

Stretch-A-Family Inc. ABN 99 897 792 897 7/198-204 Marrickville Rd, Marrickville 2204

End of Year celebrations

The 2009 Year ended with a great sense of optimism for both staff and residents of Stretch-A-Family. It was a very successful year for SAF – marking the achievement of a number of significant goals which included the physical separation of the Foster Care and administration of the agency away from Stanmore House to our new Head Office. Our staff end of year celebration was a Lawn Bowls and BBQ at Petersham Bowling Club. A few talented bowlers were identified and some of us learned that lawn bowls is a lot harder than it appears to be!



**Staff end of year celebration
Petersham Bowling Club**

The Annual Christmas Picnic for our Young People was a great success. This event is always sponsored by generous donations from our supporters. It was attended by residents and some of our young people in foster care. Young people always enjoy this opportunity for a playful interaction with staff. The glorious weather made the picnic at Maroubra even more special. With a BBQ cooked, cricket on the go, and a guitar strumming out tunes, it wasn't long before a sweat was worked up. Naturally, the best way to cool down is to raid the esky and chase staff and peers around drenching each other in icy cold water! The laughter and hilarity continued down to the beach where splashing and crashing in the waves provided more fun topping off a marvellous day.



**Left : SAF Managers Virginia,
Nicky and Kerri enjoying the
Kids Christmas Picnic.**

Right: Ok who is going in first?

Staff and young people extend sincere thanks to United Way, Macquarie Group Foundation, Salvation Army Chatswood, Bob Seymour from the Salvation Army and the Espino Family from *Petersham Paint Place* for their generous donations to help ensure that all of our residents had an enjoyable festive season.

Stanmore House residents and staff attended Carols at Pioneer Park at Leichhardt. They joined in all the festivities of this community event including singing and rapping to the Christmas carols. They also recycled some colourful lanterns to bring home with them to decorate Stanmore House.



Christmas Day at On Track

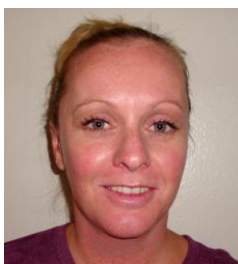
Staff News

Stretch-A-Family recognises that the strength of the organisation is largely dependent of the skills of its staff. Accordingly, creating the opportunity for staff to build skills in different roles is one of the goals of the organisation. Staff training is a priority for the agency and staff engage in a range of training courses, both in house and externally.

Michelle Piotrowski has now transferred from the position of On Track Caseworker/Aftercare Worker to the role of Caseworker Foster Care. Michelle has been at Stretch-A-Family for many years and was originally employed as a Youth Worker at Stanmore. After a period of time working for another agency, Michelle was re-employed as the On Track Caseworker, a role she has held for over five years. Michelle has been missed by the young people at On Track and in aftercare and by On Track staff. She continues to make herself available sporadically to these clients to ease the transition. Michelle has already established herself in the new role, including building rapport with the carers and young people and is keen to be a part of the expansion of the Foster Care Program.

Hayley Partington formerly a Youth Key Worker at On Track, has now completed a period of secondment in the role of Caseworker/Aftercare Worker and was recently appointed to the position. Hayley is thoroughly enjoying the role and her bright and caring approach has eased the transition for young people at On Track.

Emma-Kate Thomson is currently seconded to the position formerly held by Hayley and is enjoying the experience working in this role.



Amanda Laing

We extend a warm welcome to *Amanda Laing* who commenced duties recently as a Casual Relief youth worker at On Track. Amanda has a very interesting background working with people of all ages and in various capacities such as camp counsellor, nanny, babysitter, community support worker, program coordinator, child-care worker and spent time as a volunteer care in an Aids orphanage in Kenya. She has also worked with young adults with disabilities for three years and has completed a Psychology Honours thesis. Amanda was immediately seconded to a part-time role at On Track and is already making a significant contribution to the position.

Madeleine Bowman previously employed as a Part-time Caseworker Foster Care, has transferred from her role to a casual relief position with the Foster Care Team. Whilst we are sorry to lose Madeleine as a permanent member of the team, we are glad that we can still use her skills in a casual capacity. During December and January, Madeleine assisted us with the assessment of some potential new foster carers.



Madeleine Bowman

Renee Clout has recently transitioned from her role as part-time Caseworker at Stanmore House to the vacant position in the Foster Care team. Renee brings a wealth of experience to her new role and this will be valuable in providing support to Foster Care placements and the team are looking forward to sharing Renee's innovative Foster Carer recruiting ideas. We are currently in the process of recruiting a replacement for Renee as the Stanmore House Caseworker.

Foster Care News

We are delighted to welcome the Davis family to our team as approved specialist Foster Carers. Peter and Sonia live with their two sons, pet greyhounds and cat, south of Sutherland. The very active, easy-going family have successfully transitioned a young person from Stanmore into their home during the Christmas holidays. The holidays have been action packed with canoeing, swimming and snorkelling and welcoming new friends into their home. We wish them a long and happy association with SAF and best wishes settling back into school routines after such a busy holiday period!



The Davis Family

The foster care team are enjoying an exciting time of growth and development. Our recruitment campaigns including with *WSFM* and *the Inner West Courier* have led to the Foster Care team fielding a record number of foster carer enquiries over the past few months. Our prospective carers are in the process of being assessed and attending Shared Stories, Shared Lives foster care training. Our foster families have had a busy holiday period and the young people have enjoyed diverse activities including a multitude of camps with Lutanda, Vision Valley, Narrabeen Sports, Hillsong and Dept of Sport and Rec and also travel further afield to Taree and Samoa.



Foster Carers Annual Thank You Dinner

Our annual “thank you” dinner for our foster carers was a wonderful night at Milanos at Lansvale. The patience, caring and commitment of our specialist foster carers makes a world of difference to the lives of many young people and we couldn’t do it without them.

Stanmore House News

Congratulations, to three of our Stanmore House Resident’s who received Merit/Achievement Awards at their end of Year School assemblies. We are so proud of their efforts and level of commitment and improvement throughout the School Year of 2009. Their achievements are testament to the value of our tutoring Program at Stanmore House and the young people’s tenacity and resilience.

One of our Stanmore residents graduated from Year Six and has now started High School. Another resident received his Year Ten School Certificate.

The *Workshop Program* held throughout the latter half of 2009 has proved to be extremely beneficial for the residents of the Stanmore Program. Through participating in the workshops on Monday evening, young people developed new skills through partaking in new experiences which broaden their life skills and builds upon their self-esteem and self-confidence. Workshops have included drama, skin body and self care, creative writing, Artstart (where residents made a short DVD and to finish off the year in style), and a workshop hosted by *Peter Slattery* on building personal and empowerment skills. Our last workshop for the year was a jewellery making workshop which enabled young people to utilise and hone their creative skills to make gifts for friends and family.

On Track News

In our last SAFire we reported on the wonderful contribution made by United Way who teamed up with staff of QBE to coordinate a huge project involving the re-painting of the upstairs of the On Track residence and a makeover of the front and rear gardens.

Without upstairs air-conditioning QBE staff really felt the heat when carrying out their kind work. This led to the volunteers from QBE raising and donating \$280 which we aptly used to purchase fans for our residents bedrooms. This has proved invaluable for our teenagers in getting a good night's sleep in the high temperatures that Sydney has been experiencing.

On Track kicked off the festive season with a trip to choose and cut down their own Christmas tree. It certainly brought the scent of Christmas into the house. Our young people enjoyed outings to see the weird and wonderful Christmas lights in various suburbs. During the holidays, Luna Park, movie trips, and wildlife world were all enjoyed, with a great Christmas day at Taronga Park Zoo. On Track young people and staff saw the New Year in down at Circular Quay watching the stunning midnight fireworks light up the Harbour Bridge.



Emma-Kate at the Zoo

We were lucky enough to have five Luna Park tickets donated to us, and this was a great January outing. Every exhilarating moment was thoroughly enjoyed. Even a real fear of heights was conquered as one resident braved the Big Wheel and then proceeded to board every vertigo challenging ride available! A big thank you to Luna Park for an outstanding day.

Urgent Notice

There are over 34,000 Children and young people in Out of Home Care Australia (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2010). They are unable to live with their birth families for diverse reasons and have often experienced a lot of emotional upheaval and trauma.

Stretch-A-Family has been caring for vulnerable young people for over 30 years through our residential and specialist Foster Care programs.

Stretch-A-Family is urgently looking for people with experience caring for teenagers, who have room in their home and lives to become Foster Carers. Our carers receive a tax-free allowance, ongoing training, support and the personal reward of making a difference.

What you can do to *make a difference*.....



- Apply to become a Foster Carer- open your life and home to a young person in need. **Watch our video about Foster Care on our website & enquire online.**
- Donate to SAF's 50,000 cappuccino appeal- for the cost of your morning coffee, help us to support young people in need and expand our programs. You can donate online at www.stretchfamily.com.au
- Tell your friends, family and work colleagues about Stretch-A-Family

For further information please contact us on 9569 6933 or go to www.stretchfamily.com.au