



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

The Stronger Families Alliance is an open network that fosters collaboration between organisations 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 organisations 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.

### **News from the main group – Marketing sub group needs temporary members**

The Alliance will be forming a marketing sub group this year. This will be a time limited group that has been set up to develop marketing and public education tools and protocols for the group. The group has four tasks to complete and will be time limited. If you have a staff member, volunteer or friend who could contribute to the group could you pass their contact details onto the SFA convener, Tanya James [tjames@bmcc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:tjames@bmcc.nsw.gov.au), 0424988890.

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

### **Neighbourhood Service Networks Sub Group**

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 group was formerly called the School Hub Executive. At the end of 2011 the group changed its name to align its work with the Child and Family Plan. The Plan envisages that villages will use a variety of ways to network stakeholders in early childhood development, including the current School Centred Community Hub steering committee model.

The elected Council has asked Council's Community Outcomes team to prepare a youth alcohol harm reduction strategy and action plan for the city. The Neighbourhood Service Network has agreed to participate in an early intervention contribution to the action plan. This will involve a communication strategy through the Hubs aimed at increasing parent's awareness of their role model influence on children around drinking and the ways alcohol misuse diminishes parent's ability to use home and family as key learning environment for children (Objective 2.2 of the Child and Family Plan.)

For more information about this group contact: Tanya James: Blue Mountains City Council: Tel (02) 47805542

### **Blaxland, East Blaxland & Warrimoo School Centred Hubs**

Our three school Hub project held its first steering committee meeting in Term One. This Hub project brings together three schools into one Steering Committee following the approach already used in the Mid Mountains Hub and Hub at the Top. The projected benefits of this approach, where it is appropriate, are that limited Local Government wide resources are better shared across all the Hubs.

There are challenges involved with building a new steering committee in the Lower Mountains because of the low number of services in the Lower Mountains. We have been heartened by the response of the schools and the involvement of the committee members. We have finalised our Hubs brochure and waiting for the printer to deliver! We are installing Information Stations in each school so that we can focus on Hub news and keep parents up to date about information and activities in their local community. This seems to be one way that we can address the issue of not having a community space.

#### Programs and activities coming up:

- Supported Playgroup, Blaxland Public School; Contact Gateway for details.
- Community Breakfast, Warrimoo Public School, 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 8am-9:30am
- Community Breakfast, East Blaxland Public School, 1<sup>st</sup> May, 8am-9:30am

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

## **Winmalee School Centred Hub**

This term the Winmalee Hub hosted a Community Breakfast on 23<sup>rd</sup> March which was very well attended. The steering committee continues to have a very diverse cross sector representation, with great commitment and energy. The steering committee is continuing to focus this term on building relationships with teachers at Winmalee Public School.

### Programs and activities coming up:

- Supported Playgroup, Winmalee Public School; Contact Gateway for details

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**

This term has been busy and exciting for the Mid Mountains Community Hub which is really off the ground now and has a Steering Committee that meets twice per term. The three supported playgroups continue to thrive with new families coming along, particularly younger families attending the Hazelbrook Scout Hall group. It was not such a good term for Play in the Park due to the weather.

The launch of the new Community Room at Lawson Public School on 21<sup>st</sup> February was a big highlight. It was very well attended with 32 people from a range of services and organisations including FACS, DEAC, CADU, Gateway, Connect, Katoomba Hospital, BMCC, BMDGP, Louise Markus, a rep from Roza Sage's office, Councillor Chris Van Der Kley and local parents. Local Aboriginal Elder Aunty Carol Cooper welcomed the gathering to Country, the Lawson Public School Dancers performed their fabulous 'Solid Rock' dance and after brief speeches all enjoyed morning tea, conversations and connecting in the community room.

### Programs and events coming up: (or just past)

- Play in the Park at Golden Horizons Park between Blue Hills Rd & Red Gum Ave, Hazelbrook on Tuesday mornings 10am—11.30am (weather permitting), resumes 1<sup>st</sup> May
- Play and Chat at Lawson Public School in OOSH room on Wednesdays 9am—11am resumes 2<sup>nd</sup> May
- Scout Hall Playgroup at 70 Railway Pde, Hazelbrook on Thursdays 10am—12 noon resumes 3<sup>rd</sup> May
- Lawson School Community Room Drop In, Every Tuesday during term time. Speaker program:

8<sup>th</sup> May 10.15-12.15- African Beading Workshop-Bookings essential call Liz on 47586811

15<sup>th</sup> May 9.30 –11.00- Healthy Lunchbox – Yummy healthy food for kids with dietician

22<sup>nd</sup> May 9.30 – 11.00- Baby Time- For parents with babies up to 12 months  
29<sup>th</sup> May 9.00 – 11.00 – Around the Kitchen Table – Reconciliation Week film and discussion with Aunty Carol Cooper  
5<sup>th</sup> June 9.00 – 11.00- Wrapped in Love Knitting – Squares for blankets  
12<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> June – 9.00 – 11.00- Winter Magic Costume Art – Hats, wings, wands.  
26<sup>th</sup> June – Baby Time – as above

- Kids With Confidence Parenting Course, Lawson School Community Room, Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> March, 15<sup>th</sup> March, 22<sup>nd</sup> March and 29<sup>th</sup> March.
- Native Gardening Course, Bungarabee, ring MOCS for details
- Family Bush Walk with NPWS Discovery Ranger: Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> May, 1.30 – 3.30 p.m. Places limited contact MOCS.

#### Steering committee meetings coming up:

- 9<sup>th</sup> May - 9 – 10.30 a.m. at Lawson Public School Community Room
- 13<sup>th</sup> June - 9 – 10.30 a.m. at Bungarrabee Centre, 48-50 Oaklands Rd, Hazelbrook
- 1<sup>st</sup> August - 9 – 10.30 a.m. at Lawson Public School Community Room
- 5<sup>th</sup> September - 9 – 10.30 a.m. at Bungarrabee Centre, 48-50 Oaklands Rd, Hazelbrook
- 31<sup>st</sup> October - 9 – 10.30 a.m. at Lawson Public School Community Room
- 28<sup>th</sup> November - 9 – 10.30 a.m. at Bungarrabee Centre, 48-50 Oaklands Rd, Hazelbrook

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

#### **Katoomba / Nth Katoomba Hubs**

Both Katoomba North and Katoomba Hubs are off to a good start again this year. We now have a new principal at Katoomba Nth - Mr Trev Mason was appointed as acting principal when Mandy Hollis moved on to another school at the end of last year. We have worked with Trev for many years in his varied roles within the school and it is great to have him involved in our community hub partnership in this capacity now.

Connect has also now restructured the coordination and management of all of its hubs. Sue Fick resigned from her position at Connect to pursue her psychology and research interests and management responsibilities are now split between Connect's Katoomba and Penrith Sites. Jeanette Crawford now has overall management responsibilities for both Katoomba hubs along with coordination and program delivery at the Katoomba North site. Jane Gilling has been appointed as the coordinator/playgroup facilitator at Katoomba PS.

#### Steering committee meetings coming up:

- Katoomba North Public School, Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> May, 1-3pm
- Katoomba Public School, Thursday May 3<sup>rd</sup> 12-15 to 1.15pm

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

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

On Friday 17<sup>th</sup> February the Hub At The Top held a Family Fun Night at Mount Victoria Public School. It was a terrific night with over 140 people attending. Thanks to Jelly Bean Janet, Bianca, staff from: the schools, Connect Child and Family Support Services, MOCS, Blue Mountains Family Day Care, Mobile Minders and to volunteers from Rotary Club at Upper Blue Mountains – Sunrise who provided a magnificent dinner.

The HATT steering committee held a planning day which was attended by 13 service providers and parents. Significantly the group reported that some key achievements of the new integrated Hub over Blackheath and Mt Victoria schools was a shared sense of community across the two villages and within each community as well. While the Hub had undergone some major changes in its funding it was agreed that following were the top achievements of the HATT in the last 12 months.

- Increased sense of community within Mt Victoria and growing sense of connection to wider Mt Victoria and Blackheath community as one 'place' – i.e. parents from both villages are attending events at each other's schools.
- Successful communication network between services/volunteers
- The Triple P program in Mt Victoria – great take up and response from parents
- Parent involvement in HATT programs and the neighbourhood service network, a parent now runs the Blackheath Playgroup with the support of BANC
- More confidence and awareness in professionals and community members about what is available in Area One

#### Steering committee meetings coming up:

- Monday 30<sup>th</sup> April at 3.15 pm, Blackheath Public School.

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

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

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

The group is currently developing a communication strategy focusing on how services can build the resilience, community connections and social capacity of vulnerable children and their families. This is the first of three initiatives selected to forward the implementation of the Child and Family Plan. The Monday July 30 SFA Main Group meeting will focus on whole group input into selecting two other new initiatives to forward this part of the Plan. The sub group has began planning this day.

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 has formally transitioned from being delivered jointly by NGO and Department of Family and Communities to delivery by the NGO sector alone. This change means that referrals are made:

- Through the community referral pathway as has always been the case - organisations contact Connect to discuss suitability of referral
- Through contacting the FACS helpline and if accessed as eligible for BF the referral is subsequently forwarded to Wesley mission for allocation.

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**

This sub group continues to oversee a range of initiatives that include:

- Leura Cascades Child Consultation:

We are waiting to see what the final budget to upgrade the park will be. Once this is finalized we will know the scope of what we can consult children in the area about. At this stage Leura Public School is ready to work on the project. This project will be run in partnership with the Bush Trackers Project so will proceed regardless of the park upgrade budget – we will start by recording and distributing information about what children most appreciate about this iconic Blue Mountains park as it is right now!

- Springwood Centre Redevelopment Child Consultation:

This consultation took place in February and was carried out by Ric Mcconaghy in partnership with Council's City Planning Team. Children from Springwood Public School, Tanderra Out of School Hours and Carinya Child Care Centre were consulted about the development of the outdoor area in the new development.

- Kids Bush Trackers Project:

The Kids Bushtracker project works with children in Stage 2 to produce maps of child friendly bushwalks in their local area. The project is seeking funding to involve children in map making and map production. To date the project has attracted seed funding of \$3,000 from Blue Mountains Tourism, \$2,000 from Blue Mountains Conservation Society and \$2,000 from BMCC. The maps will be distributed locally and as a tourist product. The project groups anticipates working through the pilot stage

with Springwood Public, Leura Public and Korowal Schools in term 2. For more information contact Jacqueline Reid, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, 0414 456 765 or [jacqueline.reid@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:jacqueline.reid@environment.nsw.gov.au)

- Free child consultation training coming up

Open to all Blue Mountains services wanting to participate in a one-day experiential workshop in Katoomba, Term Two. Bring a current or potential child consultation project from your own work to the workshop. Email [tjames@bmcc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:tjames@bmcc.nsw.gov.au) to fill in an expression of interest form. Free however places limited.

- Survey Monkey child consultation

The topic is self guided outdoor play in the Blue Mountains. This project by MOCS and SNC is being taken to the child consultation training day to complete details before going live in the second half of the year.

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

### **SFA endorses The Nest project**

The SFA has endorsed the Australian Research Alliance for Child and Youth's (ARACY) NEST project. NEST aims to produce a national plan for the wellbeing of Australia's children and youth and to inspire coordinated action to achieve the plan.

The NEST website (<http://www.thenestproject.org.au/>) is currently hosting an online survey for children, young people, parents, and community members to have their say and contribute to the development of the national plan. The site features a resource toolkit for organisations interested in undertaking consultation activities with children and families and a login page to register as a consultation partner. Please click here to [register](#) for a webinar about the project scheduled to be broadcast on Monday 23 April 2012 (12–1pm EST).

### **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.

PTBR has undertaken a strategic review in order to leverage from 2012 National Year of Reading (NYR). The 2012 structure and strategy enable greater focussing of effort on local engagement and PTBR outcomes [attachment and brain development in 0-3 year olds]:

a. STRUCTURE: Five new Local Coordination Teams have been created (Upper, Mid & Lower Mountains teams, plus Katoomba & Leura teams). These will be supported by the PTBR 2012 NYR Strategy Team staffed by MOCS.

b. ACTIONS:

Autumn:

(i) BM Reading Week has been moved to 18-22 June, to culminate at the Winter Magic Festival on 23 June [parade and stall]

Winter / Spring: Actions under development:

(ii) Creating Stories School Projects: e.g. storytelling with babies workshops; primary children create wordless picture books for 0-3 year olds in Blue Mountains and in East Timor;

(iii) Baby Booksies e.g. Making Booksie community toy project;

Additionally, products and messages are being reviewed to encourage enjoying sharing stories and rhymes through books and play.

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.

Specific ways you can help or get involved in the National Year of Reading activities include:

1. Please 'like' the Paint the Blue REaD facebook page and promote this within your networks
2. Potential Readers, Booksies' costume wearers and organisers are encouraged to contact MOCS to be put in touch with their local team.
3. If you know of potential helpers in the Wentworth Falls area please contact Liz Smith and Anne Fitzgerald at MOCS [Mountains Outreach Community Service]
4. If you have a service mascot please consider joining the Booksies in the **Share a Story 0-3** NYR PTBR team in the Winter Magic Parade.