



HAPPENINGS

Spring 2009

A NEWSLETTER FOR SUPPORTERS OF THE INFANTS' HOME CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES

Coming out of the Darkness

John, aged six, held tightly to his mother's thigh and hid behind her as she introduced him to Wendy a family worker from The Infants' Home. It was late afternoon and John, his mother; Bronwyn and Wendy were heading towards the centre to collect Harry aged 3 years. John saw where they were heading and raced ahead shouting, "Harry, Harry!" Equally as excited, Harry ran to the gate with a beaming smile and excited chatter. As Bronwyn opened the gate the two boys hugged and laughed boisterously.

While John ran to grab Harry's bag and hat, Harry raced to where his teacher Sue was sitting with a small group of children and waved goodbye saying, "Going home now." There were mumbled and garbled combinations of goodbyes as Harry waved to all while racing back to Bronwyn ready and eager to go home.

Once the family had left The Infants' Home Wendy reflected on the strength and resilience this

family was showing given their past experience of family violence.

Bronwyn had grown up in another country and immigrated to Australia with her husband and young baby, John. The victim of violence in her marriage, she was unaware that the laws in Australia could protect her and John. Since her arranged marriage in her home country, she had lived in an environment of fear and imprisonment; locked in her house each day as her husband left for studies and physically beaten a number of times each week.

While pregnant with her second child, Harry, she was beaten and thrown to the floor. At this time fearing for her life and that of her unborn child she dialled 000. As the police arrived she was anxious and fearful that John would be removed from her care and placed in foster care. She was relieved and amazed that not only did they not take John away but they provided immediate shelter and safety. The Australian police and welfare

agencies housed and supported Bronwyn, prosecuted her husband, and deported him while giving Bronwyn and her sons' citizenship.

Bronwyn and her boys were provided with supported accommodation and John was enrolled at The Infants' Home for two days per week. Bronwyn accessed support through the family worker and John participated in the Art Therapy program. With great strength and dignity Bronwyn, after the birth of Harry, enrolled in a TAFE course and both boys engaged with activities and learning opportunities at The Infants' Home.

Today Bronwyn continues her studies and is close to completing her Diploma, John has residual nightmares but he has successfully transitioned to school and is making positive social and emotional developments and connecting well with peers. Harry remains at The Infants' Home and is settling into the educational program forming trusting relationships with staff and children.

each child, every opportunity



the infants' home
CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES

The Infants' Home, 17 Henry Street, Ashfield NSW 2131

P: (02) 9799 4844 F: (02) 9799 4122 W: www.theinfantshome.org.au

Autism Support for Children

The Infants' Home is highly experienced in delivering early intervention programs to young children. Over the last 3 years, we have teamed up with Aspect to deliver the Building Blocks program to young children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and their families. This year the program has increased to offer two groups each week doubling the amount of places available to children in the Inner West.

The program provides both a structured small group environment for children to develop and practice skills as well as a parent element that provides education and support for parents. The program also provides visits to either the home or a pre school/long day care environment each term to support the child to use their skills in a range of environments.

During the 2 hour group, facilitated by early intervention professionals (speech pathologist, special educator, psychologist), the children have opportunities to participate in small group activities including a greeting song, music time and story time. These activities are individualised to meet the needs of the young children in the group, often using visual aides and resources and accommodating children's sensory preferences. The children eat together providing an opportunity to practice key self help and social skills.

Developmentally appropriate play based experiences that develop communication, turn taking and other social skills are provided with the support that children need to participate and complete activities. These experiences also promote fine motor and gross motor skills as well as numeracy and literacy skills.

While the children are busy, parents work with an experienced facilitator covering many topics including; early intervention options, latest research, school options, positive behaviour support, looking after yourself and your family.



From the President

From very small beginnings in 1874 to today – how we have grown. What a marvelous year of celebration of 135 years of service to children and families. It was an honour to have our Governor General Ms Quentin Bryce AC and Mr Bryce AM AE attend our celebratory luncheon at Parliament House. Our guest speaker Ms Geraldine Doogue, spoke with passion about our history over 135 years.

Life never stands still at Henry Street and the Board congratulates the staff for their absolute dedication to providing the best possible care to all our children. Sometimes working within our "oasis" is difficult, our heritage buildings have served us well over all these years but we have reached a time when The Home needs to be looking forward to the next 135 years and how we can maintain and sustain our work. The Home is entering an exciting phase of developing a new purpose built facility and our dreams of several years are about to become a reality. Watch this space for further news in our next edition.

This month has seen the departure of CEO, Ms Jennifer Evans. Jennifer was part of The Home for 5 years and has moved on to further her career. We wish her well. Ms Anita Kumar, one of our senior management team is the Acting CEO. The search is on for a new CEO and by the next issue of Happenings we hope that the successful candidate will be well settled into the role.

This year we farewelled from the Board; Ms Jacqueline Weiley, Ms Ingrid Postema, Mr Ian Showman and Mr Graham Paterson. They will all be missed, their contribution to The Infants' Home was invaluable. The Board has also welcomed several new members, Ms Mary Verschuer, Ms Debbie Niulala, Ms Julia Sweeney, Mr Tony Kutra and Mr Michael Stilp. All of these members bring knowledge and skills to maintain the progress and stability of The Infants' Home.

This year has been an exciting one so far and we know the celebrations will continue. We look forward to spring and summer, our family events and Christmas Carol night and the continuation of the work we do with our children and families.

Thank you for helping celebrate our 135 years.

Gillian Hirstman

Farewell from Jennifer

I wish to offer my sincere appreciation to all our supporters and friends who have so generously assisted us over the past five years during my term as CEO. It has been both a privilege and a pleasure to have the opportunity to get to know you. I wish you all the best for the future and know you will continue to support The Infants' Home in the next stage of its important journey in assisting young children and families.



Our loyal supporters and members of the community farewell Jennifer Evans.



The staff at The Infants' Home bid Jennifer Evans a fond farewell.

Thank you to Wests Leagues Ashfield



We were delighted to receive the telephone call from Wests Leagues Ashfield that we were successful in our CDSE funding for \$20,000 towards three of our programs. We were even more delighted when they asked us to host the event on our lovely grounds. Community members from the area as well as other recipients of funds attended the presentation which was followed by a lovely afternoon tea provided by Wests Leagues Ashfield.

We are very proud of our association with Wests Leagues Ashfield and are very grateful for their continued support of our work with children and their families. The children of Robinson House prepared a special gift and presented it to Mr Peter Hargrove, The President of the Board of Directors at Wests Leagues Ashfield and we are told it will hang proudly on the walls of the Club.

A Day to Remember – The Home Turns 135

On 9 June 2009, The Infants' Home hosted a luncheon at Parliament House in celebration of its 135th birthday. This was an opportunity to celebrate the many successes and achievements, thank all our loyal supporters and to reunite people whose lives had been touched by The Home. The Infants' Home has been a long time advocate for children and families experiencing vulnerabilities and a proud member of the community.



Ms Gillian Hirstman, Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC and Ms Geraldine Doogue

We were honoured to have as our guests, Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC and Mr Michael Bryce AM AE as well as our local Member of Parliament The Honourable Virginia Judge. We welcomed Ms Geraldine Doogue as our guest speaker, who spoke with eloquence about the traditions of The Home and with passion about our values and future directions. The event opened with drinks and informal conversation. The Infants' Home has touched the lives of many, from past residents and/or descendants to our recent families. Relationships were rekindled as conversations brought together shared stories about The Home.

The children from The Infants' Home designed and created centre pieces for each of the tables. The displays captured the heart and work of the

children at The Home. Staff encouraged and supported the children to think, believe and respect the work they were creating and this was evident in the amazing detail of each piece. The children did not want to part with their creations but were reassured that they would be returned.

Literacy development was the focus for the work; the children explored familiar and not so familiar themes. Long time much loved stories were rediscovered and took on a whole new meaning as they were brought to life through art. The artwork brought about shared stories about The Infants' Home and inspired conversation amongst the guests. Staff talked about the different ways in which children learn and explore ideas, and guests were delighted with the visual displays.



the infants' home
CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES

The Infants' Home provides a range of care, education and support services for children from birth to five and their families to help them build a positive future.

Early support and intervention programs

- Specialised parenthood services for babies
- Intensive early care & learning programs
- Health management support
- Allied health programs
- Information, advice and advocacy
- Parent support programs
- Fathering support
- Parenting programs including playgroups
- Integrated multi-component early intervention services: GoodStart Programs - Families Together and Steps to School.

Children's Service Programs

- Quality Learning & Development Centre, including baby care through to preschool education
- Quality home like Family Day Care from babies to primary school age

Funding for The Home's programs come from the Australian and State governments, as well as fees for our services. This does not adequately cover our costs. We rely on the generosity of you, our donors and volunteers, to continue operating to the extent that we do.

Donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

The Infants' Home programs are regularly supported by government funding from:

- Department of Community Services (NSW)
- Department of Education & Training (NSW)
- Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
- Ashfield Council
- SFRS Inner West Small Grant Scheme
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Established 1874

Patron: Sir Nicholas Shehadie AC OBE

17 Henry St, ASHFIELD NSW 2131
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www.theinfantshome.org.au

How you can help The Infants' Home

Every contribution helps a child.

If you would like to support us, please send this form with your donation to **The Infants' Home, 17 Henry Street, Ashfield NSW 2131.**

ph: 02 9799 4844

ABN 71 174 918 661

Yes, I would like to make a difference to children and families.

Please accept my gift of:

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$200

Other \$ _____

Please find enclosed my

cheque/money order OR please

debit my Visa Mastercard

Number:

Signature: _____

Yes, I would like you to debit my credit card \$ _____ per month.

Expiry date:

M	M	/	Y	Y
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Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Telephone:

(H) _____

(W) _____

(M) _____

Email: _____

Yes, I would like to give the gift of time. Please send me information on becoming a volunteer.

Yes, I would like to give a lasting gift. Please send me information on leaving a bequest.

Yes, I would like to know more. Please send me information about your services.

Donations of \$2 and over are tax deductible. A receipt will be issued for all donations. The Infants' Home respects your privacy. We do not disclose personal contact information without permission. Please remove my name from your mailing list.

Westpac Premium Business Take On The City To Surf Challenge

For many years The Infants' Home has been very fortunate to be involved with Westpac, both in receiving grants and with their corporate volunteers.

Recently a group of volunteers who spent the day helping with maintaining the property wanted to do a little bit more. They rallied up the troops and put together a team and entered in this year's City to Surf event with all proceeds from sponsorship donated to The Infants' Home.

The brave team, "Westpac Premium Business", consisting of Brett Jager, Majella Keating, Greg Kenna, Lesley Armstrong and Matthew Jackson all took on the challenge and reported some very impressive completion times as well as a great fun day out. The team succeeded in raising over \$2,600 in sponsorship which they have donated to The Home as well as

applying to Westpac to match their donation with the potential of another \$2,600 donation.

We appreciate all the efforts made from our Westpac volunteers not just financially but in helping us to raise the profile of The Infants' Home throughout the community. The team will be thanked officially with an afternoon tea at The Home in the very near future.

The City to Surf event is held in Sydney every year in August and we encourage any individuals or corporations to take up the challenge as Westpac have done, to be involved in supporting a charity. If you like to support The Infants' Home at next year's event, please contact Enza McNaught on 9799 4844 or via email at emcnaught@theinfantshome.org.au



Staff profile - Sharon Donaldson

Sharon Donaldson's contribution to The Infants' Home through her work with children and families at Sydney Hope Family Cottage was recently recognised with a Leadership Award.

Sharon is a Registered Child, Family & Maternal Health Nurse who helps manage the Sydney Hope Family Cottage (Infant feeding, sleeping and settling clinic) for families with infants aged from birth to 18 months.

Sharon's career began with Sydney Hope Family Cottage in the first half of 2007, following many years working with families in Early Childhood Health Centres. She has worked with families from all walks of life, including vulnerable families in difficult circumstances. This experience has enabled her to offer the best possible support to Hope Cottage families.

Sharon is passionate about her involvement in helping parents with their children and although she claims she doesn't know everything, she is willing to go the 'extra mile' to identify what is needed. It is this 'extra mile' quality that has earned her the Leadership award, she was successful in investigating and confirming that The Infants' Home could utilize Health Funds for the Mothercraft services of Sydney Hope Cottage.

Working at The Infants' Home has provided a sense of 'family' for Sharon and she "cherishes the support of her CFSF team, particularly her colleague - Lesley Shanley, whose sparkling personality is quite contagious". She is very appreciative of the invaluable support received from the organisation, especially when her family life took a sudden change of course at the beginning of this year.

Raising four children (mostly alone) aging from 9 - 19, Sharon understands only too well, the challenges of parenting. From breastfeeding to training bras, from toddler temper tantrums to teenage temper tantrums, it has been an unforgettable (sometimes forgettable!) journey.

Sharon has provided expert Parentcraft advice for Australia's Mother & Baby Magazine since 1997, and has received three Government Awards for her active role in health promotion for families.

Did you know?

Sharon's name before she remarried was Hope. She was Sharon Hope for many years and has 3 daughters with the surname Hope. Some things are just too coincidental!