

ACT FOR KIDS



Newsletter » March 2009 »

SAFETY FIRST FOR GOLD COAST KIDS»

As of February 2009, ACTFOR KIDS will begin running a program in Gold Coast schools to teach Grade 1 kids how to protect themselves from abuse and neglect. The five week course is called Learn to Be Safe with Emmy, referring to the little girl who features in our logo.

Research shows that the risk of childhood abuse is halved for kids who undertake a program like this one.

ACTFOR KIDS' Gold Coast manager, Dr Kaye Pickering, said the strength of the Be Safe program is that it was written and developed by an expert team of ACTFOR KIDS staff, all with child safety qualifications and experience working with children.

"Be Safe uses proven learning techniques like repetition, reflection, games and follow-up homework activities, which all combine to make children more likely to recall the information they've learned if they ever need to use it."

The workshop is designed to give kids the skills to identify situations which are not ok, while avoiding themes which might be too difficult for them to handle. Over five weekly one-hour lessons, students in the program are taught about early warning signs, personal space, public and private body parts, and safe and unsafe secrets.

Kaye emphasises, because many kids are harmed by people they know, Be Safe is not just a 'stranger danger' campaign.

"IT'S MORE ABOUT GIVING KIDS THE CONFIDENCE TO BUILD HEALTHY, RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS. AND SPEAK UP WHEN THEY FEEL THREATENED OR UNSAFE." SHE SAID.

Kaye says ACTFOR KIDS is seeking funding to take the workshop to other regions and schools.

"WE DEFINITELY WANT TO BE ABLE TO GIVE MORE KIDS THE OPPORTUNITY TO BENEFIT FROM A PROGRAM LIKE THIS. IN MANY CIRCUMSTANCES IT CAN MEAN SAVING THEM FROM LIFE-SCARRING ORDEALS."»

DESIGNER SHOES?
OR PROTECTING A
CHILD'S INNOCENCE?

Every \$900 bonus
the Australian
Government gives
out this month
could pay for a
whole class of
school kids to learn
how to Be Safe!



THANK YOU»

Artery STORE.COM
DESIGN + LIFESTYLE

We'd like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all our supporters who gave so generously to our Christmas wishlist. A special thanks to ArteryStore.com for donating a \$1000 gift voucher to their gorgeous online gift boutique to help inspire donations to our Christmas Wishlist. We highly appreciate ArteryStore.com's 'too-good-to-be-true' incentive. For gifts that get your heart started visit ArteryStore.com. »



ACT FOR KIDS CEO
LEN BYTHEWAY

FROM THE CEO'S DESK»

Along with the rest of Australia, we've been touched by the suffering and tragic loss of life and homes inflicted during the Victorian Bushfires. News coverage of the fires has dominated our television screens and if you're anything like me you'll be cognisant of the effect such a traumatic event can have on kids. Included in this

newsletter is advice for parents of young children who might be struggling to understand what's now being called Black Saturday from our expert counselling team (p3).

On a more positive note we've just finished celebrating our Tatts & Tiaras fundraising month in February – our biggest annual fundraiser. Once again we were overwhelmed by the support of our fundraisers, volunteers and staff who worked around the clock to make the campaign such a success (p6).

I'd also like to take this opportunity to introduce you to an exciting new program we'll be launching this year. The *Be Safe* program (p1) is a one-of-a-kind workshop which teaches kids in Grade 1 to protect themselves from abuse and neglect. We're passionate about the prevention of abuse and about working with schools and teachers to make sure our kids have the best possible chance at a healthy, happy childhood. »

WORKSHOPS HELP KIDS "TELL IT HOW IT IS"»



If we're going to ACTFOR KIDS, we need to be sure of what young people want and what they think is important. In October and November of last year we interviewed 67 children and young people from around Queensland to find out what they think makes a good support service.

With help from another not-for-profit called SpeakOut, we held a series of creative workshops to capture kids' stories and experiences, and their thoughts about how to make our services better for them.

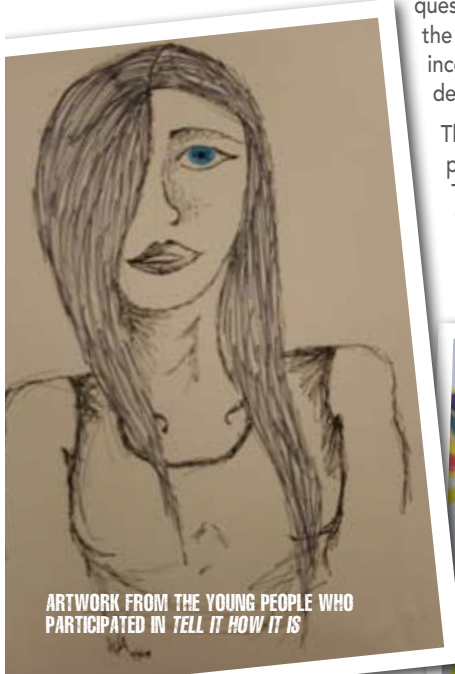
At-risk kids and young people from 17 different community organisations from Logan, the Gold Coast, Cairns and Brisbane took part. To get honest answers to our research questions, group facilitators engaged the participants in fun activities incorporating art, multimedia and design.

The feedback we gained through the project was amazing. The participants' comments were incredibly insightful and included some simple ways to make our services more effective,

which we've implemented straight away. Some of the artwork created also took our breath away.

ACTFOR KIDS will present to our government and community partners a comprehensive research report and a DVD showcasing the kids' creativity at a special event later this year. We'll make the project report and DVD available to anyone who wants it, so that other organisations can make their services more child-friendly.

After that, we plan to use the material gathered through the workshops as part of a continuous improvement program, to make ACTFOR KIDS centres even better for children and young people in our care.»



ARTWORK FROM THE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO
PARTICIPATED IN TELL IT HOW IT IS





HELPING KIDS UNDERSTAND TRAUMATIC EVENTS»

The terrible bushfires which devastated rural Victoria have confronted all of us over the past few weeks, reinforcing just how fragile human life is. Widespread media coverage of such traumatic events can have a profound effect on children, as they struggle to process the issues they see and hear in the news.

Christine Hodges is an experienced therapist who works in our Intensive Therapy Program with children who are suffering serious trauma. Many have been continuously exposed to shocking domestic violence.

While the distressing ordeals these kids deal with happen in their own homes, Chris says parents need to be equally aware of how their children deal with the bad things they see and hear through the media – whether its terrorism, natural disasters, or any other alarming incidents.

“It is always important to think about what your children are being exposed to on the TV news,” she says. “At the moment there has been a real focus on the bushfires in Victoria. The longer children sit in front of the television watching the fires scenes, the more it could impact them. When kids are seven or eight they can certainly imagine themselves in the same situation, and this can really add to their anxiety.”

Chris says the key is to acknowledge that bad things happen and treat kids’ concerns realistically.

“IT’S IMPORTANT TO FOLLOW YOUR CHILD’S LEAD IF THEY BRING UP SUBJECTS THAT FRIGHTEN THEM. BUT DON’T OVERLOAD THEM WITH DETAILS AND STORIES THAT THEY MIGHT FIND CONFRONTING.” SHE EXPLAINS.

“For example, my own children wanted to talk about fire safety plans like where we would meet if we were separated by a fire and how to escape from the house, so it was useful for our family to discuss the practicalities of such a situation over dinner.”

Chris says one of the worst things parents can do is reassure their children without actually addressing their fears.

“If your child is anxious you need to find out what part of the situation is scary for them and acknowledge their feelings. After this you can then try to reassure them, and talk about the best way for them to prevent whatever it is they’re concerned about from happening to them.”

“BUT IF YOU SAY SOMETHING LIKE ‘DON’T WORRY IT WILL NEVER HAPPEN TO US’ THEN YOU’RE NOT SHOWING THEM THAT YOU UNDERSTAND. THIS WILL OFTEN JUST PROLONG A CHILD’S ANXIETY.”»

» LEARNING TO BE



BOY, 5, PAINTS AT THE ACT FOR KIDS' EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAM

In November last year, we gave well-known journalist Frances Whiting exclusive access to our Early Education Program, a special preschool for abused and neglected children. This is an excerpt from her feature article published in The Courier Mail's QWeekend magazine on 8 December 2008.

I know this place. I know the green and purple hand prints on the wall, the glittering papier mache fish hanging from the ceiling, the scattered cushions in the book corner where I'd be willing to wager I know at least some of the titles - "Rosie's Walk", "Where is the Green Sheep?", "Hairy Maclary From Donaldson's Dairy".

I know it because I've made those fish and sat on the cushions and read those books to semi circles of gap-toothed kids shuffling on restless legs. In another life, the one I had before I became a writer, I was a Grade One teacher, and later worked in child care centres for even smaller kids, places just like this one, where parents dropped them off and left instructions about nap times.

So I am at home here, I know what to expect when I open the door to the outside play area - dappled sunlight, a cubby house, a tyre swing, a "wet play" tub filled with boats and busy hands. I walk down a ramp to where three little girls are playing with dolls under the shade of a huge pine tree.

"Hello," I say, speaking softly and crouching down to meet their eyes, "I'm Frances and I've come to visit you all today - have your dolls got names?"

THEY TURN THEIR TINY. ANGEL FACES TOWARDS ME. HAPPY THAT SOMEONE'S INTERESTED. AND IT'S ONLY WHEN THEY OPEN THEIR MOUTHS TO SPEAK THAT SOMETHING IMMEDIATELY FEELS WRONG AND NOT FAMILIAR AT ALL.

Their smiles are open and their hands are outstretched, proudly showing off their dolls, and it takes me a moment to work out what

isn't sitting right, what's wrong with this picture. Then it clicks. I can't understand a single word they're saying.

When a child experiences sustained abuse at home - physical, emotional, or a combination of both, there is a high chance they may not live somewhere where their development is nurtured, encouraged, allowed to bloom. It is likely they will not be fussed over, taken to swimming lessons, shown how to ride a bike with its training wheels off - or regularly spoken to with respect and encouraged to speak in return. Their ability to form sounds is affected, their vocabulary limited, and sometimes, if the communication has broken down completely, they may not speak at all, literally rendered mute by the debris of their upbringing.

The three little girls run off, bored by my inability to understand them, and another comes over - tiny, freckle-faced, an elfin scrap of a child. She throws her arms around my shoulders, clambers up on to my lap, and I am off balance again. I know that as a visitor I should not have such close physical contact with a child, but she is clinging to me, holding tight, I can feel her bony arms, her face burrowed in my neck.

When a child experiences sexual abuse, they are often over-familiar with strangers, equating close touch with approval, with reward, with attention. They do not understand normal physical boundaries, may use explicit language or actions, or try to touch other children and adults inappropriately. For them, the lines are blurred. They do not know if they are a child or an adult.

I gently disengage the little girl's arms from mine and walk with her inside the building, where she sits down in the dress-up corner and begins to try on some bright pink, rhinestone studded shoes. Outside the front door, a little boy sits quietly in the garden and will not come inside...»

To read the entire article visit www.actforkids.com.au and click 'News & Events'.



THE WET PLAY AREA AT ACT FOR KIDS' WOOLLOOWIN CENTRE

TATTS & TIARAS – THE THEME FOR FEBRUARY»

Can you believe February has been and gone already!? At ACT FOR KIDS February meant Tatts & Tiaras – our biggest annual community fundraising campaign – so the second month seems to pass in a blur.

Longtime Tatts & Tiaras fans would have noticed that this year we did things a little differently. There was more merchandise to choose from, more time to fundraise (a whole month rather than just a Tatts & Tiaras 'Day') and more ways to get involved.

We asked the big kids out there to hold a fundraiser of their own design to raise money for our cause. Heaps of you decided to hold 'pirates and princesses' parties and other celebrations ranged from bake-offs, to barbeques, to fashion parades. One crazy supporter even got his friends to sponsor him to get a real tattoo!

As a newly-appointed ACT FOR KIDS Ambassador, legendary hard-rocker Angry Anderson fronted calls for people to support our Tatts & Tiaras campaign.

"Now I just need to find a spot for another tattoo," joked Angry, who is known for his colourful body canvas. "That's not going to be easy."

Having gone through his own unhappy childhood, Angry Anderson knows first-hand the repercussions of physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

"I support a lot of different charities but stopping child abuse is something really close to my heart," he said. "My father was physically and emotional abusive and as a young child I was sexually abused by a close family friend. That's how I got the nickname Angry,

"I WAS A VERY ANGRY MAN. I STRUGGLED WITH THE ABUSE IN MY EARLY 20'S. BUT I AM A SURVIVOR. I COULD'VE USED A GROUP LIKE ACT FOR KIDS BACK THEN."

All the money raised through the campaign goes towards our services to treat and prevent child abuse and neglect, like positive parenting classes for at-risk families, and our counselling services which help kids recover from past abuse.

ANGRY ANDERSON'S COLOURFUL PHOTOS WERE SHOT AND DONATED BY OUR FRIEND KATRINA CHRIST. KATRINA CHRIST PHOTOGRAPHER DONATE \$25 PER PHOTO SHOOT TO ACT FOR KIDS ALL YEAR ROUND.



"THOSE KIDS DESERVE A FAIR GO," ANGRY SAID. "I'M PREPARED TO FIGHT FOR THEIR RIGHTS. AND I HOPE BY DOING IT I CAN ENCOURAGE OTHER PEOPLE TO DO SOMETHING TOO."

A lot of great support (and a much welcomed freebie here and there) made Tatts more successful than even we could have imagined. Thanks to our campaign sponsors (Channel 7, Publicis Mojo, GOA Billboards, MMT, Comsure Insurance, 96.5FM) our awesome volunteers who packed merchandise boxes, and of course all the people who participated in the campaign. On behalf of our kids – thanks a bunch!>

This year donations took all shapes and sizes, from big company checks to heartwarming stories of kids donating their tooth fairy money.

The generous donation of over \$10,000 from the Australian Fire Managers Association was the one that got our tongues wagging! At their annual conference two members set the group a challenge. If donations reached \$5,000 AFMA member Alan Chapman would shave off his beard of 35 years and if the tally shot past \$10,000 George Sismondi would get a permanent tattoo. And the result? Well take a look for yourself!



GET A JOB YOU CAN FEEL GOOD ABOUT»

7

We're looking for passionate people to join our team.

We're currently recruiting for:

- **3 Family Coaches** (Cairns) – provide direct support for kids and their families
- **Senior Family Coach** (Weipa/Napranum) – supervise your team of direct family support workers
- **Sexual Abuse Counsellor** (19hrs/wk, Gold Coast) – provide therapy to kids and young people who've experienced sexual abuse
- **Program Manager** (Cairns) – lead our Youth Opportunity Program team and help young people in the youth justice system
- **Training Program Coordinator** (Cairns) – help develop and delivery training programs for people wanting to work in child protection
- **Program Designer** (Cairns - contract) – design a therapeutic and residential care program for kids in Aboriginal communities

- **Administration Officer** (Cairns) – support a busy new office by fulfilling administration duties
- **Project Coordinator** (Cairns - contract) – demonstrate your team leadership skills by coordinating the implementation of our newest Indigenous project in Cairns
- **Speech Language Pathologist** (Townsville – part-time) – provide assessment and therapy to children 0-12 years
- **Donor management Officer** (Brisbane) – take a lead role in our database management and processing requirements

For more details, or to apply, go to www.actforkids.com.au and click "Join our team".»

SPECIAL VOLUNTEER ALERT! WE ALSO DESPERATELY NEED VOLUNTEERS TO HELP WITH ADMIN WORK AT OUR GOLD COAST OFFICE. PLEASE CALL SHARON WHIP DIRECTLY ON 1300 228 000 IF YOU CAN HELP.

WISHES COME TRUE»

We need to say a special thanks to everyone who helped our wishes come true over the festive season by donating cash or buying an item from the ACTFOR KIDS Christmas Wishlist.

The elves (aka our accounts team) have finished their calculations, and it seems the Wishlist generated almost \$60,000 worth of donations! And that's not even counting the mountain of toys people dropped off to our office.

With the help of those who granted a wish we were able to show the children in our care a real Christmas, complete with presents, a Christmas feast and a personal visit from Santa Claus. Donations to our Wishlist will support our work throughout 2009.»

KEY TO THE DOOR! ACT FOR KIDS TURNS 21»

We've just celebrated turning 21! We won't be making any traditional 21st birthday speeches but we would like to remind you what a great organisation we've grown up to be. Since 1988 we have grown from a team of six child protection workers to become a highly regarded organisation which employs more than 100 professional and passionate people throughout Queensland. Our services cover the entire length of the state with family support

centres in Brisbane, Cairns, Townsville, the Gold Coast and Cape York (Napranum, Aurukun, Kowanyama and Pormpuraaw).

"Twenty-four years ago my colleagues and I decided to take a proactive stance towards child abuse and just three years later ACTFOR KIDS was born (although it was the Abused Child Trust back then). Our daily work had brought the need to act to our attention," founding board member Dr David Wood said.

Over the past three years especially, ACTFOR KIDS has gone beyond our child and family therapy programs to develop new initiatives which prevent child abuse. We have initiated community strengthening projects, generated additional resources for the child safety sector, and built a stronger safety net for struggling parents. We run early intervention services and parenting classes for vulnerable groups. And we have formed powerful public, industry and business partnerships so we can be sure the difference we make is sustained into the future.

Dr Wood is overwhelmed by the achievements that ACTFOR KIDS has made.

"IT MAKES ME PROUD TO LOOK BACK AND SEE HOW MUCH ACTFOR KIDS HAS BEEN ABLE TO HELP YOUNG CHILDREN AND FAMILIES. THERE IS STILL A LOT OF WORK TO BE DONE – AND I THANK OUR STAFF AND THE COMMUNITY FOR THEIR ONGOING SUPPORT!"»



Katrina Christ
photographer

\$55 weekday sitting 07 3891 5885 www.katrinachrist.com.au

» DATE CLAIMERS

To see an up-to-the-minute list of fundraising and community events supporting ACTFOR KIDS go to www.actforkids.com.au Click on "News & Events" and refer to our Event Calendar.

- Lawn Party. Soak in the funky fashion, fine fillies and cool cocktails at Doomben on 28 March. \$35 entry. Call 07 3268 6800 to book.
- Be Inspired. Register for the FREE "Be Inspired" seminar in Cairns by Australia's number 1 business energiser and ACTFOR KIDS ambassador Andrew Griffiths on 17 March. Visit www.andrewgriffiths.com.au
- Graduation Day. The first ever class of students graduate from our Indigenous Training Program in Cairns on 19 March. (Congratulations guys – we're proud of you!)
- Art. Gallery II (Brisbane) is holding an art exhibition in support of ACTFOR KIDS on 19 June. Check our website closer to the event date for details.

Want to hold an event in support of ACTFOR KIDS? Call Shelby McNicholl on 1300 228 000 to discuss opportunities.»



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THANK YOU»

This newsletter is made possible by our friends at Screen Offset Printing who help us to print this newsletter at special mates rates! Thanks.»

96.5FM JOINS OUR FAMILY»



ACTFOR KIDS and Brisbane based radio station 96.5 FM Family have formed an official partnership in 2009. The exciting new arrangement is great news for us because 96.5FM is 'the perfect partner' for a charity which puts families first.

Program Manager and breakfast show announcer Liam Renton first heralded the partnership live on air on 20 January. "We're signing up, we're linking arms for an official partnership in 2009," Liam said. "We're putting the full support of the radio station behind what [ACTFOR KIDS] does. We believe in your charity, we believe in what you do, we believe in families."

With 96.5FM on board, we'll be able to broadcast expert advice about bringing up children, as well as give listeners tips on how to build a child-friendly Australia.

As exclusive radio partners, 96.5FM will also help us create a buzz around our events and campaigns by promoting them across the airwaves.

Be sure to tune your radio to 96.5FM and hear our new partnership blossom.»



THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS»

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