalong Book Shop, Leura or The Turning Page, Springwood. This program will introduce the children to many new books and authors, while having lots of fun reading. The Summer reading Club is working in conjunction with The National Year of Reading 2012. The National Year of Reading is about children learning to read and keen readers finding new sources of inspiration.

To get a reading kit, go to your local library.

### **Bushwalking Guide for Kids who want to explore the Blue Mountains**

This project is now called, "Bush Trackers: Guides and Maps for Kids". The goal of the project is to get more children and families in the bush and to promote our local, natural environment as a child friendly place.

Key features of the guide and the process driving it include:

- \* Consulting with the 12 schools in 12 towns from Glenbrook to Mt Victoria, to create kids' guides for exploring the Blue Mountains.
- \* The guides will be written from a child's perspective with all the tips and knowledge of children who have been there and know where all the fun bits are!
- \* The guides will include kids' favourite places to swim, sit, walk, draw, have a picnic, read a book, kick a ball etc.
- \* Hand-drawn maps by kids will be included, highlighting key features like creeks, caves, Aboriginal sites, fauna and flora, views, etc. The maps will be designed with spaces in which each child can write or draw, telling the story of his or her own experience.

A pilot consultation has been held at Springwood Public School with stage two children. Multiple partners are finding ways to support the project with a core funding submission to the Foundation for National Parks due in February. To date the project has attracted seed funding of \$3,000 from Blue Mountains Tourism and \$2,000 from Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

To find out more about the project or how you can be involved contact Jacqueline Reid, National Parks, (02) 4784 7326