



'FAMILIES MATTER' – in Greater Shepparton

Edition 5
October 2006

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COMMUNITY SAFETY MONTH

It is hard to believe it is October already. How many weeks left till Christmas?

This month will be as busy as ever with Children's Week running from 23rd to 29th October and Community Safety Month. This edition of 'Families Matter' contains details of events happening during the month.

I would especially draw your attention to the 'Me, You, Us – A Safer Community' forum to be held on October 27th at The Shepparton Club. A registration form is attached on page 10. Excellent keynote speakers will be attending and this is an opportunity you should not miss.

An exciting milestone in service development has recently occurred with the computerisation of the Maternal and Child Health Service. The MCH service is provided by Goulburn Valley Health under contract from Greater Shepparton City Council. This development should improve communication and service efficiency and is part of an ongoing strategic redevelopment of the service.

We have submitted 3 nominations for the Early Years Awards sponsored by Department of Human Services. These were for projects supported by the Greater Shepparton Best Start Demonstration Project. Three winners will be announced at a celebration dinner in Melbourne during Children's Week. Fingers crossed and stay tuned for more news in the next edition.

Steve Dawkins
Manager Family and Children's Services



CHILDREN'S WEEK CELEBRATIONS

Children's Week 2006 will run from the 23rd to 29th October. The Greater Shepparton Children's Week committee has again organised a number of fun activities for children and parents to participate in. Picnics in the Park will be held in Tatura, Shepparton and Mooroopna and a Pram Walk around Princess Park has been organised – weather permitting. A flyer advertising all events has been attached to the newsletter. Please pass this flyer onto parents and carers interested in coming along for a few hours of free fun!



GREATER SHEPPARTON CITY COUNCIL – AGED AND DISABILITY SERVICES

The Greater Shepparton City Council offers a flexible in or out of home respite service to families that care for children with a disability. This respite service can provide a small amount of hours each week to give carers a break and a chance to unwind or attend to tasks that can not normally be accomplished whilst caring for a child with a disability. Overnight respite with a care worker staying in the family home may also be available.

Eligibility for assessment for the service is for any family with a child with a diagnosed disability, including physical, intellectual, behavioural and acquired disabilities. Referral to the service can be done directly over the phone, in person at the Council offices or on behalf of families by any associated health practitioner.

Basic details will be collected during the referral, following which a Care Manager will visit the family in the home to assist in tailoring the right services for the family's needs. The Care Manager can then also assist the family in negotiating what can be an extremely complex service system, allowing them to access additional services from multiple agencies that may be of assistance.

Council respite may be utilised in conjunction with respite services provided by other agencies and a Care Manager will be available to assist in the coordination of all services.

For more information or to access this service, please ring Council's Aged and Disability Services on 5832 9755.



NEW LOOK AND NAME FOR GV FAMILY CARE

Goulburn Valley Family Care has changed its name to **familycare**. And why I hear you all ask?

Well, as GV Family Care has grown over the years since its inception in 1984, it now services a much larger area than just the Goulburn Valley. The agency now services the shires of Moira, Greater Shepparton City Council, Murrindindi, Mitchell and Strathbogie. With this in mind the agency has dropped 'Goulburn Valley' from its name and will now operate as **familycare**.

As the logo was also looking a little out dated, **familycare** has a complete new look to go with the name change. They have a new logo and design for brochures, stationary and for the website, so keep an eye out for them. All other details such as addresses, phone numbers and programs will of course remain the same.

GREATER SHEPPARTON BEST START FORUM

What a fantastic day for Greater Shepparton. With over 100 people registered for the forum (nearly half were from other municipalities), the day was bound to be one of great networking and learning for those attending.

We were lucky enough to have Dr Sharon Goldfeld as the keynote speaker and she did not disappoint. Captivating the audience with her research, passion and enthusiasm for early childhood, Sharon's presentation set the scene for the days agenda and following presentations.

A number of initiatives and projects undertaken by the Greater Shepparton Best Start Demonstration Project were presented including Playgroups, Community Literacy, Breastfeeding, Reshaping Maternal and Child Health, the Adolescent Antenatal Care and Education Program and Family Centred Practice. Judi Gray, Broadmeadows Best Start Facilitator, made the trip to Shepparton to talk about the School Transition project in Broadmeadows to add another flavour to the day.

Based on the feedback received from several attendees, it was a very worthwhile and informative day, especially for those municipalities with new Best Start sites. Anyone who was unable to attend can still obtain a copy of the presentations by contacting Belinda Whitelaw on 58 329 790 or email belinda.whitelaw@shepparton.vic.gov.au

Thank you to everyone who attended or participated on the day. The Best Start project team, both past and present, was extremely proud to present the achievements of the past 3 years and look forward to more exciting projects in the future.



GREATER SHEPPARTON FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES DIRECTORY – 3RD EDITION AND TRANSLATED VERSION

The 3rd edition of the Greater Shepparton Family and Children's Services Directory is just about finalised and should be available within the next few weeks. Copies of the revised directory will be distributed to agencies and organisations before the end of November. The directory has been an extremely valuable resource for both parents and service providers and Best Start is pleased to be able to continue producing this resource thanks to support from Greater Shepparton City Council.

On another note, in recognition of our diverse population, an abridged version of the directory is currently being translated into 3 community languages – Albanian, Iraqi and Dhari. It is important all members of our community have access to early childhood and family support information, regardless of literacy level or language.

Once the translated directories have been printed, copies will be sent to the Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District, Maternal and Child Health centres and will also be available from Greater Shepparton City Council. Translation of the directory into additional community languages will be considered in the future and dependent upon funding.

MULTICULTURAL CALENDAR OF EVENTS – RAMADAN (23RD SEPTEMBER TO 22ND OCTOBER)

Ramadan is the most important period of religious observation for Muslims. The beginning of Ramadan is commemorated as the time when the first verses of the ***Qur'an*** (Koran) were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. During this month there are extensive readings of the Qur'an both publicly and privately.

The main feature of the month-long period of Ramadan is the observance of fasting. From sunrise to sunset, believers refrain from food, drink, smoking and sex. This is meant to be quite strictly followed by all people, and children usually from around the age of 12 should also fast. While allowances may be made for some groups (eg sick patients, travelers or women who are pregnant or nursing), they are required if possible to make up the days not fasted by fasting at another time before the next Ramadan.

Fasting is seen as one of the five 'pillars' or duties of the Muslim faith – the other four being the duty to recite the creed; to pray 5 times a day; to give alms; and to make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime.

A period of fasting and abstinence from bodily appetites is seen as a measure of discipline, and is designed to get believers to attend to their faith; this is a period of piety, of charity, or reading the Qur'an, of avoiding conflicts or misconduct.

Believers will generally have a filling morning meal (*suhoor*) and a post-fast evening meal (*iftar*) – the evening meal will often be eaten with the wider family or friends or community, and is a time of socializing.

Different Islamic communities will have favourite or traditional foods during this period.

Believers are expected neither to starve themselves unnecessarily nor gorge themselves in morning and evening meals; the intake of food should be about the same or just a little less in total per day as in other times of the years, though the suggestion is often made that those who are overweight should take advantage of Ramadan to usefully trim down!

The feast day of ***Eid-al Fitr***, with spectacular hospitality and celebration of faith ends the Ramadan period. Small gifts and specially designed cards are given to family and friends.

Ramadan is observed on different dates each year. It is a lunar festival, marking the beginning of the 9th month of the Islamic calendar. With the different lengths of the Islamic and Gregorian (western) calendar, Ramadan will generally be 11 to 12 days earlier each year than in the previous year.

(Supplied by All Graduates Interpreting and Translating, www.allgraduates.com.au)

WELCOME JENNY BURROWS – THREE PROJECTS, ONE PROJECT OFFICER!

Greater Shepparton City Council recently welcomed Jenny Burrows, the new Family and Children's Services Project Officer.

Jenny will be responsible for the Kids Go For Your Life project, Smiles for Miles project and the Walking School Bus program. Each program involves working in partnership with a number of local organisations, services and businesses in order to improve the physical activity, nutrition and dental health of young children. Jenny has already made contact with several kindergartens and primary schools to discuss the initiatives and is looking at developing a newsletter to keep everyone in the loop about these important projects.

Jenny is located in the Family and Children's Services department at Council and can be contacted on 5832 9863.



'STORY A DAY' EARLY LITERACY PROGRAM

The Best Start 'Story a Day' program is currently operating in 8 kindergartens across Greater Shepparton. The program aims to build a partnership for learning between the kindergarten and home environment. Children are able to borrow books from the kinder library and are rewarded with a free book to keep once they have reached a particular milestone.

Documented under the Best Start Community Literacy action area and piloted in 2005 at Leslie Gribble and Patricia Smith Children's Centres, the program was deemed a success by both teachers and parents of participating children. In 2006 the program was rolled out to a further 6 kindergartens (3 council operated and 3 private) and feedback to date has been positive. Parents and teachers alike are reporting and observing an increased interest in reading and books in the children. Parents are also reporting an increase in the amount of time they are spending reading with their child at home.

Thanks to a grant received from the Forest Hill Early Childhood Foundation, the program will be implemented in all Council operated kindergartens in 2007. A partnership with DK/Penguin publishers means top quality books will be purchased to enhance the kinder library and supply the reward books.

While the program has only be running for a short time there is much promise for 'Story a Day' and the potential long term literacy outcomes for both children and parents. The Community Literacy workgroup looks forward to supporting this program and overseeing the further roll out of 'Story a Day'.

For further information about 'Story a Day' please contact Belinda Whitelaw on 58 329 790 or Sally Rose on 58 329 709.



PRACTICE RESOURCES AVAILABLE ONLINE

The Centre for Community Child Health is pleased to launch a number of online Practical Resources for professionals working with children and families.

Designed to bridge the gap between research and practice, Practice Resources translate research evidence into easily understood, practical strategies to address a range of concerns affecting children and adolescents.

The topics covered in the first 11 resources are:

- * **Behaviour problems**
- * **Settling and sleep**
- * **Eating behaviour problems**
- * **Language**
- * **Preventing injury**
- * **Literacy promotion**
- * **Breastfeeding promotion**
- * **Preventing overweight and obesity**
- * **Preventing child and adolescent smoking**
- * **Preventing smoking in pregnancy**
- * **Preventing passive smoking effects in children**

Download your FREE copies at
<http://www.rch.org.au/ccch/news>

CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS AND TRAINING CALENDAR

Playgroup Training

4 modules conducted by Playgroup Victoria

1. Running an Effective Playgroup – Tuesday 10th October, 10.30am to 12 noon
2. Play at Playgroup – Tuesday 10th October, 1pm to 3pm
3. Guiding Children's Behaviour at Playgroup – Wednesday 11th October, 10am to 12 noon
4. Health and Safety Issues – Wednesday 11th October, 1pm to 3pm

This training is free but places are limited so please contact Belinda Whitelaw on 58 329 790 or email belinda.whitelaw@shepparton.vic.gov.au to register.

Venue for all modules is the Greater Shepparton City Council, 90 Welsford Street, Shepparton. Lunch is included for those completing a full day (2 modules).

Positive Parenting Program – for the Turkish community

Come and join other mums in a group setting to talk about parenting and to learn effective ways to manage misbehaviour in children and develop some new parenting skills. **A registered Turkish interpreter will be in attendance.**

Venue: Westmorland Cres Maternal Child Health Centre
13 Westmorland Cres Shepparton 3630

Dates: Tuesday Nov 14th, 21st, 28th, Dec 5th and 12th

Time: 12.30 till 3.00pm

Cost: \$ 10.00 per person

Facilitators: Robyn Howarth and Joy Wakefield

Free childcare available

If you would like to come along to this five week program please telephone Robyn Howarth on 58217124 to book in.

A partnership of the Greater Shepparton MACH Service, Hume Region Parent Education Service and Greater Shepparton Best Start Project

'Me, You, Us – A Safer Community' Forum

Date: Friday 27th October

Where: The Shepparton Club, 455 Wyndham Street, Shepparton

Time: 9am to 3.30pm

No cost and fully catered

Keynote Speakers

Erin Erceg – Child Health Promotion Research Unit, Edith Cowan University

Bernie Geary – Child Safety Commissioner, Victorian Government

An exciting opportunity for professionals and community members. This forum will address a range of community safety issues and include the presentation of Victoria Police Region 3 Excellence in Policing in Family Violence Awards. A panel of community leaders will discuss issues of relevance to our local community.

Registration form attached. For more information please contact Council on 5832 9783. An initiative of Greater Shepparton City Council Public Health Plan in cooperation with local community agencies.

CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS AND TRAINING CALENDAR CONTINUED.....

KIWANIS HOUSE SPECIAL NEEDS CENTRE INC
Proudly Presents

DISCUSSING AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER AND DEVELOPING SOCIAL UNDERSTANDING

with

Wendy Lawson

And

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER & TEACHING SOCIAL SKILLS

with

Tanya Lowes

Sunday, 15 October 2006, 9.30 am to 4.00 pm

Doors open 9 am at Shepparton RSL

Wyndham Street, Shepparton

Limited Seating, Bookings Essential, Fully Catered

Full Day Workshop - \$65

Morning Session: Wendy Lawson

(Bss, Bsw(Hons), GDip(PsychStud) Gdip(Psychology)

- . To increase understanding and explore 'why' social understanding is so difficult in Autism
- . To identify Social Skills Difficulties
- . To show how to distinguish between Skill Acquisition and Performance Difficulties

Wendy Lawson, Bss,Bsw(Hons) GDip(PsychStud)GDip(Psych) is an adult with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. Wendy's work explores the influence of neurological development in individuals with autism with reference to impact upon learning styles. To date, Wendy has written 6 books varying from her autobiography to an everyday text on Autism. Her latest book is about friendships.

Afternoon Session: Tanya Lowes

(Occupation Therapist, Director - OT Discovery, ASD Consultant)

Tanya Lowes, is a highly regarded Occupational Therapist, choosing to specialize in the field of Autism Spectrum Disorder, practicing within the Hume and Loddon/Mallee Regions. Tanya is working hard to support families, schools and support agencies by delivering private consultations, professional in-services, ASD Parenting Programs, ASD Social Skills Programs, and Training workshops/conferences. Tanya is currently studying for her PhD.

Contact Kiwanis Special Needs Centre on 5822 1230 for more information or to make a booking.

QEC International Conference 23 and 24 November 2006

QEC welcomes you to our 4th biennial conference, **Early Childhood: Evidence into Practice**, with a very exciting and comprehensive range of international and national speakers and presentations.

The conference will provide essential and up-to-date information to those from all disciplines involved in early parenting and childhood including managers, policy makers, early childhood educators, doctors, nurses, social workers, psychologists, researchers, child protection and family support workers.

Visit <http://www.qec.org.au/program-2006.htm> for a PDF of the conference program and registration brochure. We look forward to meeting with you in November.

GOVERNMENTS COMMIT TO ACHIEVING – BETTER OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG AUSTRALIANS

The July 2006 meeting of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has agreed to cooperate on a series of reforms aimed at building Australia's "human capital" with an initial priority on initiatives focused specifically on improving outcomes for the nation's children and youth.

Under the agreed human capital reform agenda, the official COAG communiqué lists four areas as initial priorities for further work, three of which are concerned with supporting children to achieve their developmental potential.

The child-focused priority issues agreed to by COAG are:

- **early childhood:** (primarily focusing on supporting parents to provide appropriate developmental opportunities for children aged 0-5)
- **literacy and numeracy:** (focused on building competence and capacity of school aged children to enable social and economic participation over the life course)
- **child care:** (focused on ensuring quality care of children whose parents are in the workforce).

The fourth priority area "**diabetes**" has broader population health implications but is also relevant to the health of younger Australians (with an increasing incidence of type 1 diabetes in Australian children and associated longer term health complications).

Of the agreed reporting framework for the human capital reform agenda, four of the 11 indicative outcomes are child or youth focused, while a fifth outcome acknowledges the need to provide flexible working arrangements particularly for working parents. The draft framework of outcomes and indicative progress measures also notes the potential of the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) as a measurement tool for assessing the impact of early childhood interventions. The AEDI has been developed by two of ARACY's members (the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, WA, and the Centre for Community Child Health, Vic).

The official COAG communiqué states that specific reform proposals will be considered at its next meeting including agreed policy directions; outcomes and commitments; multilateral and jurisdictional specific actions; and more precise progress measures and milestones. The COAG commitment follows extensive work undertaken by ARACY and its members at both national and jurisdictional levels to raise the profile and priority of children and young on the public policy agenda.

ARACY Executive Director Professor Fiona Stanley says the progress that has been made in advancing a national reform agenda which prioritises the wellbeing and life chances of children and youth represents a significant step forward.

"The demonstrated commitment of Governments to work collaboratively on these issues is not only very encouraging, but essential, if the complex problems that are compromising the developmental prospects of so many of our younger citizens are to be effectively addressed", Professor Stanley said.

The full text of the COAG communiqué, including links to the human capital outcomes can be accessed at: www.coag.gov.au/meetings/140706/index.htm

NEWSLETTER INFORMATION AND CONTACTS

Do you have information to contribute to the Greater Shepparton Family & Children's Services Newsletter? It could be an upcoming conference, staff movements, funding opportunity or anything to do with family and children's services. If so please send it through to the contact person listed below.

Contact person – Belinda Whitelaw, Best Start Service Development & Resource Officer
58 329 790 or email belinda.whitelaw@shepparton.vic.gov.au
Next edition due – December 2006
Due date for articles – 23 November 2006

Children's Week

23th - 29th October 2006



A week full of activities, play, music, stories, information and FUN for the whole family!

PICNICS IN THE PARK

Bring your snacks, drinks, rugs, hats and sunscreen and join in the fun

Tuesday 24th October
Mactier Park
TATURA
10am to 12 noon

Wednesday 25th October
Princess Park
SHEPPARTON
10am to 12 noon

Thursday 26th October
Ferrari Park
MOOROOPNA
10am to 12 noon

PRAM WALK

Enjoy a leisurely walk with other parents/carers and then join in the fun at Picnic in the Park

Wednesday 25th October
Princess Park
SHEPPARTON
9.30am to 10am

WEATHER PERMITTING



“ME, YOU, US – A Safer Community” Forum

Friday 27th October
9.00am to 3.30pm
(registration starts at 9.00am)

There is no cost to attend this forum

Registration Form

Name: _____

Organisation: _____

Position: _____

Postal Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Fax number: _____

Email: _____

Special dietary needs: _____

Please return this registration form by **Monday 23rd October** to:

**Sandra Clough
Greater Shepparton City Council
Family & Children’s Services
Locked Bag 1000
SHEPPARTON 3632**

Or fax to Sandra Clough on (03) 58 311 987

Forum and registration enquires: Sandra Clough, ph (03) 58 329 783