

SKILLS TO ENABLE PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES

NEWSLETTER

June 2008

Issue 10

WELCOME to the June newsletter. What a busy couple of months we have had here at STEPS! I would urge you to read about the STEPS Leader Conference, held at our ABIOS Offices on 13 and 14 March. There is a full report below. We are also very excited to report about an innovative method of running the STEPS Group Program in remote areas of SW QLD. That report is on Page 2.

This is the final newsletter to be published within the funded life of the Project. However, we will continue to produce a quarterly newsletter, focusing mainly on supporting our trained leader network. If you would like to remain on our list, please email us (our preference) or contact us to let us know. **If we do not hear from you, we will not include you in further distributions.**

STEPS Leader Conference 2008

For 2 days in March – 13 and 14 – the ABIOS offices were buzzing with STEPS Leaders from around the State. We had participants from Innisfail, Mackay, Rockhampton, Charleville, Bundaberg and Brisbane. All together, 16 leaders came together to learn and share their experiences.

The conference schedule was jam packed! The content fell into 5 main categories:

- Leader Welfare – looking after yourself as a leader and inspirational stories of “success against the odds”
- Community Connections - how to seek support from within your community, including a focus on the concept of Communities of Practice
- Working in groups with people with ABI – advice to manage psychosocial, behavioural and communication difficulties in group settings
- Research- including a report on the STEPS evaluation and research conducted by ABIOS staff into aspects of brain injury

including friendships, parenting, long term needs and support for children who live with a family member with ABI.

- A presentation and workshop to specifically discuss and plan for the future of the Leader Network. This resulted in a joint action plan, which is currently being implemented by leaders and STEPS project staff.

One of the actions from the workshop was to start a leader e-mail group, which is being managed by Annette Horton in Rockhampton. We will use the e-mail group to communicate with each other and work through the action task list. If you are a STEPS leader and would like to be part of this group, please let Areti Kennedy know and she will ensure your name is added to the list.

The other major outcome of the conference is a set of 5 DVD's that include the conference presentations and some footage of STEPS leaders talking about their experiences of running groups around Queensland. These will be available to leaders through our lending library (see “Don't forget ...”).

Below is a photo from the conference. We also had a photo and article about the conference featured in the PA Hospital publication, WhisPAH (page 2)



Final group shot with guest speaker, Alistair Lynch, former Brisbane Lions player



Photo of Raylene McSwan and Stephen Wilkie, which appeared in the March 08 edition of WhisPAH

Stepping into remote SW QLD

How do you offer the STEPS Program to people living in remote, isolated communities? This is a question that has challenged the STEPS Project staff for some time. Step forward Anne Mackie from Charleville!

Anne Mackie and Areti Kennedy have worked together to find a solution for people living in far south west Queensland – offer the STEPS Program over the phone. And although that may sound simple in itself, it has required a great deal of thought and planning about how it will work both technically, and practically when people are not in a room together face-to-face.

Anne has brought a wealth of experience to this group. She has already co-led a STEPS Group in Charleville in 2007, and continues to support that group in its monthly meetings.

The program has been both successful and challenging and proves that ... “Where there’s a will, there’s a way”!!!

Don't forget

STEPS LENDING LIBRARY

Don't forget our new resource for on-going groups. STEPS now has a resource library of CD's, DVD's and videos about brain injury and stroke, and related topics that can be borrowed by STEPS leaders. Just contact Areti Kennedy and she will send you a catalogue.

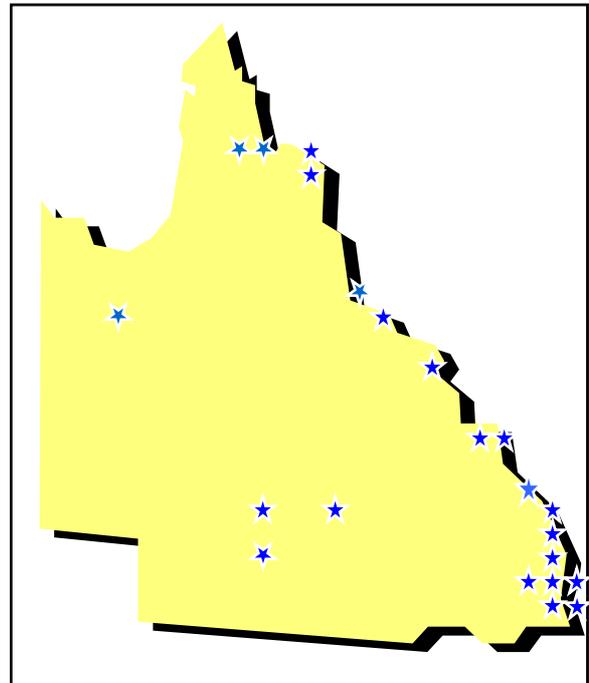
NEW ADDITIONS - STEPS Leader

Conference 2008 (set of 5 DVD's) AND a new

DVD that describes the STEPS project that can be used for promotional purposes. Contact Areti Kennedy for more details and to borrow an item.

STEPS Groups in Queensland

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



2006 Groups

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

2007 Groups

Gold Coast, Bracken Ridge x 2, Rockhampton x 2, Bundaberg, Charleville x 2, Innisfail, Kingston, Woolloowin, Roma, Cairns x 2, Mitchelton and Carina.

2008 Groups

Logan, Chermside, Bracken Ridge, Charleville, Rockhampton, Far South West QLD, Cunnamulla, Mossman/Port Douglas

On-going support groups (all years)

Buranda/Annerley, Bundaberg, Mackay, Bracken Ridge, Charleville, Innisfail, Mitchelton, Chermside, Logan

Working Together with Services



It is important that you feel comfortable with your health care providers and services and that you feel they understand your situation.

Some tips to help you get the most out of your health care and service providers:

- View your relationship with your providers as a partnership, not “us/them”. Tell them what your problems mean *to you*, what your goals for your health are, what role you want to have and if you think you won’t or can’t follow their advice.
- Get written information about who providers are and what they do for you – name, profession, organisation, contact details.
- Work out what you want to know from them. Keep a diary of health problems or symptoms so you can tell them what’s been happening for you.
- Take someone you trust with you to appointments as an extra listener.
- Ask for something to be repeated if you don’t understand.
- Ask for a longer appointment if you need it. Ask if there is an extra cost for this.
- Write down questions to ask. Write a list of concerns /questions before your appointment. Write them down when they come to mind. Keep adding to the list as new questions come up.
- Keep your questions organised and in a safe place (e.g. notebook)
- Write down answers and where you got them from (Internet, doctor, etc)
- Ask for information to be written down, especially about medications. Take notes while you are at the appointment.
- Ask if your health professional can give you printed information or tell you where you can get more info or support

Group Activities

Throughout the STEPS Group program, participants are encouraged to share knowledge and strategies about a whole range of topics.

Helping each other to “Work Together with Services” is an area where group members often have a wealth of useful information and experiences to share with others.

In the Tip Sheets section on Pages 90 and 91 of the workbook, there is some advice about dealing with Common Issues that can arise when working with healthcare and disability services.

These are:

- **Conflicting Information** – how to cope when people give you different information and advice
- **Handling Differences of Opinion** – how to manage this issue in a way that gets your opinion across in a respectful and positive way
- **Resolving Complaints** – knowing the correct processes for making a complaint
- **Accessing Services** – knowing where to look, negotiate and advocate for services

Think about a time/s when you have successfully managed these situations in your own life.

- Do you use this information or remember these strategies for new situations?
- Could you pass on some advice about a strategy that has worked for you, to another group member?
- Are there information resources (books, pamphlets, website addresses) that you could share with another person in your group?
- Do you have the name of a contact person in a service, who could help a group member with their issue?



SPOTLIGHT ON... **Innisfail**

Innisfail (including Nerada) is an attractive and substantial town servicing the surrounding agricultural region. Located 1631 km north of Brisbane and 83 km south of Cairns, Innisfail is one of the few substantial towns in north Queensland to remain relatively untouched by the tourist boom. Located at the junction of the North and South Johnstone Rivers, the town has an easy charm.

The Johnstone Rivers were first sighted by Sub-inspector Robert Johnstone who wrote: 'a most glorious view appeared - a noble reach of fresh water, studded with blacks with their canoes and catamarans, others on the sandy beaches; deep blue fresh water expanding to an imposing breadth.' On Johnstone's recommendation an expedition set off in September 1873 to thoroughly explore the coastline. About 4 miles upstream one of Dalrymple's men, P. N. Nind, made a camp and on the basis of this Innisfail was originally known as Nind's Camp.

In 1879 an enterprising Irishman named Thomas Henry Fitzgerald arrived in the area to take up land. Fitzgerald called his property the romantic name for Ireland - Innisfail - however it was not to become the name of the town until much later. In 1882 the Surveyor-General named it Geraldton in honour of Fitzgerald.

The town's name changed in 1910, when 'Innisfail', the name of Fitzgerald's property, was officially chosen at a public meeting. The name was appropriate as the Irish have played a significant part in the history of the town as the huge and gracious Roman Catholic church on the top of the hill attests..

Innisfail is basically a sugar town and its economy is largely dependent on the sugar plantations which surround the town, the bulk sugar loading facilities at Mourilyan and the numerous mills in the area.

STEPS in Logan Central

In March 2008 a Steps Group was run in Logan Central at the Community Health Centre. It was lead by Gavin, a Beenleigh area Social Worker and John, a retiree Stroke Survivor. There where five stroke survivors and one carer.

Some highlights were:

- The "Remember Me" session, which raised questions about art and who might take it up.
- "Managing Common Difficulties in the Community" was an interesting time consumer,

and brought forth our war cry "From Stroke to **STRENGTH**".

- The intensity of the sessions and the group participation.
- Sharing of personal experiences

There was great enthusiasm for the break up session. A luncheon was held in the delightful Riverdale Park on the banks of the Logan River. Group members brought along their favourite dish. Our Group movie producer suggested a photo and video session which is currently being edited.

The group plan to meet monthly. Further plans include formulating a letter to various people, institutions, groups and whomever else we think needs to be reminded about:

- Lack of communication between wards in hospitals.
- Lack of information about services and help available in their community being supplied to patients prior to their discharge from a hospital.

Some comments from the group include:

"I did learn a few things e.g. to recognize what I really need and put up a fight for assistance from different departments in the health system."

"I couldn't begin to say how beneficial the course was."

"We have gained a wealth of information during the Steps program"

"I really enjoyed the Steps program. Not only did I make some good friends, it has boosted my confidence to be able to enjoy what the community has to offer"

John Enright and Gavin Hawcroft

STEPS CONTACT DETAILS **STEPS Program** Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Service (ABIOS)

PO Box 6053, Buranda 4102

Ph: (07) 3406 2311

Fax: (07) 3406 2399

Email: STEPS@health.qld.gov.au
www.health.qld.gov.au/abios