

## **Official opening of Stretch-A-Family Head office**

On the 11 June 2009, the Minister for Community Services, the Hon Linda Burney MP officially opened Stretch-A-Family's new head office and new headquarters of the Foster Care Program. The new office is conveniently located in the heart of Marrickville's shopping centre, approximately half way between Stanmore House and the On Track program which is located at Roselands.

Since 1984, Stretch-A-Family has operated from the same location as Stanmore House, sharing the available living space in this house with the young people who live in this program. Office space was very limited and this inhibited growth and infrastructure development. The new office in Marrickville heralds the dawn of a new era for Stretch-A-Family. The agency is finally strong enough to develop a secure base for now and for the future. To make the property acquisition possible, Stretch-A-Family augmented its resources with a bank loan with the loan repayments being equivalent to market rent in this area. This provided both the security of tenure of the location and the knowledge that in due course, the property will be fully owned by the agency, enabling better use of funding resources.



*Hon Linda Burney, Lilian Camenzuli and Sam Iskandar*



The official opening was very well attended and our distinguished guests included Aunty Esther Carroll who did the "Welcome to Country", Sam Iskandar The Mayor of Marrickville, Kerryn Boland, the NSW Children's Guardian, and Steve Kinmond, Deputy Ombudsman (Community Services Division). Several Managers and staff of other partner agencies were also present. We used the opportunity to also launch our new DVD *Fostering a teenager with Stretch-A-Family* and those in attendance were able to take a copy of this DVD with them.

Minister Linda Burney acknowledged the contribution of Stretch-A-Family to young people in out-of-home care. Lilian Camenzuli, the CEO of SAF acknowledged the voluntary contribution of members of SAF's Management Committee, several of whom were present for the occasion. Lilian also thanked all of SAF's supporters, both past and present, who contributed in some way to make this venture a possibility. It was a proud moment for Stretch-A-Family committee and staff members, seeing a long standing goal finally fulfilled. The new office also boasts a very decent sized board room for meetings and case conferences. This also means that we no longer have to use up the young people's living space to have these meetings. Stanmore House residents and staff are now enjoying the use of the additional space. Residents have gained a private tutoring room and a new bathroom, while staff no longer have to work in the same area where they sleep.

Stretch-A-Family's official new address is now 7/198-204 Marrickville Rd, Marrickville. Phone number continues to be 02 9569 6933 while the Fax number is now 02 9569 6883.

## Staffing news

### Manager Foster Care Vacancy



Congratulations to **Kerri Richmond** who will soon commence in the role of Manager Foster Care. This position has also been upgraded to a full-time role. Kerri is already a member of the Stretch-A-Family team as a foster care caseworker. Kerri's experience working in foster care both with young people, foster carers and family members make her an ideal person to fill this role. Kerri has already come up with some innovative ideas for building up the foster care program and is also actively fundraising for Stretch-A-Family in the *Sun Herald City to Surf*.

**Nicola Sloane**, Part-time Youth Worker at On Track, transferred to a casual role to take on a full-time role with another agency. We have really valued Nicola's contribution to the position and wish her well in her new role.



Welcome to **Emma Kate Thomson** who has been appointed as a Youth Worker at On Track replacing Nicola. Emma Kate has a background as dramatic arts/personal development teacher and also has qualifications in counselling. She has worked with a wide range of young people as well as adults in Italy, Dubai and Australia. Emma Kate has also worked alongside young people who are caring for someone with a mental illness, disability or drug and alcohol dependence. Her passion is to help young people by engaging them in activities, identifying their strengths and helping them to overcome barriers to

reach their potential. Emma Kate is already having an impact at On Track.

We extend our condolences to our Accounts Admin Work **Ann Nguyen** and her brother on the recent loss of their mother. Congratulations are also due to Ann and her fiancé Jesse on their forthcoming wedding in September. Sadly, Ann is leaving us following her wedding to work in a new role with her husband. Ann has been a very valuable member of the Accounts/Payroll team and her loss will be keenly felt. We wish her the best of luck and thank her for her significant contribution to Stretch-A-Family over the years.



### Foster Care News

Our new DVD, *Fostering a teenager with Stretch-A-Family* was launched during the official opening of our new office. There is an abbreviated version on our website. If you would like a copy of the full DVD, please email [lilian@stretchfamily.com.au](mailto:lilian@stretchfamily.com.au) with your details and one will be mailed out to you.

The DVD was produced for SAF by Andrew Forsyth of Pemberton Productions, who donated his time and expertise. Other production costs were raised by Virgin Unite. The SAF foster carers and young people who appear in this production also did this voluntarily. We are hoping that viewing this DVD will encourage more people to apply to become foster carers.

We have just approved a new foster carer who is currently waiting for a placement match, and we have almost finished assessing another new family. We hope to be able to report that both these carers have young people placed with them by the next newsletter. We are very keen to recruit a

carer for sibling group (girl 14 and boy 11) who want to be placed together and would ideally be placed in the Inner West area of Sydney.

## Residential Care News

### On Track - Amy Steven

Wow! Where to begin with the On Track house! The last 6 months have seen some big changes to the appearance, capacity, and running of our programme in Roselands.

A massive overhaul and upgrade of the property began in March with floorboards being replaced and a fresh lick of paint, using funds donated by The Canterbury Club *Community Development Support Expenditure* fund. Staff and residents then experimented with the layout of furniture and Voila! A change is as good as a rest! With three new residents the programme is one away from full capacity, and the young residents have expressed how homely the place feels and coped brilliantly with the work that went on. With the completion of a new outside toilet, the upstairs bathroom is set to get revamped in the coming months.

Full advantage was taken of our lovely new residence with a team building day as part of our school holiday programme. We welcomed in our new Supporting Youth Worker Emma-Kate and squeals of excitement and laughter could be heard as we all took part in fun games and exercises that christened the new refurbishment as a cosy and relaxed home for the people who matter the most - our young residents.



*Team building with a difference!*

### Stanmore House

#### The Hon Anthony Albanese MP visits Stanmore House



On the 7 July 2009, Stanmore House was honoured with a visit from the Hon Anthony Albanese MP, Federal Member for Grayndler, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government. Stanmore House staff were very excited about this visit and young people joined in the effort by tidying their rooms to a very high standard! A lovely lunch was also prepared. Mr Albanese was extremely interested in the work of Stretch-A-Family and asked several questions about the goals of the program and the outcomes for young people in our care.

Following the visit, Mr Albanese also made a generous donation to the 50,000 Cappuccino Appeal and also issued a press release recently, urging the local community to get behind the appeal and donate the value of one coffee to Stretch-A-Family. Check this out on his website at <http://www.anthonyalbanese.com.au/>

Stanmore House is now at full capacity with six residents who are all settled and fully engaged in the program. All of our young people attended a Camp during the school holidays and participated in local council activities and /or other activities such as tennis camps, movie outings, Luna Park etc. The Young people also attended a recent AFL game through CREATE and on the 25th of July attended an NRL game between the Bulldogs and the Eels at Homebush stadium. Our In-House workshop series will re-commence early August 2009 and will feature a three part series titled "Skin and Self-care." The young people completed an evaluation form after the drama workshops and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

## Community Support in Action

A group of lovely ladies from the “*Community Quilts*” group of *The Quilters Guild on NSW Inc* visited the On Track House on two occasions and donated enough hand made quilts to enable one to be given to every young person in the program. They also donated wall hangings, two specially made lounge throw overs and some cot quilts for a young person in after care support who has three babies under 15 months!



These quilts are indeed a work of art, and would grace any home. Our young people have responded very positively to the gifts of the quilts and to the knowledge that they were made especially for them.

The aims of the “Community Quilts” group are to encourage a more cosy home like atmosphere for people in need. Their members are extremely enthusiastic quilt makes and enjoy their sewing days. Every young person in our residential care program now has their own special quilt which is theirs to keep wherever they move to. Our friends from “Community Quilts” have also pledged to keep up the supply of new quilts to ensure that as new young people move in, we have a handmade quilt to present to them.



Three other delightful ladies, *Kate Richmond* (mother of Kerri Richmond – see picture) and her friends *Jannie Ditchfield* and *Barbara Pook* have provided us with about ten cosy hand knitted blankets. These very colourful and warm blankets are very popular both as bed blankets and a throwovers. Some of the blankets have already been distributed to young people while others will be utilised our residential care homes. We really appreciate the time it takes to knit and then sew all these colourful squares together.



A local community group *Marrickville MTC Work Solutions* have made up some T Shirts for us promoting foster care and some SAF staff members wore these during the official opening of the new office. They will also be utilised by some of our staff and other supporters who will be competing in the Sun Herald City to Surf and raising money on our behalf. Meanwhile our good friends at *Marrickville Curves* have also set up a team for the City to Surf and are also raising money on our behalf.

The **50,000 Cappuccino Appeal** continues make slow but steady progress. At the end of the financial year we also received a generous donation from a staff member of the Investec Bank which was matched by the bank!

The Community Support that SAF receives is the proverbial “icing on the cake” and makes a significant difference to the wellbeing of the young people in the care of SAF. To the supporters mentioned above and to all our supporters, we say a heartfelt thank you!