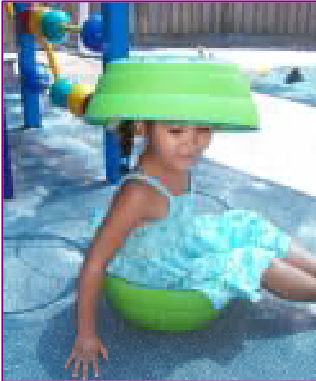




Little Souls taking big steps

Child Care & Early Intervention Centre for Children with Autism
1 Allied Drive Arundel, Gold Coast Tel: (07) 55631490

December, 2009



Andrea

*Some people come into our lives and quickly go.
Some people move our souls to dance.
Some people make the sky more beautiful to gaze upon.
They stay in our lives for a while, leave footprints on our hearts and we are never ever the same again.*

Cally



Director's Report

The last quarter of the year has been a busy but exciting time as we have welcomed new children and their families to the centre. Welcoming a new child is always a wonderful experience for us; a bit like opening a present on Christmas morning, we can see the outside packaging but we don't know what is on the inside. Over the ensuing weeks and months we have the pleasure of getting to know these little souls and their families very well. We learn their "little ways", their strengths and their challenges. Best of all, we witness them learning new skills, beginning to connect more with the people around them and rejoice in the many small victories along the way. Of course there are the inevitable speed bumps when things don't always go to plan but it is the process of finding a way over the speed bumps that makes us love what we do. Autism can be a confounding condition - the children initially can't tell us why they do the things they do, or why they are struggling to learn a new skill, so it is up to us to try and work out the answer. Working with these children can be puzzling but to witness the world through their eyes we can learn so much about how they think and learn and then we can teach to their strengths. And so, with Christmas fast approaching we look forward to the year ahead and a long and happy association with our new little souls and their families.

We also say a sad goodbye to our graduates as they start the next phase of their lives at school (one of our graduates Taj's story is included in our newsletter). We wish them well and feel great admiration for these little people who achieve so much despite the obstacle of autism that is thrown at them. To Cally, Andrea and Taj - we will miss you greatly but we know the future has great things in store for you. We are all better people for having known you.

Robyn Hawkins (Director of Therapy)



Little Souls is proudly sponsored by The Clem Jones Group and we offer our sincere gratitude for the ongoing generous support of our children with autism and their families.



THE SHANE WARNE
FOUNDATION
teaming up to help aussie kids



Taj

Taj Mckenna was born on the 2nd of November 2004; it was a bit of a surprise as he wasn't due for another three weeks! Taj was premature and spent the first 2 weeks of his life in hospital, but when we finally got him home it was great.

Taj was always a good baby waking two to three times a night sleeping right through from two months, he was always happy and every thing was going great.

Taj smiled, laughed, gurgled, rolled over, sat up, crawled, walked and started to say his first words dad and mum, so up until this stage, all of his mile stones had been reached.

It wasn't until around eighteen months we started to notice Taj wasn't progressing at the same rate as our friend's children who were the same age, every one just said to us every child develops at a different rate and not to worry.

Taj started at a family day care, his carer found it difficult to care for Taj and said she would like to have him assessed. Taj was assessed with the lady saying he was behind in a lot of things as well as both of our Mother's (whom work with children) thought Taj had traits of Autism, no talking/words, repetitive running, flapping, walking on toes, no gestures such as pointing and waving to name a few. At two years of age we got a referral to see a pediatrician who assessed Taj for an hour, not giving us any answers, saying Taj could be autistic but he had a lot of traits to say he wasn't and he could not properly diagnose Taj until he was three and half years of age. This upset us, as we knew Taj was Autistic but couldn't get him help as you needed a written diagnosis, no one wanted to diagnose Taj.

We placed Taj into child care to learn and interact with other children. This Child Care Centre was great, putting on an extra carer when Taj was there, giving him that extra help. While Taj was there they told us about Little Souls Taking Big Steps which sounded fantastic for Taj, and around the same time after having Taj assessed by a Speech Pathologist, Child psychologist and a few trips to another Pediatrician on the 22nd of May when Taj was three and half we finally got the diagnoses we had been waiting for (we really had to push), but now we could get the help Taj so desperately needed.

He started a program at Benowa State School for two short mornings a week, which helped Taj a lot. A year later we received a phone call regarding a place for Taj at Little Souls, since then Taj hasn't looked back.

Taj started at Little Souls with Ainslie and Carla, along with Casey, Julie and now Kim and Aliese as his ABA Therapists, we just can't thank them all enough, Taj starting off with just a few words going to a huge range including short sentences, singing songs, counting to twenty as well as knowing the numbers by sight, alphabet (saying-sight) reading words and few books, pointing, waving, doing puzzles, knowing his colors, shapes, categories including transport animals, clothing people food etc, trying to interact with other children, writing his name as well as spelling it, to using a computer much to our surprise, along with being toilet trained only wearing nappies to bed, just to name a few, as well as some behaviors fading such as walking on toes and flapping in the short five and half months that Taj has been attending Little Souls.

Taj has come so far in such a short period of time, we are so very grateful more than words could ever say to Robyn, Taj's Therapists, as well as everyone who works at Little Souls and makes Little Souls what it is.

As parents we know we have given Taj the best start, with the opportunity he has had by attending Little Souls Taj has become and we can see a different little boy.

(Taj's mum Melissa contributed this story)

Special Thank You to the Southport Sharks

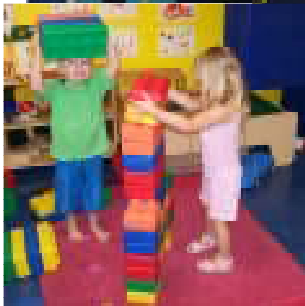
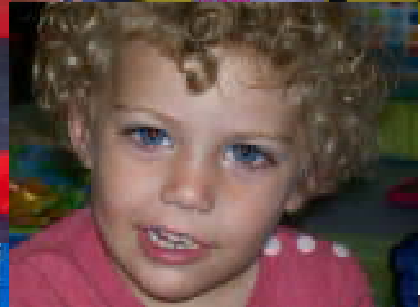
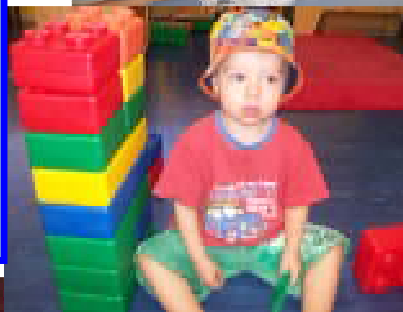


We would like to extend a special thank you to our neighbours, the Southport Sharks for their wonderful ongoing support of Little Souls. To date we have received donations in excess of \$15,000 and have enjoyed visits from their Shark mascot who is always a big hit with the children. Dean Bowtrell and his staff are regular visitors to the centre and always show a genuine interest in the children and the programmes that we offer. It is lovely to have support from a local organisation and we look forward to a long and happy association.



Mako Hosokawa has not only been a generous sponsor of Little Souls but has also spent time with the children helping with their therapy in 2009. Domo Arigato Gozaimashita Mako !!

Little Souls Photo Gallery



Christmas Greetings and Thank You

Usually, as Christmas approaches we stop and reflect on the year that was, but truth be told this year has been so busy we haven't reached the reflective phase yet! However, there is always much to be thankful for.

Firstly I would like to say a very sincere thank you to our sponsors and supporters many of whom have already received a mention throughout the newsletter. Two who have not yet received a mention are Jock and Beverly McIlwain who have donated \$55,000 to Little Souls over the last two years. Unfortunately a computer failure means we have lost the photos of our second visit from Jock in May this year. Our sincere thanks to you both and I hope you enjoyed your time with the children as much as they enjoyed singing for you.



I do have a photo of my father Graham's visit in November to celebrate his birthday. I can't say enough about dad's contribution except to say we wouldn't be here without him. Little Souls exists today because of both his financial commitment and his determination to establish the centre when most people were telling us it couldn't be done. Well dad we have proved them wrong, and already the number of lives that have been touched by Little Souls is a tribute to you - I thank you on behalf of everyone.

Special mention must also go to dad's partner in crime Graham Dytor who has also played an integral part in the success of the centre. Graham has been tireless in his efforts to raise funds for the centre. Both the Grahams love to come and get a "fix" from seeing the kids and meeting their families and sharing in their successes along the way.

I am exceptionally proud of the Little Souls team for their dedication and commitment to the children in our care. Working with our little souls is both equally challenging and rewarding. However it is not for everyone, and there is no middle ground - you either love it or you don't last long! Thank you ladies - it has been a pleasure and a privilege to work and share so much with you.

To the children and their families; we have all loved working with you and we are very proud of all that you have learnt this year and we look forward to another year of success in 2010.

Merry Christmas to you all, Robyn.



Miss Ainslie

Our congratulations to Ainslie Rosbrook (Pre School Group Leader) on the publication of her thesis in the Journal of Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders. Ainslie's thesis is titled Autistic Traits in the General Population: What Mediates the Link with Depressive and Anxious Symptomatology. This is a world wide journal and will be published in January 2010.

Donations can be made directly to Little Souls through our website at www.littlesouls.com.au

