

Expressions



Helping Special Kids

Welcome from the Chairman Iain Thompson

It is exciting to be writing a column for our whole of Lifestart newsletter. Expressions is an opportunity for our families, staff and supporters to be made more aware of what is going on within Lifestart, to hear some of the stories of our staff and our families, and to find out what's going on in the future.

We have been rather busy at board level over the last few months, working through various issues and thinking and planning for the future. Meetings are long, discussion is frank and fruitful, decisions are tough, and chocolate intake is high, but we feel like we're making progress. We will keep you informed along the way.

It was with great pleasure that we welcomed Carla Smith into the Lifestart team as our new Director of Program & Service Delivery. Carla has a wealth of knowledge and experience gained primarily in Queensland, and she will be a wonderful addition to our team. Please make her feel welcome as she settles in to her new role. I would also like to publicly thank Pam MacLeod and Heather Craven for their efforts as Acting DPSD's while we were without anyone in that position. They took on the additional

responsibilities of this role whilst continuing to run their own regions, and did a fantastic job. Special mention must also be made of all our Area Coordinators who helped us through some tough times over the last 12 months.

The board has commissioned a working group to consider what our SAS services may look like into the future, particularly given recurrent DADHC funding will not be available to us in Sydney North region. If you have any ideas for this group please contact Sonja Walker (who is chairing this working group) or Carla Smith – contact details can be obtained via head office if required. This group will be reporting back to the full board with their recommendations, and we hope to have reached a conclusion some time during term three.

It has become apparent to us that the Marketing role at Lifestart is far too big to be accomplished part time. Accordingly we have written a role description for a full time Marketing Manager. Katinga Schroeder who is currently in this position part-time has declined to take up the role full time due to family commitments, therefore we will be advertising this position in the next few weeks. Katinga has

agreed to stay in the role until we find a full time replacement and will be continuing with us on a project basis to ensure events such as the Corporate Challenge maintain their momentum.

Planning is underway for a Lifestart picnic around September / October, which will be an opportunity for all of our families, staff and supporters to get together and have an afternoon together to celebrate Lifestart and what it does. One of the things that has always made Lifestart special is the opportunity to find support from, and give support to, others who are going through the same issues as we are. As a board we are conscious that families often don't get the chance to mingle with other families and staff away from programmed sessions, P&F meetings or fundraising meetings. This event will be organised by the board (yes, we do practical things as well as talk and eat chocolate), and we will provide more details once the location is confirmed.

As always, the board is open to hearing your thoughts, feedback and suggestions. Please feel free to drop us an email at info@lifestart.org.au! Happy Lifestarting!

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(Chairman)

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Every issue of the Lifestart Expressions will highlight a supporter of Lifestart and explain how they are supporting us and how you can benefit from their service.

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Staff Profile: An Interview with Carla Smith, the New Director - Programs and Service Delivery

Lifestart: Let's start with the technical questions. Tell us about your qualifications and work background?

Carla Smith: I have a degree in Psychology and a Graduate Diploma in Special Education. Now, how do I sum up the last 30 years?! I started as teacher in a special school then taught Child Development and Special Needs at TAFE. The last 12 years have been in Queensland where I was a District Advisor on Autism and then the head of Special Education in a large primary school.

LS: What drew you to working in the disabilities field?

CS: I was always fascinated by people outside the mainstream – how they function, cope and adapt to their circumstances. That's why I did the Psychology degree – from that interest it just went from there.

LS: What caught your eye about the job at Lifestart?

CS: Early Intervention and the family centred model. It equates with my personal belief that Early Intervention is much more powerful when the family is heavily involved. Also the size of

the service, the level of staffing and the trans-disciplinary approach is unique.

LS: What is the most exciting challenge of your job?

CS: Pulling together and strengthening the very good programs and service that Lifestart offers. I don't think people realise just how good the service is.

LS: Tell us a bit about yourself, your family, any pets?

CS: All my family live around Lake Macquarie and Newcastle. I have a 23 year old son, Vaughan, who has Aspergers. We have 2 dogs, numerous ponds of yabbies- bred by Vaughan – and tanks of Siamese Fighting Fish. Vaughan (which means gentle – that's why I chose it) is a successful potter and was teaching in Queensland before we moved down here. He is working as a School Crossing Supervisor and will continue his pottery when we get his kiln set up here.

LS: What do you do to relax?

CS: I take the dogs to the lake, swimming or out on a boat. I also love to go away for weekends – just get on a plane and go anywhere that I have friends. I



love to stay in nice hotels and catch up with friends. I have 2 in particular who sometimes travel with me.

LS: Do you have a favourite restaurant or type of food?

CS: Thai food is my favourite but I haven't found a favourite restaurant in Sydney yet!

LS: Where is your favourite place to go on holidays?

CS: Anywhere warm or where my friends are.

LS: Complete these sentences:

CS: 1. A perfect night out involves...jazz music and red Lambrusco

2. A perfect night in involves... jazz music and red Lambrusco!

Carla Smith, welcome to Lifestart!

Lifestart Star

Lifestarter, Matilda, from Inner West was chosen to model this great bedroom set for the next Toys R Us catalogue.



Supporter Profile: BackVintage Wines Australia

This issue we are introducing BackVintage Wines who are supporting Lifestart by giving a \$15 donation for every case of wine ordered via the Lifestart website

www.lifestart.org.au. Just go to the Shopping page and click on the BackVintage logo. This will take you to the BackVintage site where you can select your wine and place your order.

There is no obligation to buy but once you try their fantastic selection you may not be able to resist! Remember to tell your friends and colleagues – if they buy wine anyway why not buy from someone supporting Lifestart.

BackVintage Wines Australia was established in 2003 by Julian Todd alongside some former Southcorp colleagues and is one of Australia's fastest growing, internet-based, re-

tail wineries.

The BackVintage® range of wines are independently selected and endorsed by the highly acclaimed International & Australian Wine Judge, Nick Bulleid MW. Nick is also one of only 15 Masters of Wine in Australia and a highly respected Australian and International Wine Judge.

Nick's brief is demanding. "All our wines must be archetypal wines from each region and expressing the individuality of each vintage. They are fruit forward and approachable with good structure, balance and length," said Managing Director and Founder Julian Todd.

The BackVintage® range of wines are not cleanskins. We exclusively source, blend and bottle premium varietal wines from well known premium regions throughout Australia & New Zealand for sale to corporate

and retail customers under the BackVintage® label.

Every wine must meet Nick Bulleid's personal taste and quality criteria as well as represent exceptional value. His signature and endorsement appears on every bottle. By buying direct via the internet, wines that would normally retail for \$25.00 or more are made available directly to consumers at under \$12 per bottle.

BackVintage Wines Australia is not a wine club - there are no joining or membership fees and delivery is prompt.

As our business grows, we will source wine on your behalf - tell us what you like and we'll try to find it!

And at the right price!



Ruby's Journey

Our involvement with Lifestart began in November 2005. Our second daughter Ruby was born in April 2005 and it became clear in the first few months of her life that there was something not quite right. She was not thriving, had trouble feeding and suffered from low muscle tone, which made it difficult for her to lift or move her head. This was a very disturbing time as no-one could pinpoint exactly what the problem was but as parents we knew there was something unusual with her development.

We were advised to take Ruby for physiotherapy in an attempt to strengthen her neck muscles and it was at this appointment that we first experienced the sense of isolation that, I think, many parents with children with special needs, unfortunately, experience. The physiotherapist stated in a very abrupt manner that she couldn't help me because the child obviously had some kind of syndrome and I should check it out. Obviously we had been pursuing every avenue that we could and I found this statement very confronting. This encounter led me to my early childhood nurse who informed me of an organisation called Lifestart.

I was reluctant to approach them at first because we had no specific diagnosis for Ruby and I thought that may be a problem but I cannot put into words how comforted and relieved I felt when I first made contact with this wonderful group of people. The support and guidance and friendship that were extended to us were overwhelming. We were made to feel part of an extended family and were immediately put at ease. Since that time we have received ongoing one-on-one and group therapy which has been instrumental in Ruby's improvement.

We have continued on a medical merry-go-round where countless specialists informed us that Ruby was a mystery and a diagnostic dilemma but throughout this stressful period, Lifestart were a constant support. We have received weekly physiotherapy and speech therapy and one-on-one sessions with a special educator. There have been many times when we thought Ruby wouldn't stand up or even walk but the team at Lifestart persevered with their program and it was a very exciting day for us when Ruby took her first steps on 10th December. Ruby also seems to



have a mild language delay and we are learning to sign to her to ease her frustration and enable her to communicate more effectively and Lifestart have facilitated this process. I was lucky enough to participate in a program run by Lifestart called *It Takes Two* where parents were taught a number of strategies to encourage communication with their child.

I am amazed with the range of ideas and strategies that the team at Lifestart are constantly implementing in regards to Ruby. They are always looking for new ways to stimulate each area of development,
Continued page 9.

Coming Events

Trivia Night

When: Friday 22nd June 2007

Where: Epping Club, Rawson St Epping

Time: 7pm Wine Tasting, 7.30pm First Question

Whether you love trivia or just a good night out you'll love this Trivia Night organised by the parents and staff of Lifestart Eastwood and Hornsby Centres and supported by the Rotary Club of Epping. There will be plenty of trivia, games and of course live and silent auctions – prizes already confirmed include a flight simulator experience, pamper packs, original artworks, music, movies, and nights out - there is something for everyone. You don't have to attend one of these centres to come along and join the fun. Test your trivia knowledge, try your luck at the games and bid on some great auction items and you'll enjoy it even more knowing it will all be helping special kids.

By the way, the staff at Cumberland Prospect are challenging anyone who will take them on!! Will they be victorious or will another centre win the night? Will it be yours? Book now by phoning 9807 9700 or download the booking form from your website: www.lifestart.org.au.

The Winter Ball

When: Saturday 11th August 2007-06-06

Where: Southee Complex, Sydney Olympic Park

Time: 7pm

Dress: Formal/Evening Dress

This is THE Lifestart Ball. The annual Winter Ball is for all Lifestart members, supporters and their families and friends. It's a once-a-year excuse to get out the frock or tux, feel glamorous and have a great night out with your partner and friends. You could go home with some great items from the live or silent auction too as confirmed prizes to date include Sapphire & Diamond earrings, 8kg Fisher & Paykel washing machine, 2 x Matthew Hayden signed Cricket bats, Steve Waugh signed cricket bat, Football Guernseys, Orotan accessories.....just to name a few.

Organised this year by a hard working team of mums from the Cumberland Prospect Centre, they invite you to enjoy a great night out with MC Vic Lorusso and live music from Peppermint Jam. The venue is a beautiful location at the very central, Sydney Olympic Park easily accessible by public transport or car (though they do suggest pre booking parking as the Sydney Swans are playing at Telstra Stadium on the same night.)

Organise your table of friends and colleagues or just book for yourself and you will be placed on a table with likeminded Lifestart friends.

For more details visit your website www.lifestart.org.au and click on Events or phone **98079700**

You can be an Everyday Hero

If you or anyone you know would like to support Lifestart it is now really easy through

www.everydayhero.com.au.

If you are running the city to surf, walking, jogging, swimming, cycling, riding a horse, climbing a mountain or any activity that could attract sponsors, you can do it all online.

Everyday Hero is a website designed to help you get sponsorship without ever having to handle the cash.

You can create your own web page, choose your cause – Lifestart of course – email all your friends, relatives and colleagues and Everyday Hero will handle the rest. They collect the donations on your behalf, send thank you letters and receipts and send the donations to Lifestart. They have plenty of hints and tips to help you set up your page and get the most out of your fundraising activity. Visit www.everydayhero.com.au and check out how easy it is.



Then tell all your friends, relatives and colleagues! By the way you can also buy tickets to Lifestart events at this website. Take a look – we're sure it will inspire you.

WIN \$10,000 for your Charity Competition

IGA Stores and New Idea are running a win \$10,000 for your Charity competition.

You don't have to buy anything, just download the coupon from the directions below and put the coupon in the box at your local IGA store.

Instructions for downloading the coupon:

You can find the coupon in this weeks New Idea or just download it as follows;

- 1/ Type in www.yahoo7.com.au/food4life
- 2/ Halfway down the page is the competition logo "Win \$10,000 cash".
- 3/ Click on "Enter the Competition"
- 4/ Click on "Click here to download the coupon"
- 5/ Fill it in & take it to your local IGA store. The more Lifestart families that enter the better the chance we have.

Lifestarter starring in new Wiggles DVD

Our little girl Sophie, is on the latest Wiggles DVD.

If you want to see something that will bring a smile to your face check out Sophie from Lifestart Inner West in the new release Wiggles DVD!

Sophie is starring in the new release- Wiggle and Learn "Getting Strong". Check out the Wiggles website www.thewiggles.com.au for a preview.

The preview is on the homepage. Make sure "Australia" is selected (Wiggly location

icon in the top right corner.) The preview DVD will commence loading. Check out Sophie featured twice in the preview!

Sophie was invited to go on the Wiggles . She was a confident performer in front of a cast of 20, and cameras!

Lifestart Wins Award for Dads press release

An innovative program for dads with children with disabilities has been awarded at the Early Childhood Intervention Australia Conference. Kerry Dominish, Area Coordinator for the Lifestart Hornsby, was at the conference to receive the award and give a short presentation on the program.

When a child has a disability parents can feel isolated but it is often particularly so for the dads. It is usually the Mum who runs around getting to appointments and doing the intervention tasks. But dads worry just as much about their child's progress and yet don't have the opportunities to learn and ask questions. They also don't have opportunities to meet other adults in similar situations.

"We have had dads who work together, who didn't know they both have a child with a disability and that they are in the same intervention program till they came to a Christmas party," said Kerry. However, at Lifestart, dads are benefiting from this innovative program

designed by Lifestart counsellor Allison Watson in conjunction with *UnitingCare* Burnside.

This program allowed fathers to be involved on two levels. One where they enjoyed a playgroup specifically designed for them and their children and another where they attended a workshop with other dads. At the workshop they met with the male counsellor from *UnitingCare* Burnside where they could talk freely and discuss their specific issues.

"It worked well because we talked to all the fathers individually and personally invited them to become involved" said Allison. "Andrew from Burnside rang all the dads and it was his involvement as a counsellor that made many of the dads feel more comfortable in this environment."

As a result the dads who attended were able to create networks with other dads in the same situation, feel less isolated and be more informed about their child's program. They also came up with a handout for new fathers

who join Lifestart and many arranged to meet again in less formal settings.

This program for fathers was seen as so innovative by Early Childhood Intervention Australia that Lifestart won an ECIA Achievement Award at their NSW Chapter Conference held on 26-27 October 06. (whose funding in 2005 had in fact created the opportunity for the project.). The success of this program prompted Hornsby council to fund a Community Development Support Expenditure application this year.

Kerry Dominish was thrilled with the award and also the support from ECIA and Hornsby Council. "It is wonderful to help dads learn new ways to interact with their children and to give them chances to meet with other men facing the same issues," she said. It is only by special funding from other agencies that we can provide these extra services.

SHARING BOOKS WITH CHILDREN

Sharing books with young children is an opportunity when adults and children can spend time together. Through these experiences children can learn many things such as developing an interest in reading and that reading can be fun!

Why read to children?

- Books give enjoyment.
- Reading develops talking, listening and language skills as children are exposed to new words or familiar words used in a different way.
- It provides opportunities to interact with the book, turn the page, point to pictures, and read from left to right.
- Children like guessing and anticipating what will happen next.
- Children like the reassurance of sameness, eg. rereading a familiar book and stories with repetition.
- Language learned through books can be transferred to their play.

What to Read ?

- Expose children to lots of different books:
- picture books without text
- picture books supported by text
- lift the flap books
- pop up books
- nursery rhyme books
- alphabetical / counting books
- factual books eg. books about frogs (or the child's interest)

Look for books that have:

Repetitive phrases or words such as

“I went walking
what did you see?”

I saw a **brown cow** looking at me” (Taken from *I went walking*).

The above structure is repeated, but the animal changes from brown cow to eg. green duck.

The child can help read the repetitive phrases as their familiarity with the book increases.

A ‘word focus’ such as

Verbs: “I can jump”

Describing: “this is my red car”

Rhyme: “I am Dan, the flying man”

Clear layout: uncluttered pictures, separated from text.

How to read

- Make time to read.
- Think about a quiet place to read.
- Be flexible, follow the child's lead and don't feel that you have to read from cover to cover.
- Read with interest and make it fun.
- Follow what the child is looking at and what they are interested in.
- Encourage pointing and commenting.
- Talk about the pictures.
- Encourage the child to repeat words, eg:

Child: “Cow”

You: “Yes, a spotty cow”

Child: “A cow moo”

Don't be afraid to be conversational about a book, because your purpose is to share language.

Questions to ask and how to ask them.

Use repetitive questions in a story to develop the child's ability to predict. For example, in the book, “I went walking”, the question: “What did you see?” is repeated.

Allow a guess: “monkey”.

Give a clue: “It's brown and says moo”

SHARING BOOKS WITH CHILDREN continued

Reinforce the response: *“Yes, a cow says moo – let’s see if it’s a cow”*. (Turn the page).

Teacher/parent comments: *“Was it a cow? It was a _____”*

Develop reasoning/thinking about events in a story after reading it.

“I wonder why Jack climbed up the beanstalk?” – wait for a response.

Even if you get silence, say, *“I think he went to see the giant”*.

Be accepting of all responses. You can make a suggestion to guide the response or you can make a false statement to prompt. Always return to the book and reread the relevant section.

Always match your questions to the child’s language level.

Ways to dramatise the story

Puppets, music and acting out the story can liven up story-time by keeping children interested and giving them something to do. For example, when reading the story, “We’re Going On A Bear Hunt” children could follow you doing the actions going under, over, around obstacles together. You can also make the noises of going through the grass, water and mud together.

Then later on

Children can retell a familiar story with support, ie. cover the pictures at certain points in the book and have a child tell you what happens next. You can prompt with specific questions and comments.

Where to go next

- Make up a story together - use events or objects of interest to your child, eg. a favorite toy could act out the story.
- Use felt figures to create a scene.
- Discuss pictures that your child has drawn - talk about what is happening in the picture. Ask what might happen next?
- Sometimes write down the words your child tells you about their drawing. This can become a story illustrated by the child’s drawing.

Talk to your local Lifestart staff about books that may be suitable for the child’s needs.

Northern Beaches Golf Day Review

What a fantastic day it was at Monash Country Club for the Northern Beaches golf day on 3 May. Once again the weather smiled on us and 85 golfers tested their skills on the beautiful Monash greens. The drinks cart was kept busy and the lunch packs generously supplied by Qantas kept the golfers happy during the day. The dinner that followed was at-

tended by 180 people and was hosted by Jon Harker. Phil Castle led a very spirited auction that found people digging deep in to their wallets for some wonderful prizes. Both these men did a fabulous job and their contribution helped to make the spirit of the evening relaxed and fun. The wish list for equipment for children and staff was a great success and about \$4,000 worth of new toys and equipment

was donated on the night. As always the fundraising committee of committed parents worked really hard to ensure the success of this event and the thanks of all Lifestart families go to them. As a result of the hard work in preparing for this event and the generosity of all who attended we have raised \$50,000. We are already working towards another successful event in 2008 and look forward to seeing you there!



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Congratulations Rachel Laidlaw from the Northern Beaches for her winning name for our newsletter EXPRESSIONS.

Ruby's Journey continued

whether it is through music, play, exercise or meal times. We frequently receive home visits from the staff and are also provided with multiple resources to use in our home to assist Ruby's different stages of development. This has included splints which we placed on Ruby's legs three times a day to encourage her to bear weight and various toys and puzzles. The Lifestart program has also enabled us to meet other families in similar situations and while everyone has a different story it is still comforting to meet and talk with others.

In October last year we were finally provided with a diagnosis for Ruby. She has a rare genetic disorder called uniparental disomy which means she has inherited two copies of chromosome 7 from me and none from my husband. This disorder was only discovered in 1988 so

there is still much research to be done in this area; however they believe this is what is affecting her growth and her language development.

I believe the staff at Lifestart go out of their way to help their clients. We frequently receive calls at home to check on Ruby's health or progress and they have been just as excited as us when she reaches certain milestones. The team at Lifestart is extremely knowledgeable and professional and I feel secure knowing I can talk to them about any concerns.

It is distressing for any parent to discover that their child is ill or developmentally or intellectually delayed, and that is why organisations such as Lifestart are so important to our community. It can be very frightening to be pushed from doctor to doctor, unaware of the implications for the future of your child

but Lifestart has been an inspiration to us, helping us to process this overload of information and deal with it all step by step.

We don't really know a lot about what the future holds for Ruby but she is happy and healthy and as you can see very gorgeous! We feel blessed to have found such a valuable resource on our doorstep and believe much of the progress Ruby is making is due to the support we have received from Lifestart. Their positive and pro-active approach is to be commended. They consistently set and revise goals for Ruby and all of this takes place in a warm and encouraging atmosphere where each child's individuality is observed and respected. They are doing all they can to assist us in helping Ruby to achieve her fullest potential and for that we are very grateful.

Diary Dates

- 19 August 2007 *Kites for Kids 10.30 - 3.00*
Winnererremy (Flying Fox Park)
Mona Vale
- 1 September 2007 *Trivia Night Nepean*
- 22 September 2007 *Trivia Night Inner West and Eastern Suburbs*
- 26 October 2007 *Golf Day and Dinner organised by Mark Geyer and Scott Lewis for Lifestart at Penrith Golf Club*
- 2 December 2007 *Family Fun Day Nepean*
For International Day of Persons with a Disability
- 13 April 2008 *Lifestart Corporate Challenge – "Oars for a Cause"*

A kayaking event from Manly to Blues Point to raise funds for Lifestart Special Kids. Paddle for 3km or 24km with a team or on your own. More details on the website in coming months. Watch this Space!!

Become a Lifestart Donor



Yes I would like to help a child reach their potential.

I would like to donate:

_____ \$25 _____ \$50 _____ \$100 Other \$ _____

Name (Mr/Mrs/Ms) _____

Address _____

_____ Post Code _____

Ph (Day) _____ Mob _____

Email _____

Cheque (payable to “Lifestart Co-operative Ltd”) Money Order

Mastercard Visa Bankcard AMEX Diners

Name on Card _____

Card No. _____

Expiry Date ____ / ____

Signature _____

All donations over \$2.00 are tax deductible. A receipt will be mailed to you with our thanks.

Post to: Lifestart Co-operative Ltd
 PO Box 3277
 Putney NSW 2112

To find our more about Lifestart visit our website www.lifestart.org.au

The children and families of Lifestart thank you for your support.

CFN: 15767