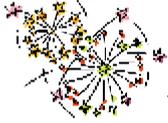


Happy New Year



Welcome back to a new year of STEPS. We trust you all had a happy and safe Christmas holiday break.

First, we have some news about STEPS staff. As some of you may know, Sue Wright left us in January to start her maternity leave. She has just welcomed a new baby boy- we wish Sue happy times with her new addition to her family.

Sue has been replaced by Diane Clarke, who started at the beginning of February. She will be working Monday – Thursday and can be contacted on the numbers listed in this newsletter. Diane looks forward to contacting existing leaders and group participants and making contact with new people interested in the STEPS Program, either as a leader or participant.

STEPS Group Updates

Two mergers have occurred in the last few months between groups in the Brisbane area who wish to continue to meet on an on-going basis. They are the:

Annerley and Buranda group, and Cleveland and Capalaba

These mergers have been quite successful and both groups have met to get to know each other, and make plans for 2007. It is hoped that the energies of the two groups of people will multiply the support for everyone involved.



Leader Training



Leader training planned for the beginning of 2007 is occurring in 4 major locations – Brisbane, Roma in Central West Qld, Charleville in South West Qld, and Atherton and Cairns in Far North Queensland.

The first one happened here in Brisbane on Monday 19th and Tuesday 20th February. There was a mix of government, non-government and volunteer participants. Once trained, it is anticipated that Group Leaders will develop, lead and support the STEPS Group Program in new areas of South East Queensland not already serviced by a STEPS Group Program.

The Roma training will take place on 6/7 March, Charleville on 12/13 March, Atherton on 3/4 April and Cairns on 10/11 April. In all areas, we have a number of registrants, but there are still places available if you are interested. We are very hopeful that these training sessions will lead to the establishment of several STEPS Group Programs in these areas.

If you are interested in participating in the Leader training please contact Areti Kennedy on (07) 3406 2311 or 1300 727 403

STEPS CONTACT DETAILS

STEPS Program

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Overview of the Brain and functions of the lobes

Area of the Brain	Function	Impairment/Deficit
Frontal Lobe	Planning & organization	Decreased ability to organize information, ideas or activities Difficulties sequencing activities & behaviour Unpredictable behaviour due to poor planning May not complete an activity or follow through Frustration and irritability when things don't go to plan Confusion about what and when to do things
Frontal Lobe	Attention and concentration	May be easily distracted May fail to follow through Difficulty staying on tasks to complete them Tangentiality – get off the topic easily Repetitive behaviours Wandering
Frontal Lobe	Initiation of behaviour	Low motivation & activity levels Apathy or lack of interest Difficulty following through to complete tasks & activities May get easily bored and frustrated and give up easily
Frontal Lobe	Ability to inhibit behaviour	Inappropriate choices in social & sexual behaviour Verbal & physical aggression/anger Impulsive behaviour Disinhibited behaviour – say or do things inappropriate things Repetitive behaviours
Frontal Lobe	Self awareness and self monitoring Insight & adjustment	Impaired social behaviour & judgement Reduced motivation to change behaviour Lack of awareness of errors Lack of awareness of impact of behaviours etc on others Poor awareness of emotions in self or others, so inability to manage own emotions
Frontal Lobe	Flexibility in thinking & behaviour	Concrete thinking – difficulty thinking of alternative ideas or behaviour Rigidity in ideas & behaviour, difficulty shifting or changing behaviour Argumentativeness Irritability with others Low frustration tolerance
Parietal and Temporal Lobes	Use of language to communicate with others - verbal - written	Misunderstanding communication, frustration, anger Misinterpretation of social communication and cues so may respond inappropriately Difficulty understanding others can lead to irritability, anger, frustration Difficulty expressing ideas, feelings, preference Difficulty regulating voice tone, volume, rapid rate of speech - may seem irritable, angry
Temporal Lobe	Memory & new learning Remembering tasks, instructions, events Remembering own & others behaviour	Forgetting to do things Forgetting conversations, instructions, decisions that have been made Frustration with effort, difficulty or failure Irritability Difficulty following through with behavioural change Misperception & confusion – can lead to suspiciousness & paranoia

Parietal Lobes	Spatial awareness Perception & location of objects and persons in space Understanding of own body in space and perceptual processing of information	Confusion & uncertainty Lack of trust & confidence in self, others and environment Effort & energy required for ADL leads to frustration, irritability Fatigue and tiredness Misperception of sensory information – can lead to suspiciousness & paranoia
Cerebellum and Brain Stem	Regulation of arousal and alertness Sleep regulation Control of physical functions and mobility	Sleep disorders Tiredness & fatigue Irritability and low tolerance Sensitivity to noise, light, heat, cold, fatigue – leads to irritability, low frustration tolerance
Limbic System	Perception and understanding of emotions and mood - self - others Regulation of emotional state	Emotional lability – rapid mood changes Lack of empathy or responsiveness to others emotional states Egocentricity or focus on self; self-centredness Impatience or low tolerance of others Irritability & anger Anxiety & depression

For more information about Brain Injury, have a look on the Brain Injury Association of Queensland website FACT SHEETS section.

STEPS in Bundaberg

A STEPS Group Program was held in Bundaberg in late 2006. There were 7 participants led by 2 wonderful lay leaders, Nene and Leanne. They met at the PCYC in Bundaberg, and enjoyed a great break-up day playing croquet and having a picnic lunch (see photos). Thanks to one of the group members, Lesley, for her thoughts about the Group: “I attended the STEPS programme held in Bundaberg recently with my friend who survived a stroke at the beginning of the year. Meeting other people who had overcome similar obstacles and difficulties has encouraged my friend to work hard at her rehabilitation, constantly setting new goals as she overcomes each challenge.

As a Carer, I found the support and hands on knowledge of other participants invaluable. The programme is concise, informative and covers a very wide range of issues; from understanding the physiology of a brain injury, the practical and emotional impacts on daily life, to problem solving and group discussions. We still refer to the great STEPS workbook for information. People with an Acquired Brain Injury, their Carers and family members will all benefit from the STEPS Group Program and the support of other participants.”



SPOTLIGHT ON...

Rockhampton

Rockhampton is located on the Tropic of Capricorn and is just a 35 minute drive inland from the Pacific Ocean. The city, which is situated on the Fitzroy River (second largest catchment area in Australia at 145,000 square kilometres) covers 187 square kilometres and offers all the benefits of metropolitan living. Rockhampton’s location between the beautiful Capricorn Coast and the rural hinterland, provides visitors and residents with the choice of unlimited investment and recreational pursuits.

A STEPS Group Program is currently running in Rockhampton, led by Annette Horton and Trevor Davis from the Rockhampton Hospital. We wish the group well and look forward to hearing about their plans to support each other, after the six week program has finished.

Reader Contributions

Annerley

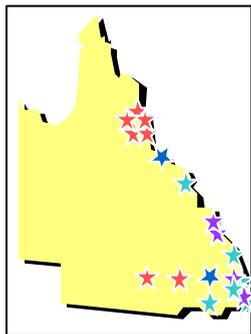
Hello I am Shannan Lawrence:

Before the accident I was studying at the conservatorium of music and I was also working as a waitress in my spare time. Now after the accident I had a meeting and I think I am going to go into Music Therapy to help others and myself.

STEPS was very good for me. It opened up pathways that I didn't know I could do or attempt. Steps has helped me with being able to talk to my friends about what I need them to do for me and what I need them to stop doing.

STEPS Groups In Queensland

Here's a snapshot of where STEPS is happening in Queensland at the moment.



★ = Established Groups

Maroochydore, Caloundra, Buranda, Cleveland, Gold Coast, Bundaberg, Capalaba, Mackay, Annerley

★ = Early 2007 Groups

Gold Coast, Bracken Ridge, Gladstone, Rockhampton

★ = Early 2007 Leader Training
Roma, Charleville, FNQ

★ = other sites in development

Group Activities

Session 2 of the STEPS Group Program focuses on understanding Acquired Brain Injury and the changes that occur afterwards. In the group, it was discussed that the affects of injury can have significant impacts on how the person and their family function and can include feelings of loss (e.g.

independence, role), relationship changes, difficulties making new friends and changes in hopes and dreams.

Understanding these changes is the first step in **Continuing your Normal Life** now.

Some practical steps include:

- being as independent as possible
- Appreciating your family and supporters
- Identifying your strengths and weaknesses
- Developing supports with people who care about you
- Planning achievable goals

Christmas party

Couldn't finish without some photos of the Christmas party held in Brisbane – even if it seems a long time ago now!



Participants from Brisbane-based STEPS Groups



Areti Kennedy - STEPS Project Officer, with 3 STEPS Group Program Leaders- Tony Bridge, Denice Rundle and Jill Akehurst