

# Cottage Capers

The Newsletter for Bear Cottage families



December 2016

## House news

As the year draws to a close, we look back at the past 12 months with mixed emotions.

For many of our families it has been a time of loss and great sadness. For others, there may have been sickness, surgery and the many other hurdles that Bear Cottage families face. For Bear Cottage it has been the challenge of continuing to offer the service as best we could with the ongoing renovations.

Like any family we gain strength from the support of those around us. As we reflect on the past 12 months we can still smile with the memories of all of the children and families who have entered the doors of Bear Cottage. Laughter, music and noise have filled the house and the staff and volunteers at Bear Cottage have drawn strength from those in their care.

On behalf of the staff and volunteers, thank you for allowing us to be a part of your lives for a moment in time. We hope you can all find the strength to enjoy the festive season and we look forward to catching up in the New Year. ■

Narelle Martin, Nursing Unit Manager

## Moments in time



You can't stay in your corner of the Forest waiting for others to come to you. You have to go to them sometimes.

Winnie the Pooh Quote #9  
[www.quotesworthrepeating.com](http://www.quotesworthrepeating.com)



# The invisible string . . .

Every family member has unique and individual needs. Our Bear Cottage invisible string of connection is multi-faceted and extends to all members of the family in unique and individual ways:

## Our dads

One of the facets is our Dads' support program. This year, Bear Cottage facilitated two **Dad's Camps** and our first ever **PitStop** camp. These programs offer

Dads the chance to relax and unwind together, opening the door to conversation, friendship and laughter whilst Bear Cottage staff care for their sick child.



**Dad's Camp** provides men with the opportunity to spend time with other men who understand one another in a fun, supportive and relaxed environment. This year our Dads participated in a diverse range of activities that

pushed them out of their comfort zone whilst supporting each other (and maybe competing against each other a little).

Activities included surfing, steak and wine night, synchronised swimming, sailing, golf, ghost tours at the Q Station and a challenging experience, the sky walk at Sydney's Sky Tower. For the first time this year we invited bereaved and non-bereaved Dads and in the words of some of our Dads *"mixing bereaved and non-bereaved Dads was the best thing"*.

**PitStop** is Bear Cottage's Men's Wellness Program – a program that links the idea of the importance of vehicle maintenance checks and tune-ups, to maintaining personal health in a supportive environment. With the help of experts from various agencies and fields, this program is designed to help Dads take control of their own health and wellbeing.



So far, the results we have seen are weight loss, reduced intake of sugar and processed foods, better movement and mobility, improved mental health, self-esteem and confidence. Activities included the opportunity to engage in educational workshops on nutrition, movement and mobility, relationships and connections, mental health and sleep hygiene.

Dads also took part in physical challenges such as boxing, pilates, paddle boarding and nature hikes. There was a strong sense of camaraderie, connection and friendship created through these activities.

There was of course, plenty of friendly rivalry, with Dads teaming up for cooking competitions where they were divided into teams. They then worked to design the best breakfast combinations based on presentation and nutritional value. They also enjoyed a "smoothie workshop" where they learn to swap ingredients for more healthy substitutes. This created a real sense of ownership in the kitchen providing them with skills they hadn't previously had.

It wasn't all hard work and there was plenty of downtime to de-stress and unwind. **"Fast Ed" Halmagyi** gave the Dads an interactive cooking class teaching them how to make a beautifully healthy paella dish. They also had the chance to relax with reflexology. By end of the program the Dads felt like new men on the inside, but we wanted to enhance that feeling by giving them the opportunity to also *look* like new men. The men indulged in a unique 'barber experience' where they were treated to haircuts, styling and a traditional clean shave.

One of our dads said *"Thanks again for putting together such an enjoyable and fruitful weekend. It's been a long time since I've felt so relaxed and pampered. I'm leaving Bear Cottage a new man - armed with new skills to improve myself to become a more effective and happy Dad."*

## Our siblings

Our Bear Cottage sibling support program provides a supportive environment where siblings have fun and connect with peers enhancing their confidence, self-esteem and inner strength. Each year we welcome experienced campers and new ones.



Lily (pictured left)

**Lily Roodenrys** is one of our experienced Junior Campers and is considered a mentor for our new siblings who may be feeling a little nervous attending their first camp. Lily has just graduated from our **Junior Sibling Camp** and will transition to our **Senior Sibling Camp** program. Bear Cottage supports siblings of variety of ages we have camps for junior and senior siblings, young adult social evenings and days for younger siblings.

Lily says: *"My name is Lily, I have gone to four junior sibling camps and they are the best. It is great to meet so many new people that have gone through the same experiences as you. I have so many new friends from all of the sibling camps I've been to."*

*Every year there is a different theme, the first one I went to was a circus. At first I got really nervous but when I got there I felt relaxed,*

*. . . continued on back page*

# Dealing with Christmas after the death of your child

Coping with the idea of the Christmas season after the death of your child is hard to contemplate. Christmas celebrations seem to start earlier every year. From September onwards there are decorations in the shops and Christmas music playing. Sometimes the anticipation of the event is harder than the actual day, and even more so, when this anticipation commences so early and is so intense.

Christmas won't be the same, because your family is irreversibly different, but here are some tips that might be helpful to bear in mind when thinking about Christmas (adapted from the Compassionate Friends).

- Re-shape your Christmas traditions, and find ways to symbolically remember your child and let this symbolism comfort you.
- Don't allow other people to dictate to you how you should get through this time of year.
- Don't feel you have to go to parties or festivities with friends/extended family if you can't cope with them.
- Sometimes we don't know what we will feel like doing until the last minute. Don't feel that you have to have a plan. Tell people you will decide on the day and you will come if you feel up to it, but may well not be able to.
- Let close friend/family know that you are struggling and need to be able to talk.
- Encourage people to acknowledge your loss at Christmas – say their name, mention them in conversation.

- Within the family try to talk to each other about how you are feeling or what you all might want to do. Thinking and talking together can help you prepare yourself for Christmas and sometimes when these plans do go right, the day can bring surprising comfort.
- If you have young children in the family be aware that they might wish for Christmas to carry on as before – although this can be enormously painful for you, for surviving children the normality of Christmas celebrations can be a comfort.

... sometimes the anticipation of the event is harder than the actual day.

- Don't put too much stress on yourself. If there are difficult relations who expect to visit or for you to visit them, just say you can't do it this year if it is going to make you feel worse. Or introduce a time limit – *"we'll come over for a quick drink but will only stay an hour"*.
- Develop a Christmas ritual to mark your loss, for example, light a candle, spend time at a special memorial place on your own or with others. Some people find buying and donating a present in their child's memory can be helpful. Including your child's memory in some way can be comforting. For example, find a way of including them when



you sign cards or having something special that belonged to them in your Christmas photo.

- Spend time with people who understand. Avoid those who don't.
- On the day itself, make time for you to escape if things are too much. A walk outside can really help ease tension.
- If you can't cope with the idea of Christmas at all, go away and do something completely different. (Be aware though, that sometimes being away from supportive friends or family can be more difficult and the jollity of strangers may be painful).
- Try to take some gentle exercise every day – really helps boost those much needed endorphins. ■

**If you require support, please contact our Social Worker on 9976 8336.**



**Part of Footprints in the Sand**  
Bear Cottage's Bereavement Service

## Remembering our Children

**Miro Joenperae McIntyre**  
22.02.08 – 12.09.16

**Daniel Howarth**  
7.01.98 – 28.09.16

**Aleisha Middleton**  
12.06.16 – 28.09.16

**Nathan Brown**  
28.07.98 – 29.09.16

**Georgia Khoury**  
26.01.01 – 1.10.16

**Jayda Hannaford**  
8.11.06 – 4.10.16

**Ailis Connolly-Cowan**  
8.11.98 – 7.11.16

**Brendan Warnick**  
10.02.99 – 10.11.16

**Leilani Hirmiz**  
20.10.14 – 18.11.16

**Sian Grahl**  
10.03.91 – 19.11.16

## Parents' corner

### Beach bliss

The **'FreeWheeler'** takes you where most wheelchairs can only dream of – onto the sand and into the water. Northern Beaches Council has two FreeWheelers available for loan free of charge. The following link provides information about this.

<http://www.warringah.nsw.gov.au/live/community-support-services/disability-services/freewheeler-wheelchair>

The Freewheeler (or beach wheelchair) has soft pneumatic balloon tyres that roll over sand and low waves on the beach. It can be borrowed without charge for use by a support person for a person aged 5+ with a disability. To book the Freewheeler, you can complete the Loan Application Form on Council's Disability Services page or contact Council's Development Officer on 9942 2560.

**A beach wheelchair can be borrowed from:**

- Manly Council Lifeguard: 9976 1497
- Newport Surf Life Saving Club lifeguard: 9997 6274 weekends or

0418 628 362 weekdays

- Bilgola Surf Life Saving Club lifeguard: 9918 2337
- Collaroy Beach - Surf Life Saving Club lifeguard: 9982 9261 or 9942 2560



### Bear Cottage contacts

You will find included with this newsletter, a Bear Cottage fridge magnet which lists all of our contact numbers for easy referral. We hope you will find this helpful and please feel free to contact us in times of need. ■



# Fundraising news

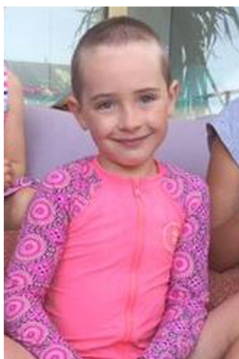
## A cut above



At Bear Cottage we are constantly inspired by the generosity of spirit of our donors. We were especially touched when we got a phone call

from David Dawson to say his daughter **Scarlett** had requested no presents for her 7th birthday, instead she asked for donations to be made to Bear Cottage – but it didn't end there.

Scarlett had asked to have her head shaved and for all monies raised to go to support Bear Cottage families. She set herself an ambitious target of \$5,000 and she has managed to surpass this by raising \$5,849.85! We want to express our heartfelt thanks to this fundraising superstar who is an inspiration to us. ■



## Cycling for a cause



Thanks to **Giovanni and Marilyn** and the team at **Pilu** for hosting a terrific fundraising breakfast recently in aid of Bear Cottage. We were delighted to be invited to Pilu Restaurant in Freshwater to welcome the group of hardy cyclists back from their Sunday morning trek to Church Point. Auction items were snapped up as Dean the auctioneer kept us highly entertained and our sincere thanks to all who gave so generously to support Bear Cottage. The event raised an incredible \$16,000 thanks to everyone who supported the event with such open hearts. ■

## Our siblings ... continued from page 2



*happy and supported by all of the kids and Bear Cottage staff. Then I was so much more excited about the next camp which had a "pirate" theme.*

*I love talking to other kids about my little brother Wyatt. We also got to do some fun stuff like this year when we went to Aladdin and it was such an amazing experience especially watching it with all of my other friends from Bear Cottage!"*

Lily has also been a huge supporter for Bear Cottage in her local community. Lily and her brother, Lennox helped organise a fundraiser for Bear Cottage at her school during Superhero Week. The whole school dressed up in their superhero outfits (including teachers) for a Bear Cottage Superhero Day. The school raised over \$1,000 dollars.

Lily's year also hand crafted a beautiful blanket now features in a special spot within the Cottage. ■

**We look forward to welcoming all of our families at our Family Support programs in 2017. For information about when our camps will be held, please see the calendar enclosed. You will also find a copy of our new Family Support flyer which outlines all of our various activities that we run. For more information please call Bear Cottage on 9976 8300.**



# Staff news

Bear Cottage is very lucky to have a small group of enthusiastic Assistant in Nurses. Each year we welcome Undergraduate nursing students to assist us in the care of the children and gain valuable experience. Recently we have welcomed **Samantha, Tess** and **Georgia** into these roles.

Congratulations to our outgoing AIN's, **Anna** and **Alana**. Both have been successful in gaining new placements as Registered Nurses for next year.

Over the past few months we have said goodbye to **Phoebe** our Music Therapist and **Mary-anne** from Housekeeping. We wish them well in their new endeavours.

Bear Cottage is a hard place to leave and we are delighted to have **Georgie** return as a Registered Nurse along with **Laura** who will also bring along valuable nursing experience.



Our new music therapist **Belle** has now started with us and it is lovely to have music in the house once again. Belle also works at Sydney Children's

Hospital and will be here two days a week.

We are also looking forward to welcoming our new Volunteer Manager **Rachel** to Bear Cottage. She will commence in the role early in the new year.



Finally, congratulations to **Emma** who welcomed baby Ryder into her family recently. ■



## Calendar

December 11th  
**Christmas Party**

February 19th  
**Open Day**

March 11th  
**Junior Sibling Day**

March 24th-26th  
**Footprints in the Sand Camp**

April 1st-2nd  
**Senior Sibling Camp**