

## Norwest News January 2011

### Directors Update

Welcome to our first Newsletter for 2011! I hope everyone has had a great start to the New Year and are starting to settle back into the swing of things nicely. We have been very busy at the centre with so many things going on in the first few weeks back. All of the children seem to be settling in very easily which is making it an easy transition process for parents, children and staff. Everyone has adapted to the new changes throughout the centre and we have had so much great feedback from a number of parents regarding our new babies room. We appreciate all the feedback that we can get - everyone's input is of great value, especially those of you who have suggestions for improvement or additions. We are particularly excited about our upcoming Parent Information Night in February and our Art and Craft Exhibition in March when we'll get a chance to chat with many of you.



### Limited Vacancies for 2011

We have a small amount of limited positions still available for 2011, so get in quick if you are wanting to add additional days or know someone who is looking for care. Just speak with Ashley or Elise to discuss availability.

### Sun safety: Hats, Sunscreen and shirts.

Sun Safety is very important for your children during these warm & sunny months. We are a 'sunsafe' centre, as certified by the NSW Cancer Council, and as such, we have strict guidelines on how to keep your children 'sun safe' during summer.

Please remember that it is the responsibility of parents to ensure their children arrive at the centre with **sunscreen** on. We have a large pump of sunscreen in the foyer for parents to apply on arrival if you didn't already do it at home as a part of your morning routine. As per our policy/procedure, morning sunscreen is your responsibility – we don't apply sunscreen in the morning. Room staff will reapply sunscreen on all children about 20 minutes before going outside in the afternoons.

We also ask that all parents make sure that their children are coming to the centre with a labelled **hat**. In the Ocean and Rainforest Rooms we have labelled hat pockets for each child (childrens hats can stay at the centre unless they are taken home for a wash) and in the Bush Room each child has their own locker so hats can stay in there. If your child does not have a hat we do have some spares, however after 3 days of wearing a spare hat the child will be given a centre hat and a charge of \$8.00 will be added to your account.

Finally, it can be very tempting to dress your child in a 'singlet top' or a 'tank top' during summer. Please remember that all children need to be in tshirts/tops with **capped sleeves**, to ensure that their shoulders are protected adequately from the sun.





## Labels

All items of clothing and other belongings that are brought to the centre need to have a clear label with your child's name. Anything that is found and is unidentifiable by staff will be placed in the lost property basket. This basket gets emptied on a regular basis so please keep an eye on it should any of your child's belongings go missing.



The cheapest, and most effective way of labelling your child's clothing is to buy a **laundry marker** from the supermarket. You can then easily write your child's NAME (not just initials) clearly on their clothes so that our staff can return any misplaced clothing to you. There are also a number of companies who do great labels at an affordable price including:

- <https://www.stuckonyou.biz>
- <http://www.labelkingdom.com.au/>
- <http://www.brightstarkids.com.au/>
- <http://www.identikid.com.au/>
- <http://www.ozlabels.com.au>

## Family Pigeon Holes

All family pockets/pigeon holes have been updated – each family has one in the foyer, which we use for printed communication, and your child's art/ craft work. All families have a printed copy of their first statement for the year in their pocket this week. If you don't seem to have one, or can't find your family pocket please see Ashley or Elise. Remember to empty your pocket regularly.

## Policy and Procedure changes

We are currently in the process of updating our policy folder to include the new room changes, staffing and fee structure. At the end of 2010 we updated our policies on Digital Media, Accidents, Fees and Charges and Cleaning. A copy of all these changes was on display in the foyer along with a sheet of paper for any parent input or feedback. We encourage all suggestions that you may have, you can do this by simply writing them on the paper provided, alternately you can always speak with someone in the office or send us an email. Please remember that it is up to you to stay aware of our policy changes.

## News from the kitchen

Michele's famous cookbook is still available for \$20. It has been a huge hit so far with over 50 copies sold in the last week of 2010. Please see Michele or office staff if you wish to purchase one. They have great menu ideas for the family and include many of the delicious meals that are cooked here for the children. We've had some great feedback from the families who have already experimented with the recipes!

Michele is going to have some forms available outside her kitchen for anyone who would like to give ideas on meals. Once you have filled out a form you may give it to Michele or pop it in the red communication tin outside the office.

Please remember to bring back your 'All About Me' Forms so that all of our information is as upto date as possible. If you have any concerns about food allergies for your child, please speak with Michele.

## Breakfast

At the centre we do not provide breakfast for children, however are more than happy to supervise them while they eat a healthy breakfast from home. We understand that being busy parents, it's often more convenient to feed your children after they leave home in the mornings. However, as our staff are focusing on welcoming and settling children into the centre each morning, they cannot be responsible for one-on-one feeding at this time of day.

If your child needs to be fed prior to 8am, you have several options:

- If they are able to self-feed – eg a bottle, finger foods – pack them into a disposable container and staff will supervise the group of children who are eating breakfast. Please note that these foods need to be given to staff and not left in bags. They also need to be easy to manage foods – nothing that can cause too much mess for the staff to clean up (eg cereals, yogurts) a list of suitable foods is provided below.
- If they are not able to self-feed you can sit with them at the centre and feed them prior to departing. Staff will provide you with a seat / high chair and a bib.



### Suitable Breakfast Options:

Fruit pieces  
Toast / Crumpets  
Sandwiches  
Crackers  
Fruit bars

### Unsuitable options:

Farex, porridge, cereal with milk  
Yogurt  
Anything that staff are required to make up  
Anything that staff are required to provide cutlery for, or wash up afterwards  
Fast foods / unhealthy foods

Please remember that we are a nut free zone, so no nut spreads (peanut butter, nutella etc) unfortunately this has to be thrown out immediately. Please remember to check muesli bars etc as some contain nuts.



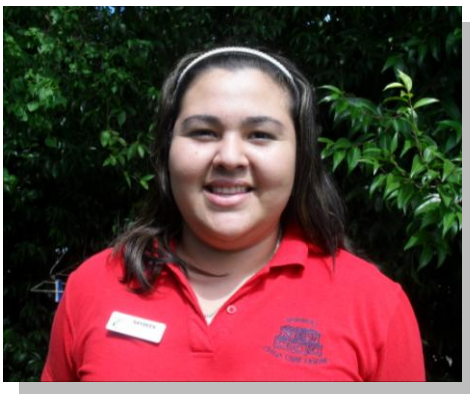
## Open Door Policy

Parents and family are always welcome at the centre at any time. If you would like to come in and do an activity with the children, speak to the staff in your room and write your name on the calendar at the front of the room or near the entrance of the room. You may like to participate in activities including:

- Reading a story to the children – perhaps one from home?
- Doing some gardening
- Doing some culturally significant cooking
- Teaching them a new song
- Bringing in photos or souvenirs from a trip (overseas or interstate) or visit (zoo or aquarium) with your kids

## Staff News

**Elise** joined us at the end of last year stepping into the Admin manager's roll. A huge thank you to Tasha for her help - given at short notice when Sarah moved to Melbourne, until we found a full time replacement – Tasha continues to work at Top Ryde Early Learning part time. Elise is now on board full time and will take care of all your admin and office enquiries. Please remember Elise processes and manages fees and accounts Tuesdays and Fridays.



**Naydeen** started with us at the centre as a student and after being so popular with the staff because of her hard work and great relationship and love of the children and that she loved doing her practicum with us, we have invited her on board the team as a part time employee. Naydeen will be internal relief and you will see her smiling face around on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Naydeen will continue to work through her Early Childhood degree (along with Taryn, Ashley and Rebecca Lee) this year.

## Staff Training

As always, our team are all continuing their professional development. Trained staff are better able to provide comprehensive educational programs and incorporate them into a safe, loving, play-based environment.

- Nesha attended (and presented at) an **Early Childhood Leadership** Conference in Sydney late last year. This was an outstanding 2 days of challenging and thought provoking speakers!
- Fernanda, Michele and Rebecca went to a workshop on **Moving Bodies** – getting the kids active in fun and engaging ways.
- Elise underwent training in **Qikkids** ( fees/accounts system) and will soon be doing Advanced training.
- During the break many continued their study at the **Certificate III** and **Diploma** of Children's Services.
- Coming soon – Becky and Allison will be finishing their Bronze Medallion. Nesha and Ashley are going on Early Years Learning Framework workshops and several of our staff will be going to Guiding Children's Behaviour, Visual Arts in Early Childhood, and Communication workshops.

## Staff Member of the Month

Our staff member of the month for January is Monique! She is doing a fantastic job of stepping into the role of room leader, and managing the changes we've made to the room this year (like our super babies room). Well done Monique!



## Spotlight on.....Nesha!

For our newer families, many of you may not know much about Nesha our licensee, so we figured we'd give you an insight into one of our leadership team.

**Name:** Nesha O'Neil

**Background:** I've grown up around Early Childhood all of my life (in fact, I was at my grandmother's centre when I was just two weeks old!). I've worked in the music industry, in recruiting, in project management and finance, as well as occupational rehabilitation and psychology.

I've owned this centre, along with my sister Ngaire, since December 2003 – we inherited it from our father. For over 5 years I ran this centre and Midson Road Child Care Centre in Epping – and nearly 2 years ago bought Top Ryde Early Learning in Ryde with Lorna (one of our former

directors here at Norwest). I'm the third generation of people in my family working in Early Childhood – my grandmother had centres in Sydney over 50 years ago, my parents ran several centres throughout the years...and now me!

I also write lots of industry articles, speak at conferences for Early Childhood Professionals and am an active campaigner for Early Childhood Issues such as pay equity for teachers, and EC for children of refugees.

**Qualifications:** I'm a study nerd.....Bachelor of Arts (Psychology and English), Master of Arts (Psychology), Post Graduate Certificate (Counselling), Diploma in Children's Services, Post Graduate Certificate in Special Education, Inclusive Support and I have done well over 300 short courses and workshops in the past 10 years. I'm a full member (for over 10 years) of the Australian Psychological Society. And I'm also a registered rehab consultant, psychologist, JP and WIRES carer.

**Kids:** I have two children, who you'll see around the centre. Olivia is three, and Dylan is about to turn five, and is off to school in a couple of weeks (argh!).

**Family:** I live with my husband (Rick) a talented musician, my two children and my dog Jackie. And all of the possums in our roof..... and the huge spiders in our yard.

**Something you don't know about me:** I read a lot of books. Significantly more than a normal person, and more than most people who consider themselves readers.....



## Entertainment Books

With all the great fundraising that we do throughout the year we will be doing the entertainment books again this year. Details of when we will be selling them will be coming in the next few months. Please let all your family and friends know in case they would like you to get one for them too. The Entertainment Book is a local restaurant and activity guide which provides valuable 25% to 50% off and 2-for-1 offers from the finest restaurants, activities and accommodation throughout Australia and New Zealand. In addition you can get 5% off all Coles purchases. You can enjoy valuable offers for the things you like to do every day. All money raised through fundraising goes directly to buy fantastic extras for your children – eg performances, equipment and experiences.

## Referrals

With a group of new starters to welcome into the centre, we thought we would remind you that if you refer someone to the centre and they enrol - you are eligible for a massage voucher. If you have encouraged someone to come to our centre and they have enrolled, but we have forgotten to give you your voucher please come and see Elise or email her.



## Australia Day

Please note that the centre will be closed on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> Jan for the Australia Day Public holiday. We will be having our Australia Day celebrations here at the centre on Tuesday. The theme will be green and gold and we have a number of fun activities planned for the day.

## Queensland Flood Appeal

We've undertaken 2 activities at the centre to help raise funds for families and children who have suffered during the QLD and VIC floods.

With the children we've baked jam-drop cookies, and put them in small bags in a basket in the foyer. For a gold coin donation, you can take home some cookies - all money raised will be forwarded on - and you get delicious cookie goodness to enjoy during the day, or on the way home.

In addition, we've got a raffle going. The lovely Lyn has donated a great [FLAVOUR WAVE TURBO OVEN](#).

Brand new, still in its box, worth \$200. They're a space-saving, cooking wizz! Amy Hallinan has also donated a Nutrimetics basket of goodies for the second prize winner (thanks Amy!).



We will be raffling this fantastic item and all funds raised going to flood victims. Tickets are available in the foyer - \$2 each or 3 for \$5. We hope that you can support our fundraising efforts!

## What happens when we don't have your CRN details?

As a part of your enrolment documentation, we require a CRN for you and your child. If we do not have this information within the first 2 weeks of attendance, your attendance details are not forwarded to DEEWR/FAO. This means that you will not be receiving CCB (Child Care Benefit - a reduction in your weekly fees) nor CCR (Child Care Rebate - 50% of your fees paid back after each quarter). We have given all of our families an information sheet about CCB/CCR with their printed account information this week - and can give you even more information if you're still confused. If you contact us after a significant period of time with the details it requires HOURS of work to resubmit all of the information - it is an incredibly time consuming and frustrating exercise for us (particularly since it could have been done easily at the time of enrolment). As such our policy is that you will be charged an administration fee of \$250 prior to us doing the work - and this doesn't actually cover our costs!

In addition, if we have any trouble 'formalising' the enrolment (ie connecting to the DEEWR system) we contact you to have the issues resolved. These issues need to be resolved ASAP for the same reasons. Please help us to ensure that you get all of the money back from the government to which you are entitled by ensuring that your enrolments are formalised. Elise will be double checking everyone's details next week and contacting you if there are any issues. Thanks!



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*Setting the Standard for High Quality, Affordable Child Care in the Hills District*



## Parent Information Night

We are holding a Parent information Night the 16<sup>th</sup> February. This is a great opportunity to hear about all the fantastic things that are going on at the centre, and it also gives you the opportunity to contribute ideas and feedback as well. As a part of our partnering with families, we ask that all families send along at least one adult, so that everyone knows about the centre. It's a good opportunity to send the parent who doesn't normally do drop off/ pick up, to meet and chat with our team. If you are not able to attend, please speak with staff.

### Dates for your diary

26<sup>th</sup> Jan – Centre CLOSED for Australia Day  
8<sup>th</sup> Feb – 1<sup>st</sup> Bush Room Sports Day for 2011  
16<sup>th</sup> Feb – Parent Information Night  
4<sup>th</sup> March – 2010 School Reunion  
18<sup>th</sup> March - Art and Craft Exhibition  
22<sup>nd</sup> March – Grandparents' Afternoon Tea

### WANTED : BOOSTER SEATS AND CAR RESTRAINTS

If anyone has children who have grown out of their car restraints or booster seats and would like to get rid of them, the lovely Rachel is looking for some. Please send an email to the centre so we can pass Rachel's details onto you.

### Portfolios

Please remember to return all Dreams and Goals sheets to the staff in your child's room so they can be added to their portfolios. This year we have decided to trial an electronic portfolio. The wonderful Bush Room staff have put their hands up to be our guinea pigs so the Koalas and Bilbies will be trialing the new portfolios this year. Dreams and Goals sheets have been emailed to all parents in the Bush Room. More information about how we will be doing this will be coming shortly. Who knows, next year the entire centre might be getting electronic portfolios. This will save us mountains of paper which is better for our environment and saves us money on portfolios allowing us to spend it on other great things for the children. If you have any questions regarding the electronic portfolios feel free to ask Ashley, Amanda or Rebecca.



### AIRPORT SHUTTLE NORTH WEST

Servicing the Upper North Shore, Hills and Parramatta districts.

Sam Khal

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[airportshuttlenorthwest@yahoo.com.au](mailto:airportshuttlenorthwest@yahoo.com.au)

[www.asnw.com.au](http://www.asnw.com.au)

### Email Communication

Email is the quickest and most effective way for us to communicate with our families. We can email you our newsletters, accounts statements and reminders – and can include both parents, and even grandparents in our communications. If you are not receiving your newsletters/ statements via email (remembering that next Tuesday is the first emailed statement for this year) please contact Elise to update your details, or add an additional recipient.



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## Direct Debit

Thank you to those families who have already returned their direct debit sign up forms. Our first run will happen next Tuesday - i.e. the amount will be debited AFTER your statement is sent out (giving you time to contact us and make queries etc) and, unless otherwise stated, the amount debited will be the 'amount owing' on your statement. By midyear we will be transitioning all families from direct deposit to direct debit – and we can give you lots more information if you need it.

## Sign In and Out

Please don't forget to 'sign in' as you arrive in the morning and 'sign out' as you depart. If you are not signed in, we are meant to record that day as an absence for CCB/CCR (even if your child is here!). In addition, if there is an emergency – e.g. a fire or evacuation – we won't be looking for your child!

## Library

We've got a brilliant little library here at Norwest for you and your children. For parents we've got some lovely resource books that you can borrow. For children, we've got a large library of top quality children's books that you can borrow overnight or for a week. For a joining fee of just \$5, you have access to all of our books! It's a cost effective way of introducing new books to your children, and helps you find that '10 minutes a day' to share a book with your kids. See Elise or Ashley for details.



## Play based learning

There has been some fantastic research recently on the benefits of play-based learning for children. We'll put together these articles and share them with you in the coming weeks. It's great to know that our talented teachers are giving your children the best start to a life time of enjoyable learning, and a head start on cognitive and problem solving skills.

## Feedback

Finally....you know that we love to hear your feedback here at the centre – the good, the bad and even the ugly. Often there are things that come up for families – questions, concerns, annoying little things, that aren't shared at the time but may build up and cause you to have a poor opinion of the centre, or our team. In order for us to make this a fantastic centre for you and your children, it's important that you tell us what's on your mind. You can call, email, speak with your teacher, make an appointment, write a communication note, drop an anonymous note into our letterbox/ communication box, speak with the Director (Ashley) or chat with the licensee (Nesha). Please don't feel worried about our reaction to your comments – we appreciate the time that our families make to give us feedback and we take it all on board.