



# HAPPENINGS

Autumn 2008

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

## Anaphylaxis: a big response to seemingly simple foods

### WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THE SIMPLE PEANUT COULD BE SUCH A THREAT!

**The Infants' Home Child & Family Services has recently been recognised by the Casa Herbalife Family Foundation for its leadership in supporting children who experience severe reactions to certain foods, with a \$20,000 grant towards programs in this area (story page 2).**

While the public has become more aware that children can have life-threatening reactions – called an anaphylactic response – to various food types in recent times, The Infants' Home has been providing care and advice for families dealing with these types of allergies for over 20 years. The most common foods to cause this reaction are peanuts, dairy products and eggs.

Anaphylaxis is "a severe rapidly progressive allergic reaction that can be life-threatening unless treated immediately"<sup>1</sup>.

Some of the allergic reactions can be triggered by touch or by the breath of someone close by who has eaten the 'harmful' food up to two hours prior to contact. Imagine how hard this might be for parents with young children to manage! Parents of children with anaphylaxis have to very quickly learn how to manage their child's allergies, know what to do in the management of a serious event, and how to avoid the event occurring.

Some parents become so fearful that the child rarely leaves home, which can affect both the child's and the family's wellbeing. And while participation in early childhood programs offers an important developmental experience for young children, parents are often very anxious about enrolling their child into care.

At The Infants' Home Child & Family Services, children with a history of allergies are cared for with

collaboration between their parents, educators, Meryl Burn (Health and Early Childhood Consultant nurse), the kitchen team and the child's treating doctor.

#### How does The Infants' Home support children with allergies?

The whole organisation works as a team to support children with allergies. The property is classified a 'nut-free zone' and supplies all the food for children's meals on a daily basis – and, for special celebrations provides families with recipes for egg-free, dairy-free and nut-free cakes. We work closely with the family and the medical specialists in developing management plans, staff training and ongoing review and monitoring. Families and children are provided with information and practical ways to support the health of each child with allergies.

<sup>1</sup> Source: "When Food is Not a Friend - a basic guide to food allergy and intolerance" article on [www.sanitarium.com.au](http://www.sanitarium.com.au)



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](http://www.theinfantshome.org.au)

# Letter from the CEO



The Infants' Home Child & Family Services is in good hands. We are delighted to announce two new Directors on the Board, Joseph Saad and Graham Paterson. Joseph has worked tirelessly for the local Rotary Club and lives and works locally, running

his own legal practice. Graham is a Senior Manager with Westpac and continues the long term relationship between our two organisations. His strategic management experience and involvement in developing programs to support indigenous communities will be of great value to our work. We extend our sincere appreciation to two Directors, Tonia Godhard AM and Ruth Medd, who are retiring from the Board in May. Tonia and Ruth have made a very valuable contribution to the Board over the past 5-6 years. They have helped steer the organisation through a period of significant change and development. We wish them well in the future.

I recently caught up with the mother of two children who attended our services for a few years. She was so impressed with the level of care, education and support provided to her family that she donated funds to support staff excellence awards. She has offered to continue that support again this year, and we are very grateful. She reports that both children are doing well at school and that she is feeling positive about their lives ahead. These stories always offer us great encouragement to continue to strive to provide the best services for children and families. It's exciting to hear and see the results of our efforts.

**Jennifer Evans**  
Chief Executive Officer

## Welcome to The Home - Casa Herbalife Family Foundation

The International Casa Herbalife Family Foundation recently launched its Australian branch as Herbalife celebrated 25 years in Australia. The Foundation creates partnerships with charities around the world with a focus on the nutritional needs and wellbeing of children. We are delighted to announce that The Infants' Home Child & Family Services has been selected as its Australian charity.

The Foundation has provided a \$20,000 grant to support our programs working with children who experience life threatening reactions to certain food types. We are the 31st recipient of funding from the Casa Herbalife Family Foundation, which contributes to programs all over the world, including Zambia, America and Spain.

We thank the Casa Herbalife Family Foundation, and the Herbalife member network who raise the funds



Tim Sanson, General Manager Australia & New Zealand Herbalife Australasia; Jennifer Evans, CEO, The Infants' Home; Garry & Jennifer de Brabander, Members *Chairman's Club* Herbalife Australasia; Jenny Craigie, Board Director 2000-2007, The Infants' Home.

across Australia, for their support. We look forward to a long association, supporting our work with young children and families.



## Stuart's Story

Stuart's\* family contacted The Infants' Home after a discussion with an allergy specialist at the RPA Allergy Clinic. Stuart's experience in the early childhood program is coordinated by Meryl Burn who initially met with the family, and took a detailed medical history including Stuart's allergies. The medical allergy plan developed and provided by his doctor, has a photo of Stuart, a list of his allergies, medication and directions on what to do in the case of an allergic reaction. This plan is displayed in the children's dining room, and is understood by all The Infants' Home staff, who are trained in his needs. In addition to the standard food restrictions that eliminate the more common problem food types, an individual menu was developed for Stuart to address his additional needs. The kitchen team are trained in his special requirements, which includes separately preparing and individually labelling his meals.

Included in the staff training program is how to respond should an anaphylactic shock occur. This includes training in the administration of an epipen, a device used to inject epinephrine (adrenaline) during an anaphylactic attack. Meryl makes sure that all staff are aware of Stuart's individual needs and ensures they are confident. Education of families and children is an important part of the support provided. A letter is sent to all the families in the program area to remind them of the food restrictions policy, and the importance of always washing their own and their child's hands on arrival. Progress is regularly monitored and reviewed.

This work all goes on behind the scenes so Stuart's experience at The Infants' Home is very similar to that of the other children.

\* Name has been changed for privacy reasons.

# Transition to “Big School”

Many of you may remember a child we have previously profiled, Zane. Well, this year Zane made the transition to “big school”. Zane and his father, Brad, had been receiving services from The Infants’ Home Child & Family Services since Zane was two. Brad, a single dad, self-referred Zane to The Home after seeing our bus picking up his neighbour’s children. Supported by The Home’s Special Education Teacher, Katie Helby, Zane was initially taught to communicate using picture symbols, selecting a picture and handing it to an adult to get his needs met. This supported the development of Zane’s language and against all expectations Zane was talking in sentences by the age of four. At The Home Zane received speech therapy, occupational therapy, and art therapy as well as participating in a social skills group and transition to school activities.

Prior to starting this year, Brad and Katie visited Zane’s local public school to meet with the Principal and School Counsellor to discuss Zane’s skills and needs. On this visit lots of photos of the school were taken to develop a ‘story’ for Zane, giving him lots of information about “big school” and preparing him for that move. Zane would read his ‘story’ to his dad over and over again, which helped him to understand what would happen when he arrived at school.

Following the start of the school year, Katie calls families to see how the transition is going.

Katie: *How do you like big school?*

Zane: *Good, good, good!*

Katie: *Have you made some new friends?*

Zane: *Let me just get my thinking cap on and I will tell you...Isabella aaand the other one is Tom... aaand one more... Oh that’s me!*

Brad is very pleased with how successful the transition to school has been for Zane. He reports that Zane’s social skills are getting better and better and he has friends at school. Brad thinks that Zane’s ‘story’ about going to school has been an important part of his successful transition, telling us that, “You know your ‘story’ book – you should patent that actually!”.

It is so exciting to hear success stories like this year after year, about how we have helped children get the best possible start to school – and life!



**There are toilets at school. You can go to the toilet at recess and lunch time.**



**It is a good idea to go to the toilet at recess and lunch time.**

**If you need to go to the toilet during class you put up your hand and ask the teacher. You could say “Please can I go to the toilet?”**



**Please can I go to the toilet?**

Extracts from Zane’s ‘story’ which helped him prepare for ‘big school’.



**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 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

Established 1874

Patron: Sir Nicholas Shehadie AC OBE

17 Henry St, ASHFIELD NSW 2131  
PH (02) 9799 4844 • Fax (02) 9799 4122  
mail@theinfantshome.org.au •  
www.theinfantshome.org.au

# How you can help The Infants' Home

Every contribution helps provide quality services for children and families. If you would like to support us, please send this form with your donation to **The Infants' Home, 17 Henry Street, Ashfield NSW 2131.**  
ABN 71 174 918 661

Yes, I would like to support the services provided for children and families at The Infants' Home. 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
---	---	---	---	---

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.

## THE PARENTS' COMMITTEE

Come and join in and make new friends! Families are encouraged to participate through various activities: from events such as the annual Art show and our Carols near Christmas time, the quarterly parent meetings in program areas and through the larger Parent Committee which meets every second month to support fundraising, advise on service development and generally join in the work of The Home.

The Committee is planning for this year's Trivia Night and would like families and friends to support in organising this event for later in the year. Please email [admin@theinfantshome.org.au](mailto:admin@theinfantshome.org.au) if you would like to help out and learn more about the parents' work.

From last year's fantastic efforts \$5,000 was raised by the Committee, which purchased the great digital frames in the foyer of each program area as well as play equipment.



Children and Families with Santa at Carols by Candlelight, December 2007.

Log on to [www.theinfantshome.org.au](http://www.theinfantshome.org.au) for upcoming events!

## VALE: Pearl Gillott

The Home was saddened by the passing in February 2008 of Pearl Gillott, a wonderful and tireless supporter. Pearl dedicated 37 years of service initially as a staff member, and then a volunteer. She was responsible for providing health care for children who attended the residential services and in some cases, their mothers. When the foster care program was introduced, in times of crisis, when no foster care could be found, Pearl would care for children in her home until a place was available. In the domestic violence refuge program, she taught mothers a great deal about parenting and caring for children. She was actively involved in The Home's change from residential care to long day care and was a passionate advocate for providing integrated services for children with disabilities. Upon retiring she took over running the opportunity shop for The Home until her last days, and was always there to support the events organised by The Home. Pearl's long term commitment to the children and families of The Infants' Home will be greatly missed.

## Supporting our programs

Thank you to all of our donors and partners for your contributions supporting the work of The Infants' Home Child and Family Services. We could not do our work providing valuable services to families and children with special needs without you. As we approach the end of the financial year we invite you to consider supporting The Home's programs and services, to enable us to continue to support children like Zane and Stuart, who are featured in this edition of *Happenings*. All donations over \$2 are tax deductible and with your help we can continue to serve the needs of all children and their families, providing them the opportunities to get the best start in life possible.