



SPOCAAS News

Volume Two - Issue 2 - 2010

A Committee of Community Living & Respite Services Inc

Welcome to the TEACHER AWARENESS Edition of SPOCAAS News.

This Teacher Awareness Edition of SPOCAAS News has been produced to compliment a major event that SPOCAAS Parent Volunteers have been working towards for several months:

**TEACHER AWARENESS EVENT: Helping ASD students in the Classroom.
Wednesday 10th March 2010.**

**1pm - 3pm Open to the Public : 4pm - 6pm Teachers Session.
Being held in the Function Room at Echuca Workers & Services Club.**

The team have worked tirelessly to put together this casual afternoon tea with hope to promote Autism Awareness, assist with management strategies and to provide a place for educators to network and share their own knowledge. At the time that this was written the RSVP list for Teachers was an attendance of 90 teachers! The open to the public session doesn't require an RSVP as the aim of this session is for those who are interested in what we might be presenting to educators can come along and take a look! I want to congratulate the Event team, particularly Elissa Plumridge, for the work on this event so far. I look forward to sharing with you all the outcomes of the day in the next edition.

Next on the SPOCAAS Agenda is Autism Awareness Month : APRIL. A special flyer will be circulated with what SPOCAAS parents have planned to celebrate and promote this important message. Judging by their enthusiasm, it is sure to be a fun Autism Awareness Month! *Hope you all have a fabulous month. Linke Smedts-Kreskas*



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**SPOCAAS Invites anyone who is interested in getting involved in promoting
Autism Awareness to email spocaas@clrs.org.au
SPOCAAS APRIL CALENDAR on back page**

“We ask huge things of children with an autistic disorder. We send them into adverse environments that are full of people and events, such as schools and shopping centres. We demand social interaction. We want them to join in conversations. We want them to play with other children. We often require them to give up a ritual, routine or obsession which has been helping them to reduce their anxiety. **We send them from the structured classroom to the unstructured playground ‘for a break’.** Children with autism have to work even harder in the playground – to make sense of the myriad of rules for social interaction. Playtime or recess is no break unless a structured, predictable recreation routine is developed to support the child with autism. This can and should include a small group of peers who understand the child and have been taught how to respond positively. An autistic child at a school that has set up a small PlayStation room, where one peer per break is allowed to share the activity, has gone from being the bullied outcast to the most popular child in the class! It is important that everyone – parents, extended family, teachers and friends – understand that children and adults with autism are not like average people. **They do not think in the same way and they should not be treated ‘like everyone else’.** Choose recreation activities carefully – team games like football or basketball are not overly successful, but individual activities such as tennis, golf, tenpin bowling or chess are more so. Computers, video games and the internet are much enjoyed by many people with an autistic disorder. Careful guidance can ensure they become shared activities in a number of ways – interactive and shared games and programs, chat rooms and special interest clubs. **Make allowances for the enormous effort they put into getting through each day – is homework more important than time to recover from a highly stressful day?**

Try to imagine what it is like for the person with an autistic disorder to live in our world.”



*Dr Richard Eisenmajer
(leading Clinical Psychologist specialising in Autism Spectrum Disorders)
with Amanda Golding (Autism Victoria)*

http://www.glenirispyschology.com.au/downloads/Eisenmajer_article.doc

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www.bold.org.au is the website of **BOLD**

Building Opportunities for Those Who Learn Differently
a Bendigo based, parent driven group.



As a group, BOLD aims to provide:

- ◆ **A raised awareness** for those with learning differences, including specific learning difficulties/disability and dyslexia.
- ◆ **Support** for families whilst also acknowledging the ongoing transitions through various life stages eg. primary to secondary, to workforce, to parenting.
- ◆ **Understanding** of individual learning experiences/styles, recognition of different paths to learning and the impact learning difficulties may have, including behaviour, poor self esteem etc.
- ◆ **Information** through the support group, library resources and forums. We can also provide contact details for resources and assessment services.
- ◆ **Empowerment** for parents and children to follow the best course of action to meet their own needs.
- ◆ **Advocacy** support for parents to interact with professionals to enable the child to realise their full potential.
- ◆ **Community development.** Meetings with local groups/networks - for support and guidance; educational and community needs; meetings with state organisations - to raise the focus of the issues within the rural context.

Log on to the site to access the forum for community discussion.

Workstar



<http://www.workstar.com.au/workstar/index.php/news> was developed out of the need to improve the educational outcomes for school aged children with autism spectrum disorders. Working with the Australian Autism Education and Training Consortium (AAETC), Workstar eLearning solution delivers online training to teachers, schools, parents and carers through the Positive Partnerships program.

Positive Partnerships



<http://www.autismtraining.com.au>

The Positive Partnerships: supporting school aged students on the autism spectrum project delivers two components of the Helping Children with Autism package being implemented by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). The aim of both components is to improve the educational outcomes for school aged children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD).

The two components are:

1. Professional development for teachers and other school staff who are working with students with ASD (Professional Development Component); and
2. Workshops and information sessions for parents and carers of school aged children with ASD (Parent/Carer Component).

Both components are delivered nationally by the Australian Autism Education and Training Consortium (AAETC).

Please visit the website to enquire about attending.

**PARENT WORKSHOP
IN ECHUCA Sept 2010.
See the website for
more details.**



Simple Strategies That Work!

Helpful Hints for All Educators of Students With Asperger Syndrome,
High-Functioning Autism, and Related Disabilities
Written by **Brenda Smith Myles, Diane Adreon and Dena Gitlitz**



“Children and adolescents with Asperger Syndrome and high-functioning autism have great potential, but all too often their abilities are not realized. Simple Strategies That Work! provides effective approaches and strategies that teachers can take to help their student with AS/HFA on the road to success. The book also discusses problems that may arise in the inclusion classroom and how educators can make even small adjustments to accommodate their students with autism, while not interfering with standard classroom routines.”
(product description from www.amazon.com)

A fabulous and practical resource that is user-friendly and easy for any teacher or educator to pick up and put straight into action! Simple Strategies That Work is available through the SPOCAAS library, and will be on display at the SPOCAAS Teacher Event on Wednesday 10th March.

What do you know about the SPOCAAS Library?



- The SPOCAAS Library is open to any person in the community – if you have an interest in ASD resources, you are welcome to join the library!
- The SPOCAAS Library is free of charge to join and the registration process is simple – registration forms will be available at the SPOCAAS Teacher Event, please ask the library helper if you need assistance, or enquire at reception at Community Living & Respite Services in Percy Street, Echuca.
- The SPOCAAS Library currently has around 150 titles on many ASD topics (and related conditions), and with the number of resources growing all the time, it is the perfect place in Echuca to find the resources to support your ASD student.
- The SPOCAAS Library is accessible during the business hours of Community Living & Respite Services, 9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday (excluding Public Holidays), and of course, the many resources of the SPOCAAS Library will be on display during the Teacher Event – please come and browse, we look forward to seeing you!

**Happy Reading,
Elissa Plumridge**

A big thank you to **Isabel Morris**, who took on the task of covering all the new SPOCAAS resources this month – with over 40 new titles, Isabel did a wonderful job covering the books in record time! We also welcome Isabel as the new library assistant – thanks Isabel for your support!





Rebecca Peniston-Bird, Producer/Director of Renegade Films is investigating ASD students and Educational issues and this is an invitation to you to tell her your story.

Initially please contact Rebecca via email bec@renegade.com.au Please include a snap shot of your situation (a paragraph or 2) and email it to Rebecca.

AFSA supports this project and has spoken to Rebecca at length about the poor outcomes of adolescents with an ASD, the many educational issues across Government, Catholic and Independent schools, and much more.



Thanks and regards
Meredith Ward
AFSA President

PO Box 3328 Wheelers Hill Vic 3150
www.afsaconnect.org.au



RISE CENTRE

38 Packham St Shepparton Tel 58221230

Hours: Wednesday and Thursday 10am- 3pm During school term

Largest provider of Resources in the Goulburn Valley for Autism, Asperger Syndrome and Learning Difficulties. Supporting children with additional needs, their families and associated service providers (including schools).

Resources address developmental areas such as:-

- ◆ Language development
- ◆ Fine/Gross motor development
- ◆ Social skills development
- ◆ Imaginative Play Development
- ◆ Literacy/Numeracy Development

The RISE Centre has dedicated and very experienced volunteers who provide support and assistance with Information and referrals regarding Autism/Asperger's Syndrome. Autism/Asperger's Syndrome workshops are conducted on a regular basis. The Rise Centre also incorporates meeting rooms, kitchen, playground , multi purpose room all available for hire for meetings birthday parties, training days, workshops and support meetings.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT SPOCAAS HAS MOVED WITH
COMMUNITY LIVING & RESPITE SERVICES INC TO
26A PERCY STREET ECHUCA
(THE OLD CENTRELINK BUILDING)
All other details remain the same**





A friend and I discussed recently all of the apparent cures and treatments to make our adorable ASD children 'better'. As you can imagine, it was an interesting conversation. When I left her, something she said stuck in my mind that I am going to share as my 'tip of the month'.



She expressed that although there are many, many treatments and 'things' we can do to help our children, it would be unconditional love and support for everything that they do, that would give them a wonderful foundation for growth. Such a simple statement, yet so profoundly important.

As a parent who is very active in learning and educating my children as much as possible, it is easy to get 'bogged down' with all of the ways that I can 'help' them. Now, it is not that I don't love and support my children unconditionally, it is that sometimes, I forget that it IS ok to not know everything about autism. It is ok to not be on guard with how I can turn any occasion into a learning occasion. It is ok that some things are out of my hands with my children.

Because when all is said and done it is the unconditional love and support for everything that they do, that will help them to grow to be the best that they can be.

**This 'TIP OF THE MONTH' is dedicated to
all of the tired MUMS and DADS of our adorable ASD children out there.**



TIP 2: When you are feeling overwhelmed by a situation, surround yourself with positive people so that you can brainstorm with them and come up with some creative ideas. Using the resources and knowledge of others will help you to effectively problem-solve much more efficiently.

About Education Maintenance Allowance (Victoria)

With education being the focus of this newsletter, this brings to mind a common enquiry about Education Maintenance Allowance and why some families with a health care card in their child's name don't receive EMA.

Are you eligible for the EMA based on your child's Health Care Card?

No, your child's Health Care Card is not linked to your financial status, which means it is not valid for the purposes of applying for the EMA. Schools are requested to pass information on to families but if you would like further information, see: www.education.vic.gov.au

Parents not eligible for EMA: If you receive a Carer Allowance (formerly Child Disability Allowance), Mobility Allowance, Remote Area Allowance or any other benefit not income tested by Centrelink you are not eligible for the EMA unless you are also a holder of one of the eligible concession cards listed at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/aboutschool/lifeatschool/ema/eligibility.htm>

***Sourced from Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) State of Victoria
website www.education.vic.gov.au .***



SPOCAAS' March Monday Morning

Come along to SPOCAAS Next Monday Morning Tea and participate in a morning about Keeping Fit, Relaxation and Looking After Yourself!

When: Monday March 22nd 2010 - 10am till 12noon

Where: Moama Senior Citizen's Centre, Martin Street Moama

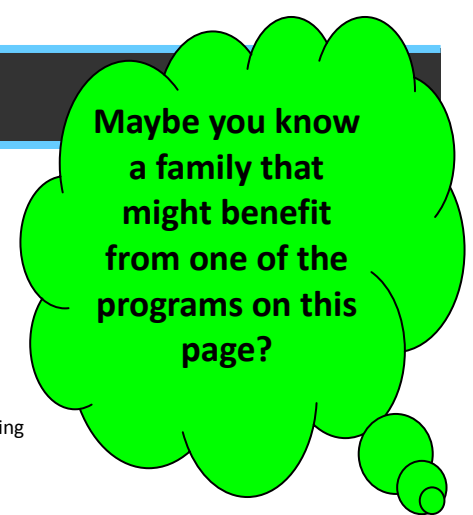
What to bring: A large towel

What to wear: Loose Comfortable Clothing and Shoes.

Facilitator: Cheryl Dedman (Cert III Fitness, Certificate Fitness for Older Adults, Currently studying Certificate Fitness for Children)

Cost: FREE

Onsite child care is available for SPOCAAS families, RSVP is ESSENTIAL for Child Care. If you aren't able to participate in the physical activities, still please come along for the wellbeing discussion! All enquiries to SPOCAAS at spocaas@clrs.org.au or call Linke on 5480 2388



Echuca PlayConnect ASD Playgroup

The Echuca Region PlayConnect Playgroup runs every Thursday during school term time. This playgroup is aimed at families with a child or children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or ASD traits. **A diagnosis is not necessary.**

RSVP is ESSENTIAL.

All enquiries to Linke on 5480 2388 or asd@clrs.org.au.

The PlayConnect Development Worker in 2010 is Elissa Plumridge.

NEW FAMILIES ARE WELCOME



PlayConnect is a playgroup specifically for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder or ASD like symptoms and their families. Giving everyone a place to connect with other families, find ASD information and resources. The children will access play activities that are suited to children with ASD. The group will be facilitated by a Development Worker but has an aim to become self sufficient. Families are encouraged to get involved and have fun!

Echuca MyTime

Echuca MyTime peer to peer support group for carers of children with disabilities is now being held in Echuca on **Wednesday** mornings. MyTime is **YOUR** Time.

If you would like more information or would like to book your place to attend, then please contact the MyTime Facilitator Suellen Betts at Community Living & Respite Services Inc on 5480 2388 or sbetts@clrs.org.au. **NEW FAMILIES ARE WELCOME**

RSVP is essential for Care of Children with MyTime Playhelpers





DATES: March & April 2010

Please note that some events are to be confirmed (TBC) and details are subject to change.
 An updated 2010 Dateline will be sent out to all SPOCAAS Registered Members shortly.
 It is advised that you are on SPOCAAS email list to ensure you are kept informed of changes.

MARCH 2010		APRIL 2010	
Monday 1st 7pm - 9pm	Evening Committee Meeting at CLRS Office Percy St Echuca	Friday 2nd	Public Holiday Good Friday
Friday 5th 7pm	TGIF Social Evening at The Pavilion Moama Bowling Club	Saturday 3rd	SPOCAAS Sausage Sizzle at Moama Safeway
Monday 8th	Public Holiday	Monday 5th	Public Holiday
Tuesday 9th 9.30am - 10.30am	Coffee Club Morning at Café 3564 Echuca	Saturday 10th 9am - 1pm	SPOCAAS Autism Awareness Day Echuca Main Street
Tuesday 9th 7pm - 9pm	Coffee Club Evening at The Echuca Hotel	Monday 12th 7pm - 9pm	Evening Committee Meeting at CLRS Office Percy St Echuca
Wednesday 10th 1pm - 3pm 4pm - 6pm	SPOCAAS Teacher Awareness Event at Echuca Workers & Services Club	Sunday 18th TBC	Men's Day Out Paint Ball Echuca
Tuesday 16th 9.30am - 10.30pm	Coffee Club Morning at Café 3564 Echuca	Tuesday 20th 9.30am - 10.30pm	Coffee Club Morning at Moama Bowling Club Coffee Chop
Tuesday 16th 7pm - 9pm	Coffee Club Evening at The Echuca Hotel	Tuesday 20th 7pm - 9pm	Coffee Club Evening at The Echuca Hotel
Monday 22nd 10am - 12noon	Morning Tea with onsite childcare (see page 6 for details) Moama Senior Citizen's Centre PLEASE RSVP	Mon 26th	Public Holiday Morning Tea at Moama Senior Citizen's TBC
Thursday 25th	SPECIAL OLYMPICS Movie Night	A SPOCAAS Planning Day is to be scheduled and Invitations will be forwarded to families	
Tuesday 30th	SPECIAL OLYMPICS Presentation Night	APRIL IS THE INTERNATIONAL AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH!	



RSVP's & Enquiries

- ◆ Email: spocaas@clrs.org.au
- ◆ Phone: 5480 2388
- ◆ SMS text: 0428 382 668



Child Care

- SPOCAAS Morning Tea provides onsite child care provided fee free by Community Living & Respite Services Inc.
 - ❖ Please introduce your child to CLRS staff on arrival.
 - ❖ Please bring a drink and snack for your child.
- SPOCAAS Evening meetings are Child Free unless otherwise specified.
- Children are welcome to Coffee Club and are the responsibility of the parent.

Venue's

- SPOCAAS meets for its monthly morning tea at Moama Senior Citizen's Centre, Martin St Moama.
- SPOCAAS meets for Evening Committee Meetings at CLRS Offices 26A Percy St Echuca (Old Centrelink Building)
- PLEASE NOTE CHANGE: SPOCAAS Coffee Club will meet at Office 3564 Café in March and at Moama Bowling Club Coffee Shop for April 2010 onwards.
- SPOCAAS Social Night is held at The Pavilion Moama Bowling Club
- Please check venue details for programs you wish to attend.