



August 2014

Welcome



After the excitement of the Royal visit we have endeavoured to settle back into normality at Bear Cottage. However, the visit has brought with it

wonderful recognition of the service and we are now busier than ever. As we reach out to more families in need, it requires flexibility to accommodate, support and offer wonderful care to as many as possible.

We recently held our annual Super Hero Week and this has also been very successful in raising awareness, along with much needed donations for Bear Cottage.



A huge thank you to **Bronwen** who has organised this event since its inception three years ago. Bronwen was awarded

the 'Bear Cottage Super Hero Award' for her hard work and dedication in raising the profile of Bear Cottage. We are extremely grateful to her for everything she does.

As the days start to get warmer, we look forward to seeing you at Bear Cottage, whether it be for respite, camps or bereavement care. 🐾

Narelle Martin,
Nursing Unit Manager

Superhero sneak peak

It was a chilly winter day but nothing could deter superheroes of all shapes and sizes descending on Bear Cottage to help us celebrate our 2014 Superhero Launch Party! Take a look at our Superheroes in action . . . 🐾



Happy, healthy mums



In the ever-changing landscape of family services, a new and exciting initiative has seen mothers embrace their health and wellness at Bear Cottage.

Bootcamp@BearCottage was designed to improve the health and well being of the whole family. The camp was the brain-child of Sue Bartolini. Sue, a CNS at Bear Cottage, heard several Mums say “*I didn’t always look like this*” and realised there was a need to help Mums help themselves. In her discussions with parents, Sue heard stories of poor health taking many forms. Diabetes, depression, high blood pressure and weight gain were some of the ailments our Mums carried.

Furthermore, Sue could recognise that in helping Mums, often the heart and soul of the family unit, there would be a flow-on of positive effects to all family members.

The core team of Sue Bartolini, social worker Sue Hearn and nurse Emma Hole worked alongside staff from the Bowden Institute and specialists in nutrition, fitness and well-being, to formulate a six month program. Initially, Mums come together for a five day stay at Bear Cottage. This intensive component of the camp helps Mums set personal health and nutrition goals. Subsequent monthly weekend camps, phone and email support help to maintain motivation.

Any new exercise regime can be a daunting prospect for most of us.



However, introducing Mums to lots of different forms of exercise can be not only healthy, but enjoyable.

Each day starts with a walk, a chance to chat and take in the natural back drop of Manly. Breakfast is a group effort with healthy foods being prepared and enjoyed together.

The day continues with various forms of exercise and stress relief techniques, including yoga, aqua aerobics, meditation and bellydancing.

Boot Camp has seen many “wins” for all involved. Yes, there has been weight loss but there have also been many positive moves towards healthy and sustainable life-styles.

Some of the comments from participants have included; “*Boot Camp has helped me to refocus on me and my needs, something I haven’t done in a long time. Not only has it given me considerable health benefits in both my body and mind, but those*



benefits have helped my whole family. We have now found a healthy way to move forward in life”.

“Boot Camp has helped me learn to start living again, without my child, and in a healthier, more positive way. This has healthy implications for my family. It has reset our focus”.

The camp welcomes both bereaved and non-bereaved parents. There has been a great sense of camaraderie and support, as Mums help each other along the way.

Boot Camp, Wellness Camp, call it what you like, the results speak for themselves – happier, healthier Mums, and as a result, happier and healthier families! 🐾

Boot Camp at Bear Cottage has helped me immensely and came at a time in my life when I really needed support.

It was comforting to meet other mothers facing similar challenges and the realistic approach to total well-being. This included exercise, nutrition and mental health (as opposed to a weight loss focus) which was refreshing. I have left Boot Camp with some positive changes, increased motivation and some fantastic coping strategies I would have never thought of on my own.

I feel so privileged to be part of the Bear Cottage family who have supported me and my family through the worst time of our lives, the loss of our only child, Declan.

When I was invited to come back to Boot Camp at Bear Cottage I was surprised because I assumed once Declan died, the help and services they provide would stop. The nurses talked about becoming part of the Bear Cottage

family, but I did not know what that truly meant until I came back to Boot Camp.

The opportunity to meet other mothers in my situation and the chance to reconnect with the nurses has been so valuable in helping me overcome my grief.

The activities were realistic, and the volunteers providing their services were supportive and understanding. I left Boot Camp feeling reconnected to my son’s memory, my inner self, and motivated to work towards better health. 🐾

Bear Cottage Mum and Boot Camp participant, Elana Kells.



Elana with son Declan and husband Jared at Bear Cottage

Siblings in the snow



Our Bear Cottage siblings recently had the great fortune to be offered an opportunity to take part in a unique Sibling Camp experience at Perisher. Following the resounding success of the inaugural ski trip last year, there was much demand from Bear Cottage families to take up this once in a lifetime opportunity.

After an early 6am start, there was a lot of chatter on the bus on the way down to Perisher. For some it was their first time seeing snow and the weather did not disappoint – it snowed and snowed and snowed!

The days were filled with lessons, snow ball fights and lots of opportunity to practise their skiing and snowboarding skills. In the evening over dinner, the siblings reflected on their day on the snow and it also provided an opportunity for them to share their own life experiences, thoughts and fears. They were all extremely supportive of each other and some long term friendships were formed.

After a fantastic weekend away, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. In the words of one sibling *“when we first started ski lessons, everyone was watching people fall over and try to get up but they couldn’t because they were laughing too much”*.

This was far more than a ski trip, it was precious time away from their families in



Teaching others about your grief

Sometimes family and friends find it very hard to know what to say to help and support people whose child has died. Often they worry about saying the wrong thing and upsetting the parents. Even more so, they avoid the subject or worse still, avoid you altogether. It is not that they don’t want to be there for you. They may not know how to be there for you. This can be very difficult because in your grief, you will need the support of your family and friends.

Here is a wish list from a parent who has lost a child. This list could be given to family or friends or even just stuck on your fridge at home, to help your loved ones have more insight into what you need them to be or say.

- I wish my child hadn’t died, I wish I had them back.
- I wish you would not be afraid to speak my child’s name. My child lived and was very important to me. I need to hear that they were important to you also.
- If I cry or get emotional when we talk about my child, I want you to know that it is not because you have hurt me. It is their death that has caused my tears. You have allowed me to cry and I thank you. Crying and emotional outbursts are healing.
- I wish you would not let my loved one die again by removing their pictures, artwork or other remembrances from your home.
- Being a bereaved parent is not contagious, so I wish you wouldn’t shy away from me. I need you now more than ever.

the safety of a supportive environment. The kids certainly made very special connections with each other and have formed supportive and meaningful friendships.

Asked what could have been done differently? One sibling’s response says it all, *“I don’t think anything needs to be changed. I like how we were given time so we could sort things out for ourselves”*.

Thank you to **The Arkhadia Foundation** and **Sue Angelatos** for funding this trip. Thanks also to **Perisher Manor** and **Mick and Allan Rowson**. 🐾

- I need diversions, so I do want to hear about you, but I also want you to hear about me.
- I might be sad and I might cry, but I wish you would let me talk about my child, my favourite topic of the day.
- I know that you think of me and pray for me often. I also know that my child’s death pains you too.
- I wish you would let me know those things through a phone call, card, note or a big hug.
- I wish you wouldn’t expect my grief to be over in a short period of time. I wish you could understand that my grief will never be over.
- I will suffer the death of my child until the day I die. Grief is a life-long process.
- I am working very hard in my recovery, but I wish you could understand that I will never fully recover.
- I will always miss my child and I will always grieve that they have died.
- I wish you wouldn’t expect me “not to think about it” or “to be happy” Neither may happen for a very long time, so don’t frustrate yourself.
- I don’t want to have a “pity party” but I wish you would let me grieve. I must hurt before I can heal.
- I wish you understood how my world has shattered. I know it is miserable for you to be around me when I am feeling miserable. Please be as patient with me as I am with you. 🐾

The Compassionate Friends



Part of Footprints in the Sand

Bear Cottage’s Bereavement Service

Remembering our children

Harmony Beattie-Taurerewa
2.02.09 – 5.05.14

Jamie Wells 20.06.97 – 7.05.14

Lauren Brodie 26.08.10 – 29.05.14

Rebekah Lowder 15.08.01 – 11.07.14

Aidan Sammut 22.08.08 – 18.07.14

Tristan Heaton 20.09.96 – 18.07.14

Jasmine Richter 23.08.08 – 26.07.14

Our thoughts are with these precious children’s families and friends

Fundraising news

When life gives you lemons

One of our thoughtful siblings, **Olivia Coombes**, aged 8 recently came up with a wonderful idea to raise money for Bear Cottage. With an abundant lemon crop growing on her property in Manilla, she decided to put them to good use by selling them to locals. So far she has raised over \$250 and is still going strong. Thank you Olivia – what a fantastic effort! 🐾



Community generosity

Thank you to all in the community who have gone to extremes to raise money for Bear Cottage. We have been overwhelmed with support from many including:

Chris Lewis and family who ran their golf day; **Dr John Jackson** and crew swam from Manly to Bondi; **Gabrielle and Tom Fyfe** and all at **Altitude Fitness**; **Kelly Sweet** at **Four Pines** who ran a great trivia night; **Ed Halmagyi** and team at **Better Homes and Gardens** for selling produce at Warriewood Markets; **Jo, Lido** and team at **Cavallino Restaurant** for Christmas in July.

Heartfelt thanks for extending the hand of friendship to Bear Cottage. 🐾



Thank you to our heroes

We have so many people to thank for the success of Superhero Week. Firstly, **MCN** producing and airing our television commercial; **'Fast' Ed Halmagyi** for his tireless support and **Simon White** for his generosity. Thank you to everyone involved with our launch party – **ICMS, Bedouin Tents, Peppercorn Food, Cafe2U, Yogurt Land, Cake Angels, Warner Bros, Kings Comics, Stella Maris, Yukes of Today, In the Booth** to name just a few.

Most importantly, thank you to the many schools, corporate and community groups from all over Australia who took part in the event. Schools as far away as White Cliffs and Coober Pedy helped raise funds and awareness. We are so grateful for their creativity, enthusiasm and generosity! 🐾



Staff and students from White Cliffs Public School



Superhero board meeting at Clark Equipment

Staff news



This month we said farewell to one of our Undergraduate AIN's **Megan**. Megan has worked at Bear Cottage for

the past couple of years whilst studying nursing and has now gone on to a Registered Nurse position at the CHW. We look forward to welcoming another couple of students in the next few weeks.

Companion Card



Many Bear Cottage families have a companion card for their child. This is a not for profit program funded by NSW Government and managed by National Disability Services. This card allows a person (irrespective of age) with a lifelong disability to take a companion to selected venues and facilities. The companion gets in for free. Many if not all of our children should be eligible for this card.

A companion can be a family member, friend, volunteer or paid carer. Facilities include cinemas, clubs, theatres, museums, fitness and sporting venues which participate in the scheme. It also includes National Park entry and NSW ferries, trains and buses.

The card is the size of a credit card and you will need to supply two passport size photographs.

To find out more or to obtain an application form you can:

- Phone the information line on Free Call **1800 893 044** or:
- Email: info@nswcompanioncard.org 🐾

Dates for the diary

August

22-24 Bootcamp 2 – follow-up weekend

September

28-1 Dads' Camp
12-14 Junior Sibling's Camp
15-18 Mums' Camp
21 Back to Bear Cottage BBQ

October

10-12 Bootcamp 2 – follow-up weekend
11 World Hospice Day

November

7-9 Bootcamp 2 – follow-up weekend
18-22 Senior Camp

December

7 Family Christmas Party
24 Closed for respite
29 Open for respite



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