

# November - December 2011 Newsletter



## Notes from the Director

As you would all know I am currently on maternity leave after having my second son Kaeden. I have been popping into the centre more and more often and liaising with the office staff (**who have been doing a fabulous job in my absence – thank you!**) and the girls in the rooms as we wrap up 2011 and plan for a busy and productive 2012.

Firstly I'd like to say a big thank you to all the Norwest families, friends and staff who have done a great job selling all the chocolates during our chocolate drive. We have set aside our fundraising money for a 'big shop' that we intend on doing to increase our resources and spend on making our yard more wonderful and natural.

Also, a gigantic congratulations to the hard working staff that dedicated hours of their time and effort into putting together fantastic documentation following Child Care Week. We were selected as finalists in 5 categories at the Australian Child Care Week Awards and were the winners in the category of 'Best Program or Activity Illustrating Physical Environment' for Fernanda and the Bush Room's Bike and Road Safety day! Awesome Job! The submissions are still available for you to see on the desk in the foyer.



This year has been a year filled with lots of learning, engaging activities and plenty of parent participation allowing all the children to grow, develop and learn new things in many fun, interesting and engaging ways. They have discovered new skills and have formed great bonds with the children and teachers that they see each and every day. We have welcomed many new families to the centre this year, many of whom will be returning with us in 2012.

We wish the children in the Bush Room who are off to school next year the best of luck throughout their new educational expedition.

As the year comes to an end there are many things we all need to finalise. This newsletter will include many of the things you need to know for wrapping up a great year at Norwest Child Care Centre.

## Dates for your diary

### Nov:

- 13<sup>th</sup> World Kindness Day
- 20<sup>th</sup> Universal Children's Day
- 23<sup>rd</sup> 2010 School Reunion
- 27<sup>th</sup> Baby and Kids Market in Kellyville
- 29<sup>th</sup> Ocean Room End of Year Party

### Dec:

- 2<sup>nd</sup> International Day of People with a Disability
- 6<sup>th</sup> Rainforest End of Year Party
- 13<sup>th</sup> Bush End of Year Party
- 23<sup>rd</sup> Last day for 2011 (**4pm sharp**)

### Jan:

- 10<sup>th</sup> First day for 2012
- 26<sup>th</sup> Australia Day Public Holiday



## Christmas Craft

At Norwest we are all about making Christmas craft. If for some reason you don't have Christmas craft or seemed to have missed out, please let us know. As you can imagine ensuring that 150 children all go home with their craft can be quite a task. If you would also like something special made for another family member please let the staff in your child's room know.

## Photo CDs

All families will receive a photo CD of their children at the end of the year and the cost of these will be charged to your account (\$20 for one child and \$30 for 2+ children). After much parent feedback last year we have decided that everyone will receive a cd unless we have been otherwise informed. If you don't want one of these amazing mementos of your child's year, please email the office to let them know before the 26<sup>th</sup> November.

## What's happening in the kitchen? – Updates from Michele

Our spring menu has been in full force and the children at the centre have been thoroughly enjoying it. It will be coming to an end at the end of the month as we introduce our summer menu for December. I will be making many new dishes including fettuccini boscaiola along with a spicy sweet potato frittata and Donna Hay's chicken risoni and lemon soup. In my kitchen I always strive to use the freshest seasonal fruits and vegetables which are often purchased on a weekly basis if not daily. Thank you to all the wonderful families who constantly give me great feedback and encouragement, it helps me make every effort to provide your children with the best quality meals.

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## Healthy Eating Habits

Children need a healthy diet if they are to develop into healthy adults. Australian children are fortunate that their society is able to provide a variety of nutritious food. Young children establish healthy eating habits by following the lead of their parents, caregivers, and older family members and siblings.

Here are some handy hints, to encourage healthy eating habits in children:

- To encourage healthy eating habits in children offer small serves of food. Your child can always ask for a second helping.
- Healthy eating can be promoted through offering a variety of foods to children from a very young age.
- Children may reject a new food the first or second time it is offered, but keep persisting as a new food will soon become a 'usual' food and so become a normal part of a child's healthy diet. Be aware that there may be some foods that your child will never eat.

Involving your child in shopping, meal planning and cooking can help develop healthy eating habits by promoting a positive attitude to a healthy diet. Simple activities for young children such as getting spoons out of the drawer or asking them to stir a bowl can help develop their understanding of a nutritious diet.

Talk to your children about different fruits and vegetables, such as where they grow and how you prepare or cook them. Knowledge of the foods they are eating, can encourage healthy eating habits for children. Make sure all members of your family are adopting healthy eating habits. Use positive terms to refer to healthy food, for example, "I love eating crunchy green beans". Make eating a social occasion, turn off the television and talk about the day. Avoid bribing your child with food.

**You should find fun and interactive ways to introduce healthy eating habits for children. Here are some tips that can make food fun:**

- Allow toddlers to touch and feel their food. This is part of the learning experience and helps develop a positive attitude to a nutritious diet which in turn promotes healthy eating habits.
- Children respond to different colours and shapes, so supply them with a mixture of foods in all textures, colours, shapes and sizes.
- Use different types of bread to make sandwiches. For example: one slice of white and one slice of wholemeal; wraps; or mini rolls. Offering variety helps children develop healthy eating habits.

A healthy childhood diet should include a variety of fruits and vegetables and the following ideas can help make them attractive to children.

- Snack time at school should be exciting for your children. Provide them with an assortment of colours such as slices of cheese, apple, carrot, sultanas, watermelon, grapes and strawberries.
- Have a visible bowl of fruit available for your children. Healthy eating habits will increase if fruits and vegetables are the closest option available when your children are hungry.
- Offer fresh fruit in preference to fruit juice or processed fruit bars.
- Children's healthy eating habits will stem from the subtlest changes in their diet. When they ask for a snack before dinner, offer beans, snow peas or carrot and celery sticks rather than pre-packaged foods.
- Offer your children a choice of three or four vegetables with dinner. If they are able to choose the vegetables they are served, they may be less likely to refuse them.
- It is important that you introduce a variety of fruits and vegetables from a young age.

Taken from Medibank's Wiggle into Health website

[www.wiggleintohealth.com](http://www.wiggleintohealth.com)

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## Great snacks for hungry kids

To maintain concentration and a balanced level of energy it is important for children to have snacks throughout the day. At the centre we provide the children with 3 healthy snacks each day. There are some fabulous ideas that you can use at home for making healthy but yummy snacks and treats for your kids. These may include:

- Carrot sticks and dip
- Cucumber sticks and cheese
- Lebanese triangles with vegemite or hommus
- Vegetable or fruit muffins
- Small serving of Anzac slice
- Sultanas and dried apricots
- Fruit salads or skewers
- Fruit smoothies

Below are some websites with more great healthy ideas and recipes:

[www.heartfoundation.org.au/healthy-eating/mums-united/Pages/welcome.aspx](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au/healthy-eating/mums-united/Pages/welcome.aspx)

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

[http://www.kidspot.com.au/Preschool-Eat-Snacks-drinks-and-vegetarian-diets+429+29+article.htm?gclid=CML0nJL\\_qqwCFaiJ4god6lOtIA](http://www.kidspot.com.au/Preschool-Eat-Snacks-drinks-and-vegetarian-diets+429+29+article.htm?gclid=CML0nJL_qqwCFaiJ4god6lOtIA)

<http://swapit.gov.au/ways-to-swap/food-swap-suggester>



**Lost Something?** Our lost property basket has become very full. If your child has lost something while at Norwest please take a look in the basket. It is probably not a bad idea for all families to take a look through the basket to make sure nothing belongs to them (you may not have realised you have lost something). Please remember that we regularly empty our lost property basket and donate unclaimed clothing to charity.

**Scrap Paper** As the children's writing and literacy skills transpire, and their creative talents come to light, they go through hundreds of sheets of paper working on these valuable skills. If you have scrap paper hanging around the house or the office (printed on one side is fine with us) the staff and children would LOVE to use it. Re using paper ensures that we are minimising the impact on our environment – we recycle it after we use it too!

## Admin and Accounts from Sarah

Final statements will be sent out on **Tuesday 29th November** and will show balance owing to the rest of the year. We ask that all accounts are finalised by **Friday 11th December 2011** so that we can hand out your child's portfolios, photo cd's (if you are buying one) etc. on their last day. If you are finishing up early we ask that your account is finalised prior to your last day for the year.

For those on Ezi Debit, we will be processing your end of year account on **Tuesday 8th December**. We will have direct debited on **Tuesday 29th November** for that fortnight, and will then process a further payment on Tuesday 8th December which will take you up to the end of the year - you \*should\* be able to see the amount to be debited on the Statement of 29th November - this is the first time we've done this, so we appreciate your patience.

For those finishing up with us at the end of this year, remember to pay until your final day, and your bond will be released 3 weeks after your last day with us (this does not include the 2 weeks we are closed). We'll provide further details about wrapping up your account in the coming weeks.

**Is your child going to school?** Please don't forget to fill out an official exit form indicating your child's last day of care. We can accept this information either via our 'exit forms' available in the foyer (we'll email you a copy as well shortly) or via email. If informing us via email, we'd also love to know your thoughts on what the centre does well, and how we might improve. Please pay your accounts as per usual up until your child's last day, then 3 weeks after your last day, and with your fobs returned, we'll make any final adjustments and send your back your bond (along with a final statement) via a cheque. All fees for school leavers returning in January need to be paid in full in December to secure these spots. If you have any questions regarding this please don't hesitate to email us your queries.

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## THANK YOU!

Thank you to many of our wonderful families who have donated valuable resources to the centre. Your contribution does not go unnoticed.

- Liddle family – books
- Badenhorst family – X-rays
- Walters family – books
- Vincent family – musical instruments
- Van Neijenhoff family – toys
- Eivers family – computer
- Kazangi family – stationery

**End of year raffle** we are in the process of putting together a fantastic basket full of goodies for the whole family including Mum, Dad and the kids. You can purchase tickets for \$2 each or 3 for \$5 and will be available from the office shortly and at the end of year parties.

**Blue books** Don't forget that every time you get your child's immunization updated to bring in a copy for us. We need to know and keep records of your child's immunization status in case of an outbreak of a communicable disease. Any child who is not immunized, or any child we don't have records for, will be excluded in the unlikely event of an outbreak.



**End of Year Party Information** On the night of the children's end of year parties we will be providing drinks and a sausage sizzle as well as iceblocks if it's warm. We'll give you an overview of the nights in a separate email. You can buy tickets by emailing the team - \$2 each or \$4 on the day. Children performing on the night or babies under 1 at no charge.

## Gingerbread Houses

As a team building exercise over the past couple of weeks, the staff at Norwest have gathered into small groups to create Gingerbread house creations. They are AMAZING and currently on display in our foyer. There is a competition on, based on parent votes, for the best creation. The voting forms are in the foyer, and we'd love you to take a moment to admire all of their hard work, and then vote for your favourite

## Household Chemical Safety

Each year in Australia 140,000 calls are made to Poisons Information centres by concerned parents or carers of young children. 3,500 children under 5 years of age are admitted to hospitals because of poisoning annually, and 5 to 10 of these children die each year.

Many products and materials commonly found in and around the house are poisonous. Medicines account for 67% of poisonings, and chemicals 28%. Chemicals are not just used in manufacturing and heavy industry, they are a part of everyday life. Products we use to clean kitchens and bathrooms, wash clothes and dishes, kill pests and fertilize gardens are chemicals. Paints car and furniture polishes, swimming pool chlorine, petrol, engine oil, brake fluid and LPG are chemicals.

It's vital to correctly store and use all chemicals appropriately as per instructions.



**Tips for Safe Chemical Storage and Use** Keep your home safe! The NSW Fire Brigades recommends this simple safety checklist:

- **Read the label** before purchasing any chemical. Understand the correct use and the dangers posed by the chemical.
- **Choose** the least dangerous product that will do the job, especially if children are present.
- **Lock** chemicals in a cabinet out of the reach of children. **Remember** children are curious, inventive and good climbers.
- **Follow** the manufacturer's **instructions**. Handle with extreme **caution**. Use recommended **protective** equipment: gloves, safety goggles, etc. Ensure adequate **ventilation**.
- **Seal** chemicals in their original containers. **Do not reuse** empty containers or repack product in different containers.
- **Remember** some medicines look like soft drinks or lollies. **Lock** them away from children.
- **Do not mix** chemicals.
- **Do not prepare** more chemical than you need for the job.
- **Do not** use chemicals for jobs for which they are not intended.

**Poisons Information Line: 131 126**

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## Effective communication with children

Babies and toddlers don't always understand words, however you can still communicate with your child using tone of voice, touch and body language. Preschoolers use their growing vocabularies and communication skills to express feelings, ideas and curiosity about the world around them. Try to give your preschooler full attention, watch your body language, and tune in to your child's emotions.

Follow the link below for further information about communicating with children.  
[http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/how\\_you\\_communicate\\_with\\_babies\\_and\\_toddlers\\_pbs.html/context/293](http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/how_you_communicate_with_babies_and_toddlers_pbs.html/context/293)

**Spots for 2012** We are really filling up and have limited vacancies for 2012. If you are a school leaver and require care for January please let the team know as soon as possible as there are limited positions available now. Your child's position is secure when you receive a confirmation email from Rachel. If you have friends or family requiring care in 2012 please send them down to the centre for a tour. Anyone who sends down a new family, and they choose to enrol, will be rewarded. We currently have vacancies on Mondays (4 spots) and Fridays (3 spots).

**Staff training** At Norwest Child Care Centre we constantly strive to maximise our professional development with many of our staff participating in training and workshops. These are done both internally and externally.

- **Study Group** – All staff who are studying come to a study group on a fortnightly basis. Here they are able to share ideas and knowledge and get the motivation for studying with others that you don't necessarily get while you are at home on your own.
- **STaR: Working with additional needs** – Rebecca and Jen
- **First Aid** – Ashley, Rachel, Helen, Lyn, Jacqui, Louise
- **Leadership conference 2011** – Ashley, Rachel, Rebecca & Nesha
- Nesha recently spoke at the **Early Childhood Conference** in Canberra on two topics – Attachment in Early Childhood, and EYLF for EC Educators – she attended a series of workshops there as well.
- Nesha has also been asked to present at the upcoming **'New Frontiers in Leadership'** conference on 'Leadership in practice'

## Hot weather and sun safe clothing

At Norwest we pride ourselves on being a SunSmart centre and develop our sun safety policy in accordance with the Cancer Council Australia. As the weather warms up we need to start being mindful of the clothes we are sending the children to Norwest in.

**Clothing:** Keeping your child's skin covered with clothes made from tightly woven fabric such as t-shirt material will protect them from the sun. If you hold the fabric up to the light you can see how much sun will get through it. It is important that children are not over or under dressed, and that clothing suits the temperature. The smaller the child the more easily they can become chilled or overheated.

**Hats:** A hat is a great way to protect your child from the sun. A full crown hat with a full brim or a neck flap is better than a baseball cap because it provides more shade; a chin strap in day care is a choking hazard so these will need to be removed. Please remember to leave a hat at the centre, as well as pack a spare in your child's bag (if they don't have a hat they can't play outside). Remember to LABEL the hat and any other items of clothing very clearly with your child's name.

**Sunscreen:** Sunscreen combined with clothing and shade is the most effective way to keep your child safe from sun and reflection. Use a high SPF sunscreen on the face, hands and any other parts of your child's body that aren't covered by clothes. Sunscreen is to be applied by parents.

For further information regarding sun safety please visit the cancer council website:  
<http://www.cancercouncil.com.au/editorial.asp?pageid=2454>



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## Spotlight on Jenny

This month we have decided to shine the light on Jen, our newest member to the Ocean Room team! Jen got married to Andrew last March in Byron Bay, with a small ceremony on the beach. They then jetted off to Thailand for their honeymoon. Jen and husband Andrew have a 4 year old son named Asher. Jen was an old Norwest parent when Asher attended the centre some years ago.

Jen and her family recently acquired a dog called Gordo, who loves eating Country Road jeans. Her interests include baking (not cooking), live music (preferably blues and roots) and being outdoors (bush or beach). Jen previously lived in New Zealand for 15 years. Jen loves Christmas and spending time around the BBQ with family and friends.

Jen is extremely passionate about Early Childhood and a child's right to quality care and education. She is particularly interested in creating environments both indoors and outdoors, special needs and building relationships with families.



## Information for parents with 'schoolers'

Below are some very useful links to factsheets and information for parents of children who are off to school. Happy reading!

<http://www.ncac.gov.au/factsheets/transition.pdf>

<http://www.ncac.gov.au/factsheets/play.pdf>

[http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/language\\_support/best\\_start/literacy/english.pdf](http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/language_support/best_start/literacy/english.pdf)

[http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/language\\_support/best\\_start/numeracy/english.pdf](http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/language_support/best_start/numeracy/english.pdf)

[http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/resource\\_themes/school\\_readiness\\_and\\_childrens\\_transitions.html](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/resource_themes/school_readiness_and_childrens_transitions.html)

## Ocean Room

**Starfish:** We have continued developing our motor skills with nearly all of our group walking now. The older children in our group have been enjoying participating in bigger group times with the children from the Turtles and Seahorse groups in preparation for moving up in the Ocean Room next year. As the weather warms up water play has also been a huge hit with the Starfish, they are enjoying exploring their senses with all the different sensory aspects that come with water play.

**Turtles:** Recently the Turtles have shown interest in sensory art. Like most 1-2 year old they want to touch everything and feel it with their hands. We have discussed concepts such as soft, rough and squishy. The interest in sensory art has lead us onto many great activities including art, music & movement and water play. Over the past few days we have also observed a growing interest in transport. Many of the boys are engaging in car play in one way or another, and ALL of the children are interested in the planes that fly over each day.

**Seahorses:** We have continued our interest with feelings and emotions as the children are becoming more aware of their own emotions and those of others. We have also loved being involved in many of the art and craft activities that go on throughout the room. The Seahorses have continued to develop their basic literacy and math skills with a variety of experiences which they are loving.

Every day the Starfish, Turtles, and Seahorse spend time practicing their songs for the end of year concert. We are getting better and better every day and can't wait to share them with you on the night.

## Rainforest Room

We have been very busy preparing craft decorations and practicing Christmas songs for the end of year party.

The Dragonflies have also been learning about the human body. Making use of many resources, the Dragonflies have been doing plenty of internet research, looking through books, observing a skeleton and looking at X-rays on the light box and against the windows. We also have been focusing on our self help skills in preparation for moving up to the Bush Room next year.

The Geckos have been very interested in all that you find under the sea. They have been busy participating in many related activities such as watching the Great Barrier Reef DVD, lots of art and craft and doing research through the use of books and the internet. Many of the Geckos are often found joining the Dragonflies in their activities and experience also showing interest in the human body and developing independence through self help skills.

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## Bush Room Update

Recently we have had some students doing their practical experience components of their various courses of study.

In the Bilbies group we had Alexandra from Macquarie University complete her prac at the beginning of November. She really enjoyed getting to know the children and planning for some of their learning experiences. We currently have Emma from Nirimba TAFE completing her prac with the Bilbies group, and she is working on several programming opportunities, such as teaching the children signs from Auslan (Australian Language of the Deaf community) one of which will be performed by the Bilbies at the Christmas Concert.

The Bilbies have also been thoroughly engaged in the Schoolies Month Activities. With 'Kiss and Drop' starting in the first week of November and continuing to build as both parents and children get used to this process of separation and of growing independence as preparing for their transition to 'big school' in 2012. Last week we also had some of the children wearing their school uniforms to Norwest; which created several 'light bulb' moments as the children figured out that some of them would be going to the same school as each other next year, and that they will be entering another type of community. For the last two weeks of schoolies month we have lunchbox lunches. This is a mammoth effort from Michele and the Bush Room teachers as they have to coordinate these each day and ensure that each child is getting the opportunity to build the necessary skills needed for this self-help task.

During the final week of schoolies month, we will also be holding the 2010 School Reunion, for which the past Norwest school Leavers join them for afternoon tea next Wednesday (23<sup>rd</sup> November) to ask them question about their schooling experiences. With this in mind the children have been talking together with their teachers to identify how they feel about starting school next year, and what things they would like to know about 'big school'.

Fernanda, Emily and a visiting practical experience student from Macquarie University (Hannah) have been very busy working with the Koalas to investigate volcanoes over the past couple of weeks. This investigation included looking up various information resources, like books and videos on the internet to find out about what happens when a volcano erupts. Then Hannah implemented a science experiment for the children to witness, firsthand what an eruption looks like (it was really cool, but I'm sure that you've heard about it already!).

Fernanda has also been working on building the critical reflection skills of the Koalas by instigating a series of experiences that are aimed at building the questioning and inferring skills of the children. She initiated a game that she calls "Who Am I?" and encourages the children to think of question that they can ask that will give them more information in order to identify the object she is pretending to be. It started from Fernanda sharing a news item with the group and getting them to ask questions to find out more information. This is an important life skill, and enables people to be able to successfully find things out for themselves.

Writing has also been a recurrent event in the Koalas classroom, with the children all avidly getting involved in authentic writing activities such as: writing Halloween cards, and Santa Letters, and also incorporating the names of their friends and sometimes their families in their writing explorations!

Great Work Bushies!

We are also REALLY looking forward to our End of Year Party, with the special performance from the Koalas group and the Graduation for our School Leavers of 2011!