August 2015

We have just celebrated our 4th Annual Superhero Week at Bear Cottage, an event that celebrates the superheroes that we see each day at Bear Cottage – our children and families. The event has grown over the last four years and we now have involvement all over Australia including a school in White Cliffs and community groups in Darwin. It is wonderful to receive the support of the Australian community for our hospice.

It was great to see many of our families at the Superhero Party that kicked off the week. This event could not be held without the incredible support from so many people including ICMS, Superstar Parties, Event by Design, Superhero Wrestling, Fly By Fun, Featherdale Wildlife Park, Bricks 4 Kids, Social Playground, Natasha Lorenzen, Guzman Y Gomez, Happy as Larry, Café 2 U, Print 2 Day, Sydney Props, The Balloon Shop, Celebration Cakes, Cake Angels, Capes 4 Kidz, Nudie Juice, Peppercorn Food Company, Kennards Hire, Madame Tussauds, the Police and Fire Brigade, PricewaterhouseCoopers staff and SUP volunteers.

Congratulations also to Judy Lavery who won this year’s Bear Cottage Superhero Award for her tireless volunteering at Bear Cottage.

We look forward to seeing the final fundraising result and acknowledge all of our children and families for their bravery, strength and courage.
Footprints in the Sand Camp – a mum’s perspective

A couple of months ago my family – my husband Russell and I, my step-daughters Brittanee (20yrs), Ellie (14yrs) and my son Tim (11yrs) – attended a “Footprints in the Sand Camp” for bereaved families, put together and hosted by the team at Bear Cottage and located at the Collaroy Centre.

To be honest, we weren’t excited about the camp in the lead up to it. The week before the camp occurred marked the one year anniversary since our darling Hugo went to heaven and it had been a month of really rocky emotions, especially with all three children. Russ certainly didn’t feel like going somewhere and ‘talking about his feelings’ but we absolutely knew that this camp would be very significant for Britt, Ellie and Timmy and would give us a mini holiday together as a family at this important time. Little did we know how much each one of us would be impacted.

It didn’t matter that the location was not at Bear Cottage, we were still met on the Friday night with that comfortable, warm embrace that we, as parents who have been blessed enough to have been on the receiving end of Bear Cottage’s care, know so well. We were immediately disarmed from whatever negativity we had built up in our minds and found ourselves feeling so open and responsive to getting to know the other eight families that attended the camp.

I soon recognised the incredible camaraderie and bond we all shared having all been through caring for a sick child and the loss of that child. The carefully planned and organised activities really helped this along – from fun water activities including canoeing on Narrabeen Lake, family yoga, Ten Pin Bowling and pampering sessions for mums, to wonderful arts and crafts activities for all the family.

Outside the walls of Bear Cottage, I have never seen teenagers relate to each other the way the girls who attended the camp related to each other. Ellie, our 14 year old, had found the previous month particularly hard. She was very connected to Hugo, shared a room with him and seemed to be the hardest hit yet the quietest about it out of the three kids. We saw our rather dark, shut down girl open up like a beautiful joyful flower on this camp as she shared her heart with her new friends, laughed, cried and experienced a new freedom.

Even Brittanee, who is older and at university, got so much out of the camp saying “I really, really, really loved it. I love how daggy and comfy and how real everyone was, like a big extended family. I wish there was another one soon”.

Even the menfolk, who we all know are so good at sharing their feelings, opened up after a bonding session of ten-pin bowling and a couple of beers. My husband Russell said that he has never seen anything like it before. A group of eight guys, sitting together in a group and listening to each other face the realities of continuing life after losing a child. Russell found such compassion, strength and sense of belonging with this amazing group of men and he said that it helped him face some emotions and thoughts he had been feeling head on rather than avoiding them.

The last evening was capped off by a puppet/shadow production put together by all of the children and the lovely art therapist Trypheyna – an unforgettable performance that touched on the children’s journey when they gained entry into the wonderful Bear Cottage. There wasn’t a dry eye in the audience as we saw our children, some of whom would never voluntarily venture in front of the spotlight (including our Tim) shine.

On the last day, the sun shone as we ventured down to the coastline at Collaroy Beach for a BBQ. We made boats, filling them with petals, decorations and little notes about our lost child and as a family, set them off into the water whilst having some time to remember Hugo and what he means to us – a remarkably touching and beautiful way of completing our camp.

The team at Bear Cottage is exceptional – the entire weekend was done with great thoughtfulness, grace and love and we can only imagine how much time and effort went into the organisation of what I consider a weekend of breakthrough for every family that was present.

Thank you Sue, Philly, Trypheyna and the volunteers that made this weekend happen. I know I say this on behalf of every family, a big heart-felt THANK YOU! Love Tina x
Fun at the snow

This year’s Siblings Ski Camp to Perisher Valley was held for teenage siblings in July.

Our snow bunnies enjoyed two days of skiing, tobogganing, touring the mountains via ski lifts, night time skiing festival and snow ball fights in the snow. As we drove towards Perisher Valley, snow began to fall and for many, they experienced their first experience of snow. We all jumped out of the car and danced in the snow as it fell on and all around us. It was a truly magical and breathtaking experience for all of us. Our siblings agreed the camp was a life changing experience and one that they will never forget.

Siblings engaged in activities that helped them learn new skills, build confidence, talk about their life experience, feelings and fears and connect with others. There were many moments of laughter!

One of the siblings said that the camp was just what they needed, to laugh, to connect with other Bear Cottage Siblings and to have a break from their reality.

One of our siblings also celebrated a birthday and we all got to spoil him with an impressive homemade chocolate cake and the whole restaurant singing him “Happy Birthday” with sparklers and all!

We know that children often share special bonds with their siblings and the illness or loss of one child is sure to impact siblings in ways that they will carry for the rest of their lives. The Bear Cottage Siblings Support program aims to provide a supportive environment where children who have a brother or sister with a terminal illness or who has died, can spend time together, connect with others, share experiences and have fun.

We are incredibly grateful to the Arkhadia Foundation for their generosity in allowing us to offer this camp to our siblings.

Parents’ corner

Our nurses were super impressed with Matthew’s board shorts on a recent visit. Matthew and his mum Kerrie were happy for us to share this innovative adaptation for shorts, tracksuit pants and long pants.

To make these, Kerrie cuts down both sides of a regular pair of pants and applies velcro along the sides. This enables the pants to be laid on top of the wheelchair seat before Matthew is hoisted onto his pants. Then the front part of the pants is brought up between his legs and the velcro is pressed closed on both sides.

Matthew says that this is a much easier way to get dressed each day rather than being rolled side to side and having his pants pulled up while he is lying down. It is also much less strain on Kerrie’s back.

Kerrie has a few more tips:

- With longer pants or track suit pants leave the lower end intact (about 30cm) and uncut so that the feet can be slipped into the end of the pants when in the wheelchair so that the innovation is not noticeable.

- At the top of long pants (from the waist to the hip) velcro may not be necessary. Kerrie has experimented by sewing on matching ties which cannot be seen when you are sitting in a wheelchair. This also makes toileting (for boys) easier.

Kerrie says that velcro will also last longer if the garment is washed in a delicate clothing bag.

What a fantastic idea!

Staff news

We’d like to welcome Nadia Menzies who has taken on the Fundraising Manager role until April while Rebecca is on maternity leave.

Adrienne Martin also joins the fundraising team as Administration Officer. Adrienne has been a volunteer at Bear Cottage for the past two years.

Dr Ksenia Hogg also joins the team as Staff Specialist Paediatrician.

Remembering our children

Georgia Wogas
30/06/95 – 17/05/15

Elsie Williams
28/04/10 – 05/06/15

Kaelim Chiem-Drumm
05/02/15 – 11/06/15

Wyatt Roodenrys
13/07/10 – 17/06/15

Timothy Booth
05/06/15 – 25/06/15

Callum Cordell
01/02/07 – 25/06/15

Thomas Farrell
27/09/97 – 27/06/15

Bradley Farrell
20/04/96 – 29/06/15

Jada Acevedo
19/10/05 – 06/07/15

“Grief is like the ocean it comes in waves, ebbing and flowing. Sometimes the water is calm and sometimes it is overwhelming. All we can do is learn to swim.”

Grief Awareness Month - August
**Fundraising news**

**Ottomin Foundation**
Our music therapist Phoebe recently received a special gift from the Ottomin Foundation when she took delivery of a beautiful Reverie Harp.

Crafted in Geelong, it is tuned in a way that makes it accessible to all — so no musical experience is required to play it.

This exquisite sounding instrument will be a beautiful addition to our music therapy program.

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**Sydney Brick Show**
We would like to say a huge thank you to everyone from the Sydney Brick Show. They recently presented Bear Cottage with a cheque for $20,000 which was raised at their event held at Sydney Town Hall in April. As well as raising this incredible amount of money, they provided our children and families with a wonderful day at the show — we particularly loved seeing the giant Bandaged Bear that was specially built for the day.

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**Inner Wheel Club**
We were thrilled to receive $15,000 from Inner Wheel Club of West Harbour this week. The club has supported Bear Cottage since its inception 14 years ago. Along with many generous donations over the years they also provided Bear Cottage with our much loved, well used Bear Cottage Bus. Having long term support like this helps us to plan, grow and continue to extend our services.

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**Food for thought**

They say the kitchen is the heart of any home and we are lucky enough to have two chefs who provide wonderful meals at Bear Cottage.

We’ve had a chat with Chef Kylie about her role at Bear Cottage and the recipe that she has most requests for . . .

**What did you do in your former life?**
I worked in Child Care for most of my working life as a carer. One day the cook phoned in sick and we needed someone to jump in the kitchen, so I did. I loved it so much I decided to go and get formal Cookery qualifications at TAFE. I then worked primarily as a Child Care Centre cook.

**What do you enjoy most about cooking for our kids and families?**
I love preparing food that not only tastes good but nurtures the soul. I like the challenge of cooking food that will appeal to everybody. Nutrition is key to me and I am very conscious about what goes into the meals and try to use quality ingredients.

**What do you think is the most important thing about preparing nutritional and flavoursome meals for your family?**
I believe that food can influence the way you feel and your moods. For this reason, I try to avoid artificial and chemically produced ingredients. I try to cook from scratch as much as I can. Obviously there are days where it’s not possible but generally I will try to make the best choices for my family and the BC family. Also, there is an old saying ‘you eat with your eyes’, with this in mind I always try to present food in a way that is visually appealing. I find I have greater success with children trying a meal if it looks appealing.

**What recipe do you have the most requests for from BC Staff and families and can we have the recipe?**
I have many requests but this is one of the latest. This recipe is great for winter and very easy to prepare and cook. Buy free range chicken if you can. Bon Appetit!

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**Lemon Herb Chicken**

4 chicken breasts
1 lemon
2 tablespoons of olive oil
2 tablespoons of mixed dried herbs
salt and pepper

Put chicken breasts in a baking tray. Drizzle the olive oil over and massage into chicken. Sprinkle all the mixed herbs, salt and pepper evenly over chicken pieces, don’t be shy. Then slice up lemon into slices and place a lemon slice on each breast.

Place in a pre heated oven at 210 Celsius and bake for about 25-30 mins depending on thickness of chicken.

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**Calendar**

- **August 20-24**
  - Dads’ Camp
- **August 29**
  - Junior Siblings’ Camp
- **September 20**
  - Remembering Day
- **November 7**
  - Junior Siblings’ Camp
- **December 13**
  - Family Christmas party
At our recent Footprints in the Sand Camp for bereaved families, this puppet show was created by the children and young people who attended. This extraordinary team of young people worked together over the Saturday and created and presented a puppet show with puppets they conceived and made. With very little direction from Bear Cottage staff they recreated the “Magic of Bear Cottage”. It was a testament to their strength, resilience, care and love for their family and siblings and a willingness to work together. It was amazing. We were blown away! A special thank you to each of you.

Magic of Bear Cottage

Sometimes life can take us on a very windy and uncertain road.

It can be difficult and painful and feel very lonely and we have no idea where we are going or who can help us. It can also feel as though there are too many options but none seem quite right.

We need a compass to guide us.

That is when you discover there is in fact One Enchanted Place in the Kingdom – they call it Bear Cottage.

Which makes it sound tiny but when you get there it is in fact like a Magic Palace which expands, to hold all sorts of wonderful experiences and memories.

Most people only ever get to look in through the window but for some Precious Ones they are given the Key.

They get to the front gate. Open the lock. And step inside.

We’d like you to come with us as we share with you some of our precious stories of being at Bear Cottage with those we love.


One day, the unthinkable happened. The magic of Bear Cottage began to fade. Without the magic to guide people to Bear Cottage, the Cottage was soon lost.

No-one could find it. Where had the magic gone?

It had been sealed away, behind a huge gated fence around Bear Cottage.

The Cottage had been sealed away by the evil Baine. Baine had often looked through the window into Bear Cottage but he had never been inside.

He was jealous of the magic inside.

The massive gate had only one key.

Baine hid the key inside where no-one could reach it.

No-one could share the magic of Bear Cottage.

Everyone was very sad. No-one could find the Cottage sealed away behind the fence and gate.

One day, Millie and Frankie, two clever dogs, were digging in the grass. They found a magic compass which they brought to their family Olivia, Emma, and Baby Alice. Millie the dog was a great digger.

They followed the compass all day, until they reached the huge gates.

They peered through and saw Baine inside.

They asked Baine “Why did you lock up Bear Cottage?” but Baine didn’t answer, he just climbed into his monster car and drove away.

With the gates sealed shut it seemed no-one would ever share in the magic of Bear Cottage again. The magic was trapped inside forever.

But the magic of the Cottage could do amazing things in the hands of amazing people.

Two magic balloons named “Patrick” and “Chaise” floated by. They saw the tall, dark fence, but balloons aren’t scared of gates.

The two balloons floated right over the fence with no trouble. They were inside. They floated into Baine’s room and stole the magic key.

Patrick and Chaise had to co-operate to be able to lift the key. They carried it to their friend “Chef” inside the Cottage.

Chef gave the key to “Philly” the nurse. “Philly” is super smart, and she knew just what to do.

“Philly” gave the key to Frankie the dog. Frankie the dog dug under the fence and gave the key to “Sue” the social worker.

When Sue saw the key she was so happy.

Continued overleaf >>>
She opened the gates and all the magic came flooding out again for everyone to share and enjoy Bear Cottage.

Baine was furious. Sue asked Baine “why did you lock the Cottage away?”

Baine couldn’t refuse to answer Sue. He saw the kindness in her face.

Baine began to cry, “I was jealous, I was angry”.

Baine explained he had lost people he loved as well. He never went to the Cottage.

He was jealous of the magic at Bear Cottage.

Why didn’t he ever go to the Cottage? He never shared his feelings and never felt better.

Baine didn’t want to ever lose anything beautiful, or wonderful, or magic ever again.

Why couldn’t the magic fix everything?

But Sue explained:

“When our loved ones leave Bear Cottage they get to travel up into the sky, on balloons, with the birds and butterflies and dragonflies.”

People think that is the end but we know different.

It is all a matter of your perspective.

When we open our eyes we don’t see the empty space where they once were, we see them floating free and happy, still alive in our memories and dreams.

Bear Cottage people come and go, but never truly leave us. They will never be gone because we will never stop loving them.

The play ends with a big party with lots of music.

THE END

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Cast & Crew

Puppets
- Frankie the dog
- Schnitzel van Krumme – companion
- Jefferson – shy / sad
- Baine – villain / complication
- Chef
- Millie the dog
- “Key”
- Padlock
- Patrick and Chaise – the Balloons
- Baby Alice
- Olivia
- Emma
- Richard
- Sue – the kind and wise social worker. Glasses.
- Philly – the super smart nurse who knew exactly what to do
- Corey and his Sausage Dog and car puppets

Performers

Ellie
Tim
Jodie
Jordan
Tiarne
Emma

Eli
Ollie
Jake
Olivia
Makala

Kalani
Chloe
Cory
Julia
Jessica
Nick

Part of Footprints in the Sand
Bear Cottage’s Bereavement Service