

Cottage Capers

The Newsletter for Bear Cottage families



December 2019

Welcome

It has been another busy year at Bear Cottage as we continue to care for many children and their families through difficult times. Although there have been times of sadness, there have also been many moments when laughter and happiness have vibrated through the Cottage as life is celebrated.

December and January will see many families come for a visit and we look forward to providing you with a much needed break during this busy period. Please ensure all of your paperwork is completed accurately by your doctor and sent to us prior to admission.

There has been a temporary restructure at Bear Cottage and until further notice, all bookings can be made through **Philly** by either contacting her at **PhilippaLouise.Smith@health.nsw.gov.au** or by phoning 99768324. For after hours emergency admissions please call the nurses on 0429896586.

If any member of your family is interested in participating in one of our many Family Support activities or camps in 2020, please do not hesitate to register your expression of interest. We always try to accommodate everyone but it can be difficult as we have limited spots available. Preference will be given to those who have not attended a particular program before. In 2020 in order to ensure equity, we will be taking down names and then allocating places closer to the particular camp.

On behalf of the team at Bear Cottage I would like to thank you for allowing us to care for your child and family and wish everyone a safe and happy festive season. We look forward to catching up with you in the upcoming months. 🐾

Narelle Martin, Nursing Unit Manager



Christmas cheer

One of the most anticipated events on our Bear Cottage calendar is our annual Bear Cottage Family Christmas party. It is a wonderful opportunity for our families – old and new – to come back to Bear Cottage and catch up with friends, staff and volunteers.

This year's event was our largest event ever with over 500 people attending and as you can see by the photos below, a great time was had by all.

Our Christmas Party would not be possible without the support of so many people who willingly donate their services and give up their time. For many of those that support us, they come back year after year and despite the ever increasing size of the event – they are always happy to be involved.

This year is somewhat bitter sweet as we will be saying farewell to a special Bear Cottage friend, **Michael Delaney** from **Cafe2U Cromer** who is retiring and selling his business. Michael has been a regular at all our events for the last 10 years. He really is part of the Bear Cottage family and will be sadly missed.



Thank you to all the families who joined us on this special day and to those who made it possible. Merry Christmas! 🐾



We would like to thank Danny Mayson Kinder, ICMS, Clown Doctors, Jayden James and his beautiful clydesdale horses, Tonya James and her Bricks4Kidz Northern Beaches team, Merlin, Manly Sea Life, Cake Angels, Kathleen Harper from Cakes by Kathleen for the gingerbread, Bounce O Rama, Stage Artz, 1800 Promo, The Little Creative Company, Shara Rose, Dean from Peppercorn Meat, the O'Kane family and Wholly Schnit, Pizza Event, Ben & Jerrys Manly, Sabrina Stirling for her amazing cupcakes, Westfield Warringah Mall and our Bear Cottage volunteers.



My Bear Cottage story by Elijah

I have been coming to Bear Cottage since I was five with my brother and my family and now it has almost been ten years. My favourite thing about Bear Cottage is the fact it feels more like a home and not like a hospital. It gives me, my brother and my family and others the opportunity to be distracted from the sickness, hospital and appointments and focus on having a good life.

I have been attending Sibling Camp for a while now – Junior and Senior Camp. The thing I enjoy the most is spending time with other like-minded people and sharing experiences and memories. These people will laugh, cry and make you feel great because they are going through the same things.

One special memory from Bear Cottage was when **Fast Ed** came to Bear Cottage and I was able to cook paella with him. It was amazing and such a fun afternoon – I couldn't believe we had the opportunity. One of my favourite meals would have to be Shannah's chicken schnitzel (it's absolutely amazing) and so is Shannah!

There are many activities that I, my family and others have the opportunity to do. Some activities I enjoy the most are the art table with Judy or Gy, Music Therapy with Belle and playing board games with the nurses and volunteers.

One of my favourite special outings has actually been this year. In July myself and other siblings from Bear Cottage went on a Destination Camp to Queensland. It was just after my brother had surgery and he and my mum were in hospital for a few weeks. Having them home was the best and traveling to Queensland was an amazing opportunity and change of focus. We went to all of the attractions in Queensland and everyone had an amazing time. I made some pretty wonderful friends as well, who I will always remember and look forward to catching up with at Superhero Day and the Bear Cottage Christmas party.

To any kids who haven't gone to a Sibling Camp, I highly recommend going. You will make friends for life and have the best time ever. It is truly an amazing experience you will always remember. Even if you are shy or nervous, it's okay – I was too!

It is so important for people to support Bear Cottage because it's not a place that extends life expectancy, it's a place that gives people a life full of enjoyment, happiness and invaluable memories – which is what all these children like my brother need. It helps sick children and their families get away from the business of life and the role of carer and focus on spending quality time together, living a wonderful life. I would also like to mention how amazing the staff and volunteers are at Bear Cottage. They are our family. They are always there when you need them and always have a positive outlook and supportive spirit.

The cooks all create wonderful food which everyone loves and the volunteers give up their own time to support and give patients and families happiness. We are grateful to be loved and supported by Bear Cottage. 🐾

Thank you Elijah for so generously sharing your story!

A very good year

As 2019 draws to a close there are many highlights to look back on. Bear Cottage staff have shared some of the things that have made this year so memorable.

Watching the siblings plan, rehearse and perform their amazing fashion parade was a highlight for me and Mustafa's surprise appearance zooming up the hallway on his scooter topped it off! There was laughter and applause all through the house.

Art Therapist Judy



I was so proud to see the Bear Cottage volunteers be recognised for their commitment, passion and dedication as a state finalist in the **NSW Volunteers of the Year Awards**, Volunteer Team category. This recognition is testament to the 10,000 volunteering hours per year that are given with an open heart by our volunteers.

Volunteer Manager Rachel

Watching the children and families being presented with their "bravery medals" from Fire & Rescue NSW team at the Superhero Party was a real highlight and very moving! **Nurse Philly**



I don't have one highlight in particular, but it has been so lovely to be welcomed into the Bear Cottage family and I've really enjoyed getting to know the families who pass through the Bear Cottage doors.

Physio Amy Rogers

I have had the pleasure of working with **My Teddy** who kindly donate personalised Bears for our children to brighten their first admission. It is wonderful to see the children's smiles when they receive their Teddy.

Admin Officer Wendy



Seeing the beautiful sculpture in the Garden of Remembrance transform from our first sketches to the beautiful finished product that now forms the centrepiece of the garden. **Community Relations Manager Bronwen**

It's so inspiring to see the siblings attending Camp for the first time. They arrive feeling nervous but in no time at all they make friends and support each other. Watching them conquer their fear when they attempted and completed the ropes course at the Zoo was a real highlight and seeing the siblings catch up at events and witnessing the lasting connections they have formed. **Child Life Therapist Gy**

I have a fondness for the Dad's Camps, to witness the real friendships that have been made from time spent together. I love the way they embrace with ease any activity on the program – even if not a favourite. **Nurse Sue**

Working alongside our Family Advisory Group to ensure our Family Support Programs are delivered in the best interests of those that need it most. **Nurse Manager Narelle** 🐾



Cottage Camps

As you know, Bear Cottage does it's best to support not only the patient but all members of the family. This is mostly done through our support camps. We have a very active and busy **Family Support** team who organise and facilitate many camps throughout the year. These camps are for mums, dads, siblings of all ages, grandparents and our bereaved families.

The concept behind all our camps is to give family members some well-deserved time out with special treats or experiences and provide the opportunity to mix with their peers who are experiencing similar circumstances. Research has proven that peer support is incredibly beneficial in this situation.

The feedback from these camps is generally very positive with families talking about the benefits of learning from each other, having open and honest conversation and the general experience of support gained from others who have a shared experience.

Participants describe camp as being *"a supportive, non-judgemental, sometimes challenging but valuable experience"*. **All camps are free of charge so as not to limit participation due to financial constraints.**

Although parents may have met other parents during their stays in hospital or at Bear Cottage, for siblings and grandparents, they may be the only person at school or in their social group that are in their situation. Many family members



that meet on camps continue to stay in touch away from Bear Cottage ensuring there is a continuation of that 'invisible string' of support that we so often talk of at Bear Cottage.

Our Camps are a mixture of bereaved and non-bereaved participants and our grandparent and **Footprints in the Sand Camp** for bereaved families are held off site.

How do you get involved?

All camps are highlighted on the calendar that is included with this newsletter. To accommodate the demand, we hold two camps per year for mums, dads, siblings and bereaved families. If you are interested in attending, please keep an eye out for the expression of interest that will be mailed to you prior to each camp. We will keep a list of those that have expressed an interest and you will be informed if you are successful in being offered a place at that camp. Whilst we try to and accommodate as many participants as possible, there are limited spaces for all our camps so the facilitators will be as fair and equitable as we can.

If you would like further information, please don't hesitate to contact **Narelle** on **9976 8301**. 🐾

"Dad's Camp is my only real opportunity for time out with the monumental bonus of being able to connect with people who share a similar life predicament to me".

Bear Cottage Dad

Budding artists

It was wonderful to welcome the students who participated in **Operation Art** to Bear Cottage so that they could present their beautiful artworks. *Joyce*



Operation Art is a program which encourages NSW school students to create artworks for sick children in hospital.

Joyce Zhu is a student in Year 6 at Haberfield Public School and her work was called "Forest Girl". Joyce said *"I drew a girl with a bunch of animals to show that you can co-exist with everyone. I wanted to provide this artwork for sick children because my hope is even if you are sick you can hope for the best and live peacefully with everyone."*

Millie Boggs from Blaxland East Public School was also very proud to present her artwork entitled "Mr Twit" which was inspired by the Roald Dahl book "The Twits". Millie

also brought along a copy of the book as a gift for the children at Bear Cottage and a beautiful card that said *"To all the kids at Bear Cottage, thank you for letting me come and present my artwork to you. I have also given you all a present to show how much this means to me"*. Look out for these beautiful new art works on your next visit to Bear Cottage. 🐾



Millie and Art Therapist Judy



Siblings enjoying the beach at FITS camp

At our recent **Footprints in the Sand Camp** the Bear Cottage siblings, aged between 3-14 years, had a fantastic time participating in a music workshop run by **Phoebe's Musical Chairs**. They came up with the lyrics by brainstorming ideas and buzz words about what they loved about their mums and dads. Here's what they had to say . . .

We are young and you are old

Chorus

Dad you pick me up when
I'm on the ground

Mum you brush me off
when I'm feeling down

Verse

We are young and you are old
Just remember, you've been told
Mum we love you, you're amazing

You give us caring hugs and
you smell so clean

Dad when you are mean to me
I know it's a joke

I like to laugh with you,
because you're a really good bloke

Chorus

Dad you pick me up
when I'm on the ground
Mum you brush me off
when I'm feeling down

Verse

Mum you fill our bellies,
hearts and souls

Thanks Mum, I love your rissoles
and sausage rolls

Dad I love to wrestle,
but not when you fart

And even though you are smelly, you've
always got a place in my heart

We are young and you are old
Just remember, you've been told! 🐾



Remembering our children

Maxim Luca Guedes

8/03/15 – 28/09/19

Harper Dowdall

25/10/15 – 24/10/19

Connor Mason

23/09/01 – 7/11/19

Meet our staff

We have recently welcomed our new Social Worker Lauren to Bear Cottage and while she is looking forward to getting to know you, we would like to introduce her to you . . .

Where did you work before Bear Cottage?

I have worked in the community for the past 10 years, working with families who have a child with a severe disability.

I worked with these families to navigate the complex world of disability supports, providing care and counselling and empowering families to continue the amazing support they provide to their child.

What attracted you to work at Bear Cottage?

As a social worker I had always been aware of the amazing facility that is Bear Cottage and the incredible service they provide. It had always been a dream job to me and the position came up I went for it.

The chance to continue my family work, walking alongside these children and their families and supporting them is such a privilege.

What were your first impressions?

It is better that I could even imagine. This place is truly special. The team are so passionate, the volunteers are incredible and the facility itself and what it offers is so important.

The hallways are filled with music, art, smiling faces and Beau the dog. However the children and the families are what makes Bear Cottage. I have spent the past few weeks getting to know some of them and I am so excited for my future here at Bear Cottage.

Can you tell us a bit about yourself?

I am a Northern Beaches local. I love the beach and spending time with my family, husband Tom and two kids Milla and Will. I am currently, slowly renovating a very old weatherboard house. I am really enjoying the process of bringing this house back to its glory. 🐾



Social worker Lauren

Other staff news

With the end of the year coming to a close it has been a time to farewell the following staff.

Our Nursing team loses two of our Emmas.

Emma D had been visiting Australia from Ireland and took up the opportunity to work at Bear Cottage for six months. She thoroughly enjoyed her time and is hopeful to return sometime in the future.

Emma H however, has been at Bear Cottage for many years. Emma commenced working at Bear Cottage in 2013 and is much loved by all. Emma is making the move to country NSW with her family but we are sure she will never be far from Bear Cottage and will always be in our thoughts.



Emma H

Hayley J is temporarily on leave after celebrating the birth of her new baby boy **Finn**.



Hayley

Staff Specialist **Nicole** has welcomed baby **Harry** into her family.



Michaelle

Fortunately for us, we are very lucky to have **Michaelle** and **Wendy** joining our team as Registered Nurses.

We also have the lovely **Dr Hannah Klingberg**

who is filling in as Staff Specialist whilst Nicole is on maternity leave.



Hannah

Business Manager **Toby** has also left Bear Cottage and we wish him well in his future endeavours. 🐾

Parent's corner

The **Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement (ACGB)** has launched the world's first app specifically designed to support bereaved individuals and their family and friends.

The free **MyGrief App**, which has just been rolled out in Australia, the US and the UK, aims to support bereaved people, as well as those who are supporting them.

The App is designed to be simple to use, and uses uncomplicated language to support and guide users.

Designed by industry professionals, the App is expected to be accessed by a broad range of Australians experiencing grief and bereavement, with the main user group initially expected to be 18 – 60-year-old males whom arguably according to research, are more reluctant to seek support.

Available for free for android and Apple devices, the MyGrief App was jointly funded by Gandel Philanthropy and the Jack Brockhoff Foundation. 🐾



Christmas cheer

Many of you will have enjoyed **Chef Owen's** delicious plum pudding if you have stayed at Bear Cottage in the lead up to Christmas. Now you can enjoy his recipe at home:

Baked Plum Pudding

Ingredients

600g dried fruit
2tsp mixed spice
250gms sugar
3/4 tsp salt
175gsm margarine
300gsm plain flour
425ml water
10g baking soda



Method

Boil all ingredients (except for flour and soda) together for 5 minutes

Allow all ingredients to become cold
Sift flour and soda together and add to mixture

Pour into a 20cm greased baking tray and cook in slow oven for 1 1/2-2 hours
Serve with custard or white sauce.

Enjoy!