



NEWS

AUTISM TASMANIA

*Offering life long support to people with
Autism and related disorders.*

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FROM THE EDITOR / SECRETARY.....

Edition 3

The last few weeks have been extremely busy but very exciting. The founder of the Giant Steps programme Ms Darlene Berringer, accompanied by her husband Gary was in Tasmania during February to look at the possibility of establishing a centre here. Darlene is a warm, caring and very sincere woman (with a very patient husband!!) and a knowledge of autism that highly impressed those who were able to meet her or hear her speak.

As a parent with a failed attempt at integration into a new school just behind us, we look forward to the establishment of Giant Steps with hope. My thanks go to Deidre and Kim Triffitt for all their efforts in getting Darlene here and thus giving our son a chance for the future.

During Darlene's visit she spoke of working with autistic children with sleep disorders and suggested the following. Use cotton sheeting (flannelette) with a low pillow and a lambskin or sheepskin under the sheeting. Tuck in the blankets or doona tightly to give the child a feeling of security.

Ros.

COMMITTEE.....

A committee meeting was held recently in Launceston. It was a long day - 10:30am to 5pm, but it means that our monthly meetings can now be purely information days, either in the form of guest speakers or a discussion, but without all the "housekeeping".

PRESIDENT:	Mark Ward	(003) 43 2308 (H) or 31 5024 (W)
VICE PRESIDENTS:	David Ollington	(002) 63 7467
	Rose Clark	(004) 42 3594
SECRETARY:	Ros Ward	(003) 43 2308
TREASURER:	Michael Rutledge	(002) 49 2422 (H)

If you are in need of some assistance or want someone to talk to I am sure any of these people would welcome a phone call. If you would like to contribute or think you can help in any way please feel free to call one of the committee. It really would be appreciated.

ETHICS.....

At the recent committee meeting the subject of ethics was discussed. Many of us in Autism Tasmania (particularly parents) have been frustrated at the lack of services offered to us up to now. However in order for change to occur it is imperative that we adopt a positive attitude towards professionals. The committee asks that in discussions, at meetings etc the names of doctors, institutions, therapists etc are not used.

In order for us to be taken seriously we need credibility with the medical and other professions. What do you think?

MEMBERSHIP.....

The total membership at present stands at forty six. Many thanks to those who have joined. Cash donations amount to \$266.40. If you know of anyone who is interested in this most worthy undertaking please let them know of our existence.

PARENT CONTACTS.....

At one of our meetings it was suggested that we have some means for parents to make contact with other parents, particularly those with children of similar ages.

If you would like the opportunity to be in touch with others, let the secretary know your details. these could be published in future newsletters. We are happy to speak with anyone!

Example	<u>Name</u>	<u>Child's Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Phone</u>
	Mark & Ros	Michael	nearly 7	(003) 43 2308

GIANT STEPS.....

Darlene and her husband spent 10 days in Tasmania in February and she has left many of us committed to the establishment of such a centre. While here, Darlene assessed children, approximately twenty, of whom 12-15 have been accepted into the first intake for when the program begins, most of these will be full time, some part time. Many parents were overwhelmed at what she was able to tell them about their children and very excited at suggestions to try in the interim.

Darlene also interviewed staff, some positions have not yet been finalised. She also met with service club representatives and addressed a public meeting in Deloraine. She spoke to approximately 80 professionals from all parts of the state. She met with the Minister of Education, Mr Beswick MHA and the Secretary of the Department of Community and Health Services, Mr Cleary. She also met with a representative from The Tascare Society who funded part of her airfare here.

Darlene met with many media representatives including the Examiner, Southern Cross, Contact, Sunday Tasmanian and the 7:30 Report. Press coverage was given in the Advocate.

Following on from Darlene's visit an executive committee steering committee were elected at a recent meeting in Deloraine to work towards establishing the centre. Darlene stressed it was necessary to have a commitment from the state government before the centre can operate. If you would like to help, you can write to Mr Beswick, Mr Roger Groom or your new federal member outlining the opportunity we now have and encouraging them to support the concept. Autistic children are entitled to an education that is appropriate. Darlene stressed we have the power - support this initiative - lobby your politicians and lets do something positive!!!!!!

Darlene's commitment to Giant Steps and autistic children is illustrated by the fact that she asked for no payment other than her out of pocket expenses. However the committee are still short of funds to pay outstanding bills. If you have any creative or inspiring fund raising ideas give Deidre a call on 003 68 1128, or perhaps you can help with a donation, send to Deidre Triffitt c/- PO Box 300, Deloraine 7304.

FUND RAISING - GIANT STEPS.....

We have a small fund raiser going for Giant Steps. Enclosed with this newsletter is a Birchalls voucher, where you receive \$1 off your next purchase (over \$10) and Birchalls will donate \$1 to Giant Steps. Happy Shopping!!

WHAT'S COMING UP.....

Please feel free to come along to these gatherings, they should be informative. The format for the meetings will generally be a guest speaker (and questions) in the morning followed by lunch. This gives you the opportunity to chat with others on an informal basis. Please bring a plate to share for the lunch and plan to stay for lunch if you can.

Saturday 3rd April Hobart meeting at Early Special Education, Campbell Street School commencing at 10:30am. Lunch about 12:30pm. Guest speaker Anne Gates. Anne is a teacher at Wentworth Special School who worked with two autistic children last year. Anne has a musical background and is going to speak about how she used music in working with these children.

Saturday 15th May (Please note change of date). Burnie meeting at Miranbeena School 306 Mount Road Burnie commencing at 10:30am. Lunch about 12:30pm. Guest speaker Jenny Mitterbauer. Jenny has a 27 year old son, Robert who suffers from Autism. She will share her experiences and talk of her involvement with Family Information and Advocacy on Disability (Tasmania) (FIAD) and outline the services FIAD offer.

Please note the following changes to the schedule.

Monday 14th June Autism seminars with Dr. Tony Attwood in Hobart. See page 4.

Tuesday 15th June Autism seminars with Dr. Tony Attwood in Hobart. See page 4.

Saturday in July Launceston meeting.

Saturday in August Burnie meeting.

Two successful meetings were held in Burnie and Launceston in February and March. It was great to see a big turnout in Burnie and put faces to names. Miranbeena is an excellent venue if you need to take children with you.

We were fortunate to have a guest speaker at our Launceston meeting, Catherine Merry is the senior occupational therapist at St. Giles in Launceston and gave a very interesting and informative account of Sensory Integration. Thanks Catherine.

COMMONWEALTH GRANT.....

Commonwealth Special Education Program - Autism Education Project

The Commonwealth Special Education Program Committee awarded Autism Tasmania a grant valued at \$3,000 for an Autism Education project to be run in three centres around the state.

It is hoped that a series of state wide seminars / workshops can go ahead in September at about the

DISCLAIMER.....

References in this newsletter to "autistic" is the initiative of the writer and the president of Autism Tasmania does not necessarily agree with the use of this term.

BERYL HAINES AWARD - DR TONY ATTWOOD.....

Note these dates !!!

Dr Tony Attwood will be in Hobart on Monday 14th June (Queens birthday holiday) and Tuesday 15th June to present seminars to parents, professionals and anyone with an interest in Autism.

Dr. Attwood trained as a clinical psychologist in the United Kingdom and was awarded a PhD for his research on the social gestures of autistic children. He has been a practicing clinician in the area of intellectual disability for 17 years. His special interest is the diagnosis of Autism and the development of effective management strategies for the unusual behaviour of such children. He currently works for Intellectual Disability Services in Queensland.

Dr. Attwood spoke at the recent National Autism Conference and those who attended cannot speak highly enough of the material he covered and the quality of his presentation. He is a very captivating public speaker. The program is as follows;

Monday 14th June - Parent Seminar.

9am to 4pm

Aimed at parents and extended family, however teachers, therapists etc. are welcome to attend.

Topics covered are Living with Autism.
 Coping with an autistic child (strategies for coping with problems).
 Trying to understand Autism (how it must feel, trying to see the world from their point of view).

Tuesday 15th June - Professional Seminar.

9am to 4pm

All interested people including doctors, clinic sisters, teachers, therapists parents, and extended family are welcome to attend.

Topics covered are Early diagnosis - signs, symptoms.
 Differential diagnosis.
 New diagnostic techniques.
 Educational strategies for children with Autism.

You are welcome to attend either of both days. Registration forms will be sent out shortly. Phone Elizabeth Rutledge (002) 492422 for any further information.

WINDCHEATERS.....

We are planning to place an order for some windcheaters with a logo and slogan on them. This will help to raise awareness of Autism in the community and will help in a small way to raise some funds for future projects. We propose ordering children sizes 3,4,6,8,10,12 and adult sizes 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20 and 22 in perhaps one or two colours.

A discussion on the design for the windcheaters will take place at the Hobart meeting. Please come prepared with ideas or if you are unable to attend and have some inspiration let the very uncreative secretary know your thoughts beforehand!

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AUTISM.....

Toronto, Canada is the next venue from July 13th to 17th 1993. The VACAA should be contacted as soon as possible by phone 03 885 0533 if you would like more information (and can afford to go). Group travel bookings could be a possibility.