



# Connections

## newsletter Summer 2010

### Celebrity Nutritionist Rosemary Stanton Speaks to Foster Carers

CareSouth, in partnership with William Campbell College and Community Services, hosted a nutrition workshop for foster carers on Wednesday, 13 October, 2010 at the Berry Hotel.

The workshop was held to encourage healthier food choices for children in foster care and featured a talk by celebrity nutritionist **Dr Rosemary Stanton**, and a practical cooking demonstration by **Matt Watson**, head chef and joint owner of the Berry Hotel. Afterwards, foster carers in attendance asked Dr Stanton questions about healthy cooking and nutrition for the children they care for. "Children in foster care have many disadvantages and set backs to overcome, we hope this workshop equipped our foster carers to remove one more hurdle by ensuring that they have an opportunity to eat well," said CareSouth's CEO, Janenne Wells.



Matt Watson giving a cooking demo for carers.

"You can't underestimate the impact of a child's diet on their wellbeing and behaviour. Assisting foster carers to provide healthy, balanced nutrition for children in care gives those children the very best chance to grow and develop, fuelled by food that gives them energy and an opportunity to concentrate and learn," said William Campbell College's manager Andrew Munro. According to Dr Stanton, poor nutrition amongst Australian children is widespread.



Left to Right: Andrew Munro, Rosemary Stanton, Janenne Wells, Stuart Crofts



**"They're eating more snacks, they're having more soft drinks, they're having more fast foods. They're not eating more fruit, vegetables, meat, bread, milk - any of those basics. It's all of the extras. The average child has three treats in their lunchbox a day and 93% of kids have a treat in their lunchbox every day,"** said Dr Stanton.

Dr Stanton is no stranger to the challenges facing parents, grandparents and foster carers in providing nutritious food. She and her husband have four children and 10 grandchildren, including two foster children on permanent placement.

"I want us all to think more about our food – where it comes from, how to grow or prepare it, how it affects our health and how our choices impinge on climate change," said Dr Stanton.

### CareSouth OOH Program Provides Foster Carers and Caseworkers with Competency Trainings

\* **Connecting Through Care** was presented by the Australian Childhood Association in mid October. More than 50 foster carers and caseworkers attended this two-day workshop at Kiama which provided them with a framework to understand the complex presentations and behaviours of traumatized children and young people in out-of-home-care.

\* **The Importance of Family Contact** was presented by Paula Hayden in August 2010. Some 35 carers plus caseworkers attended this one day workshop. The first message presented by Paula Hayden was "The Value of Family Contact" which included promoting child well-being and development, assisting with family restoration and maintaining or building attachment and connectedness with family and other significant people. Secondly, Paula discussed the need for planning and decision making which should occur in collaboration with children, young people, their families and carers to the full extent possible.

\* **Rights and Responsibilities Training** is one of CareSouth's regular and ongoing training events and was open for all carers to attend. The training was held in October and covered rights and responsibilities as a foster carer.

**More training is planned for Carers in 2011....**



Foster carers enjoy a Nutrition Workshop at the Berry Hotel encouraging healthier food choices for children.

**FROM THE CEO,  
JANENNE WELLS**



As this is our summer edition, we are in the lead up to Christmas—a busy time for all of us but not necessarily the happiest time of the year for everyone in our community.

In November 2008 Justice James Wood released his final report in relation to the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection in NSW. One of the key recommendations of the report was that Out-of-Home Care services should be provided by the non-government sector. This reaffirmed the findings of previous inquiries (Usher 1991/2 and Fitzgerald 2000). CareSouth is committed to working with other NGOs and Community Services to ensure that we promote good outcomes for children whilst they are in care and into their future. We now have a number of our children in care who are nearing the age of 18 and it is pleasing to see them completing their year 12 studies, attending formals and making plans for the future. For at least one person this includes entering the Defence Forces. This is quite an achievement considering the difficulty that these vulnerable young people experience.

CareSouth is also supporting a campaign undertaken by ACWA's (The Australian Children's Welfare Association) Leaving Care Working Party (LCWP) to advocate for funding towards driving lessons for young people in care. CareSouth has a number of young people in care who have already reached driving age or will be leaving care over the next two years. CareSouth recognises the difficulty that vulnerable young people experience in accessing a vehicle and engaging a suitable adult to log 120 hours of driving lessons. Access to driving lessons for young people is an important road and safety issue that has the potential to reduce road fatalities. Having a driving licence significantly improves the ability of young people in rural and regional Australia to access employment and attend training, as well as contributing to reducing crime and enhancing social inclusion. We would appreciate your support in relation to this matter and if you would like more information, please contact us for details.

I would like to thank everyone who has supported us during 2010 to make this a "good year" for our children and young people. Merry Christmas, safe travelling if you are going away and I look forward to your support in the new year!

**CELEBRATING LONG STANDING  
CARESOUTH EMPLOYEES**

**REAL PEOPLE MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE.**



**Therese Gehlhaar**

- Therese Gehlhaar** 13 yrs Youth Hostel Team Leader
- Trevor Pickering** 10 yrs Disability Program Direct Care Worker
- Belinda Beveridge** 9 yrs OOHC Caseworker
- Siretta Dawson** 9 yrs Accounts Clerk
- Julie Strickland** 9 yrs Executive Support Officer
- Rob Wilson** 9 yrs OOHC Wollongong Office Manager
- Lynette Oakes** 9 yrs Residential Services Youth Support Worker
- Janelle Dowling** 7 yrs Disability Services Direct Care Worker
- Lisa Loveday** 7 yrs OOHC Nowra Office Manager
- Sonia Liddicoat** 7 yrs Residential Services Operations Manager
- Rhonda Miller** 6 yrs Family Choices Manager
- Julia Hunter** 6 yrs Family Choices Caseworker
- Chris Stubbs** 6 yrs Foster Care Program Operations Manager
- Kym Loxley** 5 yrs Disability Services Direct Care Worker
- Natalie Brajkovic** 5 yrs Brighter Futures Family Worker
- Dee Neveling** 5 yrs Clinical Psychologist
- Jo Munro** 5 yrs Public Relations Manager
- Clare Wilson** 5 yrs Aunties & Uncles Operations Manager



**Trevor Pickering**



**Belinda Beveridge**



**Rhonda Miller**



**Clare Wilson**



**Jo Munro**



**Julie Strickland**



**Julia Hunter**



**Dee Neveling**



**Chris Stubbs**



**Left to Right: Chris Stubbs, Belinda Beveridge, Lisa Loveday, Siretta Dawson, Trevor Pickering, Lynette Oakes and Therese Gehlhaar.**

**UOW RESEARCH USED TO RECRUIT AUNTIES & UNCLES**

CareSouth's Aunties & Uncles program recently partnered with the University of Wollongong in an extensive, nation-wide study to examine levels of awareness and attitudes towards children's welfare services.

The study showed that younger females working full or part time, who have higher household incomes and have no children of their own are more likely to consider volunteering for the Aunties & Uncles program in future than others in the community. These people also have a good support network of family and friends, as well as greater levels of empathy and life satisfaction.

In response to the findings, CareSouth is launching a targeted Aunties & Uncles campaign incorporating the findings from the research in a range of media from posters to TV advertisements.



**CareSouth Carers/Mentors Uncle Greg and Aunt Lisa**

Only **14%** of study participants had heard of the Aunties & Uncles program

Only half of those people **7%** actually knew about the program

When participants were provided with info, almost **50%** of those surveyed indicated they would consider becoming an Aunt or Uncle

## Meet Therese Gehlhaar CareSouth's Longest Serving Employee

It's not hard to know why Therese Gehlhaar is so good at her job. As the CareSouth youth hostel team leader, her role is to provide a safe crisis accommodation centre for young people aged 16 to 24 years in the Nowra area. With a heart of gold, unyielding tenacity, a depth of knowledge, and the will to make a difference, Therese has been impacting the lives of youths for the last thirteen years with CareSouth.



**"WE'RE HERE TO WORK WITH KIDS," SAID THERESE. "IF THERE'S A PROBLEM, I'D LIKE TO FIGURE IT OUT...AND I'LL KEEP TRYING UNTIL I FIND IT OUT."**

Often lacking the motivation to change their financial, educational and living situations, Therese and her staff have three months to teach residents life skills necessary to survive against homelessness. They teach residents how to pay the bills, the importance of an education, and how to apply to University, in addition to how to cook simple meals on a budget. With the effort of the whole youth hostel team, residents also learn the joy of art and the happiness they experience of eating meals family-style, often for the first time.

"The refuge has always been some sort of crisis accommodation," said Therese. "Residents have three months to stay here at the moment and that's it—so we need to help them learn how to live on their own and look for accommodation fast."

Therese, who has three daughters, nine grandchildren and one grandchild on the way, first started at CareSouth in 1996, just two years after the creation of CareSouth (then Shoalcare). In need of practical work to receive her TAFE welfare certificate, she worked at CareSouth's 24/7 youth refuge service. They liked Therese, and decided to hire her full time after finishing her schooling.

Since the start of Therese's career, she recognizes there have been changes throughout CareSouth and within the welfare system itself.

"The youth refuge program has moved locations from the Park Row house in East Nowra to Hale Avenue and finally to the current Moss Street location," said Therese. "Where residents once shared bedroom units in the beginning, they now have their own self-contained flats, including a shower, bedroom and lounge for each resident."

"We used to get backpackers and out-of-towners skipping from refuge to refuge, but we can't have them stay here anymore," said Therese.

With limited space—only five flats in the hostel and three rooms in community housing across the street—Therese says CareSouth has to take locals above anyone else because "they have nowhere else to go."

"Residents used to come here with only a small amount of personal items they were traveling with," said Therese. "Now they come to the hostel with all of their precious belongings because they are homeless and have to carry it around with them."

During her thirteen years with CareSouth, Therese has taken on many roles, including a job with the Aunties & Uncles program and the disabilities program. But she says her role working for the youth refuge program has always been consistent regardless of the other positions she has assumed. She credits her success in these jobs to learning the systems ins and outs, in addition to her overwhelming knowledge about the youth network.

"My role now is exactly as it was when I first started 13 years ago—to accommodate young people and prevent homelessness," said Therese.

This "can do" attitude is what helped former resident Brian\* achieve his life long goal to work as an accountant. With Therese's guidance, Brian spent his time at the hostel applying for grants to play volleyball and go to school. After receiving grant money, Brian left Nowra to play volleyball in Melbourne. He is now back in Nowra attending University and working at an accounting firm.

Therese smiles when she talks about Brian's story—something she is very proud of. Brian is just one of the many residents who have benefitted from Therese's guidance, knowledge and confidence over the years.

**"YOU DO THE RIGHT THING WITH US, WE'LL SEE YOU THROUGH TO THE END," SHE SAID.**

*\*Brian is not his real name.*



**Therese pointing out her favourite quote on the brick mural: "When you're on a downhill slide, there is always a ladder to climb up."**

## Service Awards

CareSouth recently launched an Awards & Recognition Scheme to acknowledge distinguished employees each month for superb service, going above and beyond, giving heart and soul, having a bright idea, and dedication to excellence.



**Bob Beverly**  
Corporate Services

### Going Above and Beyond Award

*"Bob always offers his services with a smile on his face"*

**Marc Mergel**  
Out-of-Home Care

### Dedication to Excellence Award

*"Marc always strives for best practices"*



## CareSouth's Master Chef

The CareSouth Youth Hostel held its 2<sup>nd</sup> client cooking competition beginning on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November. All five clients entered and the quality of the meals was incredible!

Each evening, a different client cooked a main meal and a dessert from the Hostel's *Four Ingredients Cookbook*. All clients put in an extraordinary effort—some even started to prepare their meal or dessert the night before so everything would be perfect. Each meal was voted on by other clients on a scale between one (lowest) and five (top mark).

The winner was Michael\*, which was announced at the end of a recent staff meeting. Michael's meal was smothered beef patties, which he made into burgers and served with chips. His dessert was a chocolate pudding cake with home made frosting. The burger was delicious and the dessert was mouth-watering. Well done Michael and all of our clients for participating in our cooking competition!

*\*Michael is not his real name*



## Family Fun Day at Jamberoo

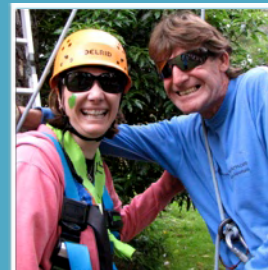


Almost 120 staff, foster carers and children in care, from Nowra, Wollongong and Queanbeyan, participated in a Family Fun Day on Saturday 6 November at Jamberoo Valley Lodge. Organised by Optimum Experience, the focus of the day was encouraging unity and team work.



Participants were divided into colour-coded tribes. The morning games focussed on building teamwork and included props like hula hoops, balls and tubes. The afternoon activities were adrenalin-fuelled with high wire activities like the giant swing, leap of faith (involving a 6 metre dive!), 10 metre eagles nest, vertical ladder, sock challenge and trapeze.

*"We had the most awesome fun time as a family building trust and relationships while participating in extreme outdoor adventures. We loved it and couldn't recommend the day highly enough!" - Joanne, Foster Carer*



## CareSouth's Brighter Futures Team Fights Violence Against Women

CareSouth's Brighter Futures family worker **Tim Cohen** has been involved in organising a White Ribbon campaign event where a group of Illawarra men are challenging local boys and men to come together to swear never to commit, excuse or remain silent about violence against women. The event, which was held 26 November at the Illawarra Master Builders Club, is part of the national White Ribbon campaign, which is seeking to create widespread awareness about the positive role that men can play in bringing an end to men's violence against women. CareSouth's Wollongong Regional Manager **Toni Bolte** is also involved with White Ribbon Day campaigns through the Illawarra Committee Against Domestic Violence.

**"Most men never assault their girlfriends, partners or wives, and most do all they can to keep their children safe. But far too many still believe that violence is an acceptable way to settle arguments or to get their way. And other men must not stand for that."** - Tim Cohen

## CareSouth News Makers

### WEEKEND FOSTER CARER NEEDED



CareSouth is seeking a couple or individual to care for a 12-year-old with a pleasant bubbly personality and a cheeky sense of humour. Andrew\* has a moderate intellectual disability and needs a foster carer to look after him every second weekend and some holiday periods.

If you are interested in caring for Andrew or would like more information on fostering other children PLEASE CALL Rhonda or Linda on our toll free number 1300 554 260 or 4423 6833.

**FOSTER PARENTS AREN'T PERFECT. THEY'RE JUST REAL.**

REAL PEOPLE MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE.

1300 554 260

[www.caresouth.org.au](http://www.caresouth.org.au)



- \* Two children in Out of Home Care residentials have achieved high scores (86% and 93%) in academic tests
- \* Disability Services at Kembla Close have received high praise for their support of two clients at the Emergency Response service
- \* Community Services gave praise for the efforts of three staff from Foster Care for providing weekend support for a child in crisis after breakdown
- \* SAAP has a young man about to enter the Defence Force despite the challenges and a second young man from Foster Care is on the same path
- \* Brighter Futures has achieved a significant high rate of ongoing participations from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and Indigenous families

## CareSouth Celebrates Foster Care Week

Foster Care week was celebrated this year from 12-18 September. To recognise the efforts of our foster carers, CareSouth invited carers and their family to a BBQ dinner at the Bay and Basin Leisure Centre. All facilities of the centre were available for our use, including the heated pool and water slide.



**REAL PEOPLE MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE.**

CareSouth

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