



Newsletter | December 2011

This issue

In brief	1
Message from the EO	2
Program Manager report	4
Recreation program	5
Respite programs	6
Host program	7
Volunteering at Interchange	8
Classifieds	10

In brief

Holiday office hours

Interchange office will be closed from 24 December 2011 (Christmas Eve) and will re-open on Tuesday, 3 January 2012.

The ON CALL phone will be operational during this time but ONLY for changes and emergencies related to existing shifts for this period of closure.

Hello to Katie and Emily!



A very warm welcome to Emily Quinlivan (four months), beautiful daughter of Vivienne and Leon Quinlivan, and Katie Cassar (three months), beautiful daughter of Hayley and Steve Cassar.

A happy reunion was held recently in the Interchange Inner East kitchen with lots of cuddles, chuckles and kids stories. Viv and Hayley are happily thriving in this time of new motherhood. They send all the Interchange families their good wishes for Christmas and the New Year.



Message from the EO

What a fantastic nine months I have enjoyed here at Interchange Inner East. There have been many great experiences and not surprisingly, a few headaches along the way. However as we bid farewell to 2011, I am confident we have made substantial gains to the organisation's framework of operation, and significant investment in systems to support an even stronger Interchange Inner East in 2012.

Interchange is ultimately about people; our valued clients and their wonderful families, our generous volunteers and our skilled and obliging staff, as well as the many friends of Interchange who support and contribute to the important work we undertake.

Survey results

In September, we asked our families to provide feedback about the services they receive from Interchange. Our survey revealed:

- more than one third (110) of our families took the time to outline both their appreciation as well as their concerns and suggestions
- we received a 94% overall service satisfaction rating of "very good or good"
- 96% of participants rated the skills and competence of Interchange Inner East staff as high.
- we are attracting, recruiting, training and supporting high quality staff who do meet the needs of our clients, to a high level of competence.

Survey participants also told us they needed:

- timelier communication about planned recreation activities
- more camps

- more choice and options for recreational activities
- more socialisation for individual clients
- more activities for children under 12
- and more programs for 18+
- more focus on physical activities and good nutrition
- regular up to date information about respite funding for children with disabilities.

Thank you sincerely to those who supported this important service quality initiative. We now have an important benchmark to gauge improvement to services in the future. I wish we could guarantee improvement in all these areas but much is dependent of us attracting more resources. We will do our best though!

Grant funding

Importantly, we have applied for two large government grants; one to grow our youth volunteering capacity to support Recreation Programs into the future, and the other to extend our school holiday program for school-aged children with high to complex needs. How fantastic it would be if we were successful! We have nearly exhausted the Aldi grant and many areas of operation have benefited from this wonderful and unusual prize of \$10,000 of Aldi shopping for the year.

Improved processes

The biggest 'shout out' achievement for us here in the office is the successful implementation of our new community software package, Carelink+. This means staff will no longer need to spend hours managing rosters, timesheets and invoices manually. There are big smiles starting to appear on staff faces as we fully realise the freedom this will provide, enabling renewed focus on program review, service growth and development.

With the additional resources and time saving of the new system, we also will be able to focus on addressing some of the issues identified in the survey. We have

been working with a wonderful consultant, Donna Orchard, for several months now and she has assisted with the huge task of transforming the 31 years of data collection and complicated procedures here into the streamlined framework offered by this new system. This development is very important for Interchange if we are to meet the challenges of the disability sector in the future, especially in managing Individual Support Packages and multiple forms of funding.

Christmas party

One recent highlight was the Christmas Party, which almost became an 'Aqua WipeOut', with torrential rain threatening its successful continuation. By some amazing luck, we enjoyed two hours and 57 minutes of respite from the rain, which enabled the fun and festivities to proceed.

There was such a fantastic sense of community and teamwork from the wonderful volunteers who helped erect marquees in the rain, including the Apex barbeque boys, the balloon brigade, the face painter, the moist motorcyclist gang, the masseuse, Piggy the Bendigo Bank mascot and his four friendly Bendigo Bank staff helpers. We heard music from DJ Ben as well as Liam Aberly and Maurice (performing their original song). An amazing belly dancer, a crafty magician and the wonderful animals of the petting zoo kept us entertained. Our thanks to Laura the Coffee Chick who helped us stay warm and refreshed. The feeling of satisfaction we as staff experienced at the joy and pleasure provided to our clients is one we will cherish.

A special commendation to Amy Hurren whose project leadership helped make this day such a success; it was a brilliant staff effort. We were also able to share many dozens of unused fresh sausages at Refuges for the Homeless across North Melbourne later that evening!

Thanks

A special note of thanks once again to our wonderful Committee of Management,

who continue to provide governance and direction to Interchange Inner East. They contribute time and energy volunteering to attend meetings and working groups to ensure that IIE continues to thrive. Our Annual General Meeting was a great success with our keynote speaker Dr Richard Eisenmajer, a specialist in Autism Spectrum Disorder, providing a stimulating and thought provoking presentation.

Every Australian Counts

I wish to draw your attention to the Every Australian Counts campaign, which is the formal driver behind the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). I urge you to consider joining this campaign as concerned Australians unite to advocate for the development of this scheme which would provide people with a disability and their families and carers with the regular care, support, therapy and equipment they need. As a Medicare-type scheme, it would provide a secure and consistent pool of funds for these services and support. For more information, please visit everyaustraliancounts.com.au.

Season's greetings

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish each of you and your families, the very best for this festive season and for the year to follow. Many of you experience huge challenges and pressures, often exacerbated during this time. My hope is that your connection to Interchange Inner East provides you with some confidence that we are here to support you to the very best of our ability and that we will continue to strive to extend that support into the future.

A Merry Christmas to you all.

Marie Lugg
Executive Officer

Program Manager report

What a busy six months it has been and I have thoroughly enjoyed getting to know the people involved with Interchange.

We have recently updated our staff and volunteer code of conduct with an amendment to the dress code during summer. Our aim is always to meet the needs of clients for meaningful recreation and respite activities whilst providing fun, socialisation and stimulation.

Since our staff support our clients in a variety of activities and venues, it is very important that they are aware of safety and hygiene at all times. We expect that staff and volunteers will dress in a respectful, clean and neat manner suitable for duties required of their role including the wearing of appropriate footwear that is non-slip, and has secure straps. Thongs are out, unfortunately.

Recruitment

Over the past six months, I have recruited a number of new staff to the Interchange Respite Support Worker team, mainly within the Respite services. This will help with the busy school holiday period coming up over January. The recruitment process is ongoing and we are always looking for people with experience in the field to join us in supporting our clients and their families.

Volunteers

Kim, our Volunteer Coordinator, has been busy contacting our existing recreation volunteers and reviewing their availability and goals towards volunteering on our weekend groups. They are a great asset to the recreation program and we are hoping to build this group of positive and supportive people.

After 4 program

The After 4 program has finished up for the year too. We hold this program every Thursday after school at Interchange. We said goodbye to some great staff and clients and welcomed new ones. The After 4 family is a happy, supportive and fun group of people and they get the opportunity to develop specific skills such as cooking, gardening, sports, art and craft as well as building new friendships. In particular, we wish to thank four of the Canterbury Bendigo Bank staff, Matthew, Fiona, Bev and Helen, who have volunteered in their own time to support this program over the past few months.

I am looking forward to 2012 and I hope to meet more Interchange staff and families along the way. If you have any questions, or would just like a chat, please do not hesitate to call me.

I wish everyone a lovely Christmas and happy holidays.

Clare O'Sullivan
Program Manager



Recreation program

It has been a very busy Term 4 with camps and activities run each weekend throughout. Participants in the Young Adults program have been exploring Boomerang Horse Riding Ranch, Tootgarook holiday house in Rye, Wandarren Farm Stay at Mt Glasgow, Trout Fishing, live music outings and a range of other activities from markets to the Melbourne Zoo.

The Adolescent Program is gearing up for the January holiday program with a range of activities in which to be involved, such as indoor rock climbing, a day at the tennis, exploring the city, creative dance, and drama workshops. We are looking forward to the holiday program being a time for participants to try fun activities and have an opportunity to socialise with a lively and friendly group of people.

Despite the weather, our Christmas party went off without a hitch - it seemed like everyone had a good time! A great big thank you to everyone who helped out on the day. Liam Abery's fantastic debut song was a huge hit, as was the Bollywood dancer who managed to inspire many to get up and try the smooth Bollywood moves. As always, the special appearance from Santa was a highlight for many, ending the Christmas Party just before the rain poured down once again.

We in the recreation office would like to wish you all a very happy Christmas and look forward to seeing/speaking to you all in the New Year!

Best wishes.

Amy Hurren and Kim Nguyen
Recreation Program Coordinators

Have you considered banking with Bendigo Bank?

On mentioning this promotion to our branch staff, Balwyn, Canterbury, Ashburton and Surrey Hills Community Bank® branches will contribute the following amounts to Interchange:

- \$250 for every approved Bendigo home loan referred to us
- \$50 for every approved and funded personal loan
- \$25 for every approved Bendigo Credit Card application referred to us
- \$10 for every new business or term deposit account opened and held for three months
- \$5 for every new Piggy or Ultimate account opened.

Balwyn, Canterbury, Ashburton and Surrey Hills Community Bank® branches also offer family and friends of your local school who mention this promotion to our branch staff:

- 0.50% discount on loans \$50,000 to \$249,999
- 0.70% discount on loans \$250,000 and above.



Respite programs

We have seen many changes in our office in 2011 and many improvements along the way! Anna Wylie was a very valued member of our team, coordinating for families from January to June. We were very sad to see Anna leave her coordinator position, but thrilled that she then moved into a Respite Support Worker role providing one-to-one support for many families, including some she had previously worked with in her coordinator role.

In July, we welcomed Kim Nguyen to the team. Kim is both a recreation and respite coordinator, and is the key contact for a number of families within the respite program. In August, we welcomed Bronwyn Copping into a three-day week coordinating position. Both Kim and Bronwyn are wonderful assets to our team, bringing with them a vast range of experience, qualifications and new ideas, which have already allowed us to make improvements to our program.

New technology

The year has also seen us move with technology, investigating the best way to upgrade our rostering and invoicing processes. With the rapid growth of the Individual Care Program, the need for a software system to replace our outdated manual processes was vital. We are pleased to announce that from 14 December 2011, we will manage all rostering and invoicing through Carelink+. This will increase our service delivery efficiency and accuracy and we are very excited about the possibilities going into 2012!

Holiday requests

We are currently very busy organising and filling holiday respite requests, so if you have any requests please contact us

as soon as possible so we can book your preferred respite support workers.

If you require some additional support for holiday funding, the Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre may be able to assist. Give them a call on 1800 059 059 to discuss your requests.

Looking into the New Year we understand many of your regular weekday requests may change. Please let us know any changes as soon as you can. As many of our respite support workers have study commitments, their availability may not be finalised until late February. We will, as always endeavour to maintain consistency in workers, however please be aware that this may not be possible at all times.

Christmas party

It was wonderful to see so many families and children from our respite programs joining us for the Interchange Christmas party on 26 November. Despite the wintry weather, the Christmas spirit was with us and all had a fun day! Working in the office, we get to know many families over the phone so we look forward to the Christmas party where we can meet everyone face to face and catch up in person. Thank you to all who come along!

We wish you a very Merry Christmas and a healthy and happy New Year!

Bronwyn, Danielle, Stephanie and Kim Respite Programs

Host program

I am pleased to welcome our newest volunteers who have recently joined the Host Program.

- Belinda is in her late 20s with some free time on weekends, and hosts Emily. They are looking forward to lots of trips to the local swimming pool, followed up by a thickshake at McDonalds and then a walk in the park.
- Cassie is a young university student, and she likes taking Isabelle out for hot chocolates. She even took her to the Miley Cyrus concert in July this year.
- Anne has been hosting Ashleigh since September and plans to visit the local swimming pool regularly.
- Kim and Cameron, and their daughters Ruby and Tess, have just started hosting Mairead. They met at the Interchange Christmas party, and took her to another Christmas party a week later. They're really getting into the spirit of the festive season.
- Cindy and Trent, and their three boys Ben, Zac and Sam, have started hosting Sheena, who really enjoys being part of this busy household where there is always some fun to be had.

We hope you have a long and enjoyable experience with the Host program!

Farewell to host volunteers

We say farewell to two families

- Kristen and Malcolm have participated in the Host Program since 2002. Their most recent host match is with Sheena. They will be finishing at the end of this year as they are moving to Queensland. We wish them well in their new life in sunny Queensland.

- Kathleen and Adam have been hosting Rachel for four years; they will be finishing at the end of this year as their family circumstances have changed. We thank them for their support.

Training

We are pleased to announce that in 2012 we are able to offer some **free training** to all volunteers, families and staff in areas such as first aid, performing CPR, and manual handling. I would encourage all Host volunteers and family members to take advantage of this training opportunity. Please let me know as soon as possible which dates and times you would like to attend. We will offer on a first come, first served basis.

Apply First Aid

Saturday, 18 February
9:00 am – 4:30 pm
Saturday, 25 February
9:00 am – 4:30 pm

Note: you must attend both dates, 15 hours in total. Lunch provided

Perform CPR

Saturday, 3 March
9:30 am – 12:30 pm

Diabetes Training

Saturday, 21 April
Six hours – time to be confirmed

Safe Manual Handling

Saturday, 12 May
9:30 am – 12:30 pm
Saturday, 12 May
1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Location for all courses:

Interchange Inner East
2 Kendall Street
Canterbury

Christmas party

Many of our Host families and volunteers enjoyed the annual Interchange Christmas party, despite a morning downpour and the threat of heavy rain. Everyone had a great time and I hope we see even more people from the Host Program at next year's party. We have a

team of teenage volunteers from local schools, whom have had a fun day practicing their balloon twisting and dancing skills.

Hosting hours

Host families, please remember to phone or email details of the hours you hosted for the month, including the date, start time and finish time. This also includes any hours you did over the past few months that our office has not received.

I am always interested to hear about your host visits and any feedback from parents and host families is welcome, so feel free to give me a call for a chat anytime!

Do you know someone who would like to become a host?

We are always looking for new host volunteers to join our program. Our volunteers can be single or couples, with or without children. A fun and enthusiastic attitude is a must! Our website now contains more detailed information about hosting, so if you know of anyone who is interested in finding out more; encourage them to visit the website, and to call me for a chat.

I would like to wish everyone a relaxed, happy and safe Christmas, and I look forward to working with you all in 2012.

Kathy Hewitt
Host Program Coordinator

Volunteering at Interchange!

There are so many ways that volunteers can support Interchange Inner East. We acknowledge and thank each and every one of them! If anyone is interested in becoming a volunteer at IIE, please call Marie Lugg. We usually start with some checks and paperwork, to get to know what you are interested in doing, and how we can best match you to our programs here at Interchange Inner East.

We have great fun with our volunteers who are one of our most precious commodities.

Some examples of volunteering:

Committee of Management: responsible for Governance and the strategic direction of Interchange Inner East

- Doug Maunder (Parent, President and Finance, Risk Management, Auditing sub-committee)
- Julie Mitchell (Parent, Vice President and Marketing sub-committee)
- Ramona De Niese (Secretary and Quality sub-committee)
- Marco Kohne (Treasurer and Finance, Risk Management & Auditing sub-committee)
- Anthea Robinson (Finance, Risk Management & Auditing sub-committee)
- David Benwell (Finance, Risk Management & Auditing sub-committee)
- David Bailey (Parent, Finance, Risk Management & Auditing sub-committee)
- Nora Sparrow (Quality sub-committee)
- Kathryn Stubbings (Parent, Quality sub-committee)
- Maureen Withers (Parent, Marketing sub-committee)
- Tony O'Brien (Parent, Marketing sub-committee)
- Carole Grace (Staff Liaison)

Committee members volunteer their time and skills and are elected on a rotation basis annually at the Annual General Meeting. Our meetings occur

monthly in the evenings. Expressions of interest to join the committee are always welcome.

Committee members can also choose to offer additional input through specialised sub-committees, which focus on key strategic projects with designated outcomes throughout the year. One good example is the Quality sub-committee, which worked on the Participant and Family survey questions, to help develop the survey questions, analyse the feedback, and then develop quality improvement plans to address issues raised.

Administration support

- Helen Elliot supports Recreation Program administration on a weekly basis – four hours a week
- June Kavanagh supports many programs and activities, newsletter mail-outs, general ledger, payroll (she is available to us on a flexible needs base, which is fantastic for both June and also IIE)
- Devi Sellawahi offers data entry support once a week
- Marina Stumpf, (International student) has offered us intensive data entry support with Carelink +, in between work and commencing studies next year
- Alex Mitchell helped in planning the Christmas Party

Program support

- Claire Fiddian and Dan Craddock offer IIE on-going consultation and support around the website and Claire helps with publications, such as our quarterly newsletter and annual report.
- Bendigo Bank staff from the Canterbury branch including Craig Pitt, Fiona Pattan, Helen Ross, Bev Bjurnesjo, and Matthew Thiessen volunteer at the After 4 program each week, supporting group participants and other Interchange activities.
- Students from Swinburne helped with the website, Sarah Manger and Kel Ang (year 10 students from Fintona) volunteer in the office once

a month and Allan Liu (Year 11) helps in our programs. Another happy band of students led by Tim Hewitt support the Balloon Creations each Christmas Party. Jon Adams also assists by sharing information relating to web-based surveys.

- The Recreation Program is supported on camps and activities by Ting Ting Cao, Lena Dao, Tommy Im, Jonathon Jaboor, Megan Murray, Tess Rowley, Stella Pavlou and Holly Wightwick
- Then there are the wonderful parents such as Lawrie Barnett, who runs a printing business and offers us so much pro-bono work.
- We are seeking to grow our volunteering base so if you are someone or know someone who would like to volunteer with IIE... please get in touch!



Classifieds

Families Together is a group of parent who have children with an Autism spectrum disorder. The group meets once a month at the Shopfront, 90 Station Street, Ferntree Gully from 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm. Evenings usually involve informal discussions or guest speakers from service providers in the community.

Myriam Bejjani, psychologist from Illoura Early Intervention Centre, facilitates the group. New members are welcome! If interested please email myriam.bejjani@knox.vic.gov.au or call 03 9758 7991. Our first meeting for 2012 will take place on Monday, 6 February. We hope to see you there.

Kids are free at the Zoo!

Zoos Victoria has welcomed a move by the Victorian Government to introduce free admission for children under 16 years of age to Melbourne Zoo, Healesville Sanctuary and Werribee Open Range Zoo on weekends, Victorian public holidays and Victorian Government school holidays.

The Association for Children with a Disability has recently launched its latest sibling publication. *Growing Together: a parent guide to supporting siblings of children with a disability*. The booklet is a great resource for families and professionals. It includes stories written by siblings and parents about their experiences.

The main topics in the booklet include:

- sib feelings and experiences
- how parents can support sibs
- providing information to sibs
- acknowledging sib feelings
- keeping sibs safe
- connecting with other sibs
- sibs as individuals
- supporting sibs at school
- when a brother or sister is in hospital
- when a brother or sister is seriously ill
- talking about death and dying

- when a child dies
- talking about the future
- looking after yourself
- resilient families.

For more information, visit acd.org.au.

Are you a mum with a child who has an ASD? Join Mums Connect!

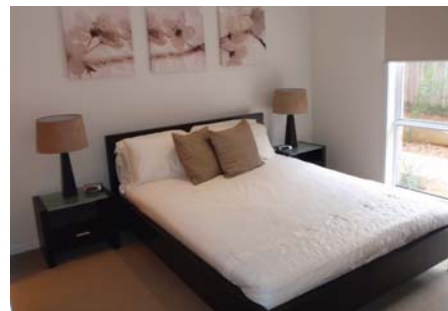
Meet on the fourth Saturday morning of the month (except school holidays) from 9:30 am – 11:30 am at Power Neighbourhood House, 54 Power Avenue, Ashwood. For more information, visit mumsconnect.blogspot.com.

Diners Club

Adults with a disability residing in the eastern metro region are invited to join the Diners Club. Eastern Diners Club goes out for dinner to various restaurants in the region every third Saturday of the each month. Full membership is \$12 p.a. For more information, please contact Guy Brown at Scope on 03 9902 1161.

Rosebud Retreat

...a stylish home away from home



Located on the Mornington Peninsula, the Rosebud Retreat offers a stylish three-bedroom home accommodating up to eight people. Cost is \$170 per night.

Priority will be given to ageing carers and mental health carers. The retreat is available to Care Connect clients, their carers, as well as external agencies. Bookings on 03 9362 8000 or rosebudretreat@careconnect.org.au.

Christmas party 2011!

