



Mamrebillia

APRIL 2008

A Word from the Acting Director

Welcome to this latest edition of Mamrebillia.

The underlying theme in the various contributions this edition recognises the importance of having other people in our lives.

I am reminded of the African proverb "it takes a whole village to raise a child". As a parent of four children, I am forever thankful for the many times family and friends have stepped in to help me over the years; with practical assistance, advice and emotional support.

From those earliest sleep deprived days when someone else has offered to look after the

children while I've gone to lie down; to those times when I've needed reassurance that my teenage son's delinquent behaviour is not directly related to my leaving him in child care while I worked, I have been nurtured by my extended network. These relationships continue to sustain and enrich both my life and my children's lives today. In these times when single parent families and separation from our extended families is the norm, it is even more important to foster other relationships with people who show concern for our children. Maybe it's not just help in 'raising' those children, it is ac-

knowledging that children are valued participants in our 'village' or community.

How wonderful it is when someone else outside your immediate family recognises all the gifts that you see in someone you love!

You, as a family member, know how wonderful they are and how your heart bursts with love and pride at every achievement, both big and small. How much better is it to share this pride with others! Isn't this why we plan important celebrations such as birthday parties, weddings and wakes!

cont page 2

Building Networks to Support

The Building Informal Networks project has been operating at Mamre for the past five years, to assist young adults and their families to build networks of support. A common goal of these young adults is to move into homes of their own and each person and their

family has gathered a network of people to help them to achieve this goal. At first we used to say that people were building these networks because they had no funding and they wanted to get on with their lives. However, we quickly realized that this had nothing to do with funding,

and the love and commitment and support that was being given and received was something that money could never buy.

Eight young adults are now living in their own home, while others are building their networks

cont page 5

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

"Being There!" 2

A message from Rachel 3

"Courage.." 3

Staff Profile - Suellen Welch 4

Jan Dyke Workshop 5

"Making Space" 6

Up and coming events 7

The importance of Interdependence 8

Being There!



*“...he was ‘there’,
somewhere
special to him,
not somewhere
‘special’*

I recently read a very moving story about a young man with disability who would regularly go to a bend on the side of a road across from the rail yards and watch the trains come and go. Railway employees would pass the man as they went to work and he would tell them which trains were due and when. He was so passionate about the trains that he knew lots of details and the railway employees would joke that he knew more about the trains than they did.

One day one of the train drivers invited him to go on the train for a small return trip which he happily accepted. This became quite a tradition and continued for many years. Over the years the young man got to know many of the railway employees but the train driver and his brake man

became very close to him and both men and their wives became a part of his support circle.

What struck me about this story was that this man had a passion and he was obviously not discouraged by anyone to pursue this passion and he was ‘there’, somewhere special to him, not somewhere ‘special’. People came to know him and invited him into their lives and he came to know them and invited them into his life because they shared a common interest, which is usually how we connect with others isn’t it?

I imagined the opposite of this story. A man who would linger on a street corner and his service provider or family would worry what others

thought about him, or that he might become a nuisance to the train drivers with his facts and information and would therefore discourage him from being there. If this had happened he would have missed this wonderful opportunity to have this wonderful life among the rail yards and he would not have had these four people come into his life.

His experience and those relationships, it seems, were completely organic, no-one could have planned such an outcome, it happened because someone gave him the ‘space’ to be somewhere he wanted to be, and while there he met others who shared that space, who were where they wanted to be.

Julie Van Oosten

CONT FROM PAGE 1

We know from experience that people who don’t fit the “norm” in our society get a rough time. We hear from families who have a child with disability that they are often surprised when someone else expresses genuine concern, admiration and love towards their son or daughter!

In Mamre we talk about the importance of community and the reciprocity of relationships; it is not a one-way thing. Patrick Oliver, in his wonderful article at this end of this newsletter, supports this notion and eloquently stresses how we all need others in our lives.

I think you would find that anyone you spoke to would agree that as

workers, we gain as much as we give in the support that we provide to families. Rachel Johnson, in her farewell article, refers to the connections with families as being life-changing. So often we don’t know what impact people have had on others as their paths have crossed. Think about the people who have helped shape who you are today.

We know that a life lived alone is not a good life; life is a whole lot better for all of us when we are a part of a network of family, friends and community!

What can we do as individuals? We can take the initiative – if we want good neighbours, decide to be a good neighbour! If we are lamenting the loss of old friend-

ships because people have become too busy, get on the phone; write a letter or email! Engage with people!

Which reminds me – mark this date on your calendar – Saturday June 28th 2008 is the “Picnic in the Park” – the re-scheduled date to celebrate Mamre’s 25th Anniversary. We look forward to seeing you there!



*Bronwyn
Moloney*

Acting Director

Thank you to all...

By the time this edition of Mamrebillia goes to press, I would have left my role, my paid role in Mamre. After many years, I think it will be 17 this year, and a good twelve months of soul searching it was time for me to make the biggest decision I've had to make in a long time. But I couldn't go without thanking you....

Mamre, it's people and it's philosophy has been an incredible gift and journey for me, hence the toughness of the decision! I try to count the number of people I have had the privilege of meeting and connecting with, the lessons I've learned and the laughs I've shared, and there's too many to even try to count, yet somehow I know I will carry these with me into the future.

The families, the connections and moments I've had with so many of you, and with so many of your sons

and daughters. I often say that what you have taught me about life, compassion, love, and hope has been life-changing for me. Thank you, you may never know the impact you've had on others.

Mamre has such a strong and vibrant collection of people who work hard and live by their values of standing in solidarity with others. They are kind, generous, gifted and honorable people who will lead Mamre into the future and I'm very proud of knowing them.

The Leadership within Mamre is inspirational and paves the way for creativity, the ongoing development of a strong vision, healthy risk taking and fidelity to Mamre's values. The Leadership Team – Kathryn, Julie, Jeremy, Maria and Bronwyn – with

their wisdom, strength and support for me and each other, will continue to be an integral part of my learnings. Thank you so very much.

So, where to from here? I am taking up a role as Service Manager in the area of Child Safety. I will also be making myself available to be on Mamre's Governance Board so I know there will be ongoing opportunities to run into you at the Christmas Carols, the Big Day Out, on a reference group for something, a planning group for something else. I will read your stories in Mamrebillia, and I will always be grateful and somehow changed for the experience of knowing you.

Thank you and look after each other....

Rachel Johnson



*"Mamre,
its people and
its philosophy
has been an
incredible gift
and journey for
me..."*

Courage: Not the absence of fear or despair but the strength to conquer!

Daniel Bryant is a remarkable young man. Last year Daniel was awarded the Lions Children of Courage award. Daniel received this award as he has shown courage in the face of the difficulties associated with Autism, by improving his quality of life through making friendships and being an important part of his school community.

The Lion's award is not a competition; it is the recognition of a young person's achievements in the local community and acts as

encouragement for the future, helps an individual to believe in oneself and improves their self worth.

Daniel has given faith to others through modeling and working towards a full and rich life evident through being an integral part of his community and upholding an excellent attitude to the everyday challenges he faces. To his family Daniel has always been a symbol of courage and inspiration apparent in his every day bravery to face the world, try to fit



Daniel and his father receiving the award

in, and continue to attempt and succeed in new things.

On behalf of the Mamre community I would like to congratulate Daniel for his fantastic efforts on being a valued and respected member of his local school community.

Natalie Kennedy

Staff Profile - Suellen Welch



Favourite Film: Recent – “As It Is In Heaven”. **Some other favourites** – “Jesus of Montreal”, “Singing in the Rain” (I love lots of the old musicals!!), “Night is Falling”, “Little Miss Sunshine”, “Whale Rider”, “Lantana”

Favourite holiday destination: Straddie during the whale season

Favourite piece of music: Gymnopedie No.1 by Satie, “The Mission” soundtrack, Dawn Mantra’s by Ross Edwards

Your favourite Brisbane eating-place:

for good coffee – Alberto’s Shot, (West End), Paladar (South Brisbane);

for breakfast – Pearl Café, Browndog Café (both East Brisbane);

Bar – Piaf’s (Southbank);

Cheap Eats – Viet Ho, Happy Days (both West End), No No’s (Red Hill)

How did you become involved with Mamre:

I was first told about Mamre by a good friend, Sue Lewin. She later encouraged us to approach Mamre for possible support when our son Toby was born with Down syndrome. I have been working as a Key Worker @ Mamre South since October 07.

Ideal way to spend a Sunday:

A leisurely picnic at Orleigh Park, West End with family, good friends and perhaps a bottle of sparkling shiraz (with everything ready for work the next day so I can really relax!)

What do you think is the most pressing issue facing Australia at the moment?

That governments, groups and individuals realise the fundamental importance of building and investing in ‘community’, rather than the economic bottomline.

What do you think is Brisbane’s best-kept secret:

Day trip to Coochiemudlo Island.

What are you reading at the moment?

I struggle to get through the weekend paper magazine these days but have recently enjoyed “Miss Garnet’s Angel” by Sally Vickers.

3 guests from anytime in history you would invite to dinner?

Lindsay Lohan, Paris Hilton and Britney Spears – just joking! I think I’d want to invite at least 10 people! - Hildegard von Brigen, Aung San Sun Kyi, Martha Graham, Bob Fosse, Stephen Page, Leonard Bernstein, Thomas Moore, M. Scott Peck, Eva Cox with k.d Lang and Louis Armstrong as late night entertainment over a glass of port.

Do you have any old books you want to recycle?

At Mamre’s “Picnic in the Park” on June 28th, we are planning to hold a book stall.

If you have any books you would like to donate, you can pass them onto your Keyworker or drop them off at any Mamre office.

For more information, please call Suellen at the Mt Gravatt office on 3291 5888



and making plans. At this stage, their parents remain their primary supporters but each person has more people involved in their lives –either with planning, thinking or doing. None of these people have Adult Lifestyle Packages from Disability Services Queensland. Another two young adults who already have a house have asked the project to assist them to develop a network to support them in their home

Most of these people have a Support Circle. This semi-formal structure is just a means of helping people come together regularly to help the person achieve their dreams. To date, in the Building Informal Networks project, support circle members have all come from the person and their families' existing networks or extended family. No-one has yet felt the need to invite people from the broader, general community.

We refer to these groups of people as Circles of Support not Circles of Friends. Sometimes people are friends and friendships do develop but there are many instances of people contributing suggestions,

advice, a new perspective, practical support or a regular commitment who would not necessarily be a friend of the young adult with a disability. There is a saying that it is people that keep people safe and as these little groups meet regularly across Brisbane, I see lots of evidence that that is true.

What we have become more confident about over the past five years is that friendship and relationships are an essential part of a full and meaningful life for every body.

We assume that all people want to love and be loved and that people need each other even if this doesn't appear to be the case.

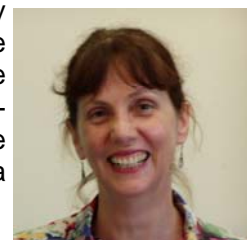
We assume that all people have a lot to give and receive – being labeled with a disability doesn't change that.

Many people with disabilities are lonely. In our fast paced, busy society it feels as if people are not prepared to take the time required to get to know someone who is different in some way or who may take a little longer to communicate with. Sometimes a disability can mask

the gifts that the person has and it requires time and commitment to get to know the person well.

We have become very confident that there are many people who are happy to make a commitment and become involved if they are invited to and if they are given the information they need to help them do this. Sometimes, (often in fact) what people offer and do far exceeds original expectations. This building of Circles or networks is very intentional and step by step. It is not about just hoping that people will see a need and come.

We know that the Circle members have really benefited from their time and connection with the people who have disabilities. They regularly tell us how privileged they feel to be asked to be part of helping someone achieve a dream.



Margaret Rodgers

Workshop for Families

"Families and service working together"

Do you wonder why it is often very stressful to use services which are meant to help you? Do you wonder what you can do about this?

Mamre is running two workshops for families to examine this.

Part 1 - **Saturday 29 March 2008**

Part 2 - **Saturday 10 May 2008**

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Location: Mamre Office - 1428 Logan Road, Mt Gravatt (above the Coffee Club)

Mamre has been exploring how to work in a positive relationship with families to build a good life for their son or daughter.

Mamre invites you to have your say. Come and join in the discussion. Share your experiences with other families and assist Mamre find a way to

work with families in real partnership."

The workshops will be facilitated by Jan Dyke.

Jan Dyke has worked for over 40 years for and with people with disability and their families, including Queensland Parents for People with a Disability, Queensland Advocacy Inc and Homes West Association Inc. Jan runs tight, interesting and productive workshops.

A further workshop for both staff and families will be held on

Saturday 31 May 2008 to explore how Mamre can work with families in the most useful way.

If you are interested please contact Anita Speed on 3622 1222 or anita.speed@mamre.org.au



Jan Dyke

Making Space

This year is one of making space for me in a physical and emotional sense. I would like to share how the impact of space making can make a difference.

All three children are for the first time at the one school allowing me to have more space between 9.15 -2.45 pm. With this extra time I am making some space for myself and filling it up with exercise three times a week, creating some paid work based around my arts activities and looking after my family as interest rates rise and create their own stress on an already taxed family.

The exercise is proving the easy part; someone elmotivates me to push my body to new limits. All I have to do is turn up. I have met other women who cross paths with me on a regular basis and enquire about my circumstance as I come and go with Freya's hospital visits necessitating my absences some weeks. Little do they know the quiet support they provide?

“While I dream of how to create more meaningful interactions with her peers, maybe relationships are just created by sharing space.”

This year creating art downstairs has provided a big challenge. First, I had to make space in our house to accommodate a room of my own. The storage area has become my studio- a place to house all my scraps of fabric, buttons and other important craft items. No longer are my habits

sprinkled throughout the family home. It has been squashed in and hung from rafters in one location. Within the constraints of life as a mum, it is now time to allow space for me to create and return a profit.

Space of a different kind is being negotiated, as our family has been fortunate enough to have received some extra funding. This allows us access to a cleaner once a fortnight, some childcare for my partner and me to go out once a month and more time to write plans of how our life could run to enjoy a good life. I both rejoice and resent this new space--- before it became available I longed for someone to understand, and stomped my foot. Now I try to accommodate the planning and be gracious with myself to accept the help. After all isn't this funding allowing me to enjoy the other pursuits I have mentioned and to create a more peaceful mother to flow on to the rest of the family.

Our children teach us much about ourselves and our relationship to others. My life with Freya certainly puts me to the test. My feet must follow my intentions.

Freya has a passion for soccer and after five years, her dreams came true. In the Grand Final of the Futsal competition last week her coach gave her the opportunity to kick the penalty. The team was 2 all. She kicked the winning goal. This was her first and only goal in her soccer career. The roof almost lifted as all of Freya's loyal supporters also rejoiced in her triumph. Freya is known for her enthusiasm for the game rather than her prowess. She cheers when either team kicks a goal and has been known to kick in the other direction of her team's goal. Her brave coach allowed the space for Freya to achieve her dream and the stakes were high. What a reward.

Everyday each utterance of Freya requires space to listen and interpret her conversation. Some days as a family we are better than others. I have to remind myself how tenacious she is to get her message across with such limited means.

Freya has a new teacher in the SEC this week and a new principal at her school. I was recently quizzing her old teacher on how Freya was doing in the mainstream class and suggesting ways to improve things. She retold an incident from the recent swimming excursion. Two girls from the mainstream classroom noticed Freya had her undies on back to front and politely told her. It is these small acts of kindness that go unnoticed and can only happen when space is made for Freya to share in everyday situations. While I dream of how to create more meaningful interactions with her peers maybe relationships are just created by sharing space.

I believe both formal and informal relationships are developed in both Freya's and my life by following our hearts desire and leaving space for them to happen.

Now can I make some space to pick up that circle of friends I started in late 2006.

P.S. I'll keep you posted.

Donna Tousaint

Mamre Policies

Over the coming editions of Mamrebillia, we will look at some key policies from the Family Handbook. "The role of the service" is one such policy and you'll find it located on page 22 of the Family Handbook 2008.

The Role of the Service

Mamre will:

1. support and encourage families now and into the future.
2. Keep the disability support needs of families central to all activity.
3. Work respectfully and creatively with support networks that are naturally there.
4. Protect families from intrusive bureaucratic processes.
5. Upon request from families receiving direct family support, actively seek funds through submissions to funding bodies and make alliances with other services.
6. Provide accountability for the expenditure of funds to families and the funding bodies.
7. Ensure the service complies with all relevant laws, regulations and standards, including taxation and insurances.
8. Employ, train and support quality staff and
9. Challenge anyone who compromises the health and well-being of the families it serves and challenge the "system" to enhance what is currently possible. *Section 1.8.5*

Just a reminder that all our policies are located on our website at www.mamre.org.au

"ICE" ON YOUR MOBILE PHONE

We all carry our mobile phones which can have a wide range of names and numbers stored in its memory. In an emergency, or if we were to be in an accident or taken ill, paramedics and other people helping us would see the mobile phone but wouldn't know who to call, especially if we were unable to communicate or speak clearly. There are many numbers stored in our mobiles, but which is the correct contact person in case of accident, illness or emergency?

The concept of **ICE** (*in case of emergency*) has been suggested. It is a method of finding the appropriate contact person through our mobile phone address book during emergency situations. All we need to do is store the number of an emergency contact person or persons under **ICE** (*in case of emergency*) entry. This person could be contacted during an emergency. Emergency service personnel and hospital staff would then be able to quickly contact the right person by simply dialing the number we have stored as **ICE**. For more than one contact name simply enter ICE1, ICE2, ICE3 and so on. The idea may prove to be a very useful one. (*Used with permission from the Carers' Chronicle*)

DATE CLAIMER

PICNIC IN THE PARK

June 28th, 2008

NEWMARKET

More information coming soon!

Annual Audit for Mamre Services

Mamre will undergo its annual maintenance audit for the Disability Sector Quality System on

2nd - 4th June 2008.

If any family is interested in talking with the auditors about the service they receive from Mamre, please contact Margaret Ward on 3622 1222 or on

margaret.ward@mamre.org.au or SAI Global on 3834 7400 or mail@sai-global.com

The auditors will keep your comments confidential and you are able to talk to them by telephone, email or face to face.

The Importance of Interdependence

For some reason we've come to admire in society the person who can "tough it out" and "make it" by their own selves. We hear during times of adversity that someone has been "so strong!" and hasn't needed the support of other people to help them through an adverse time – as if tenacity is measured in terms of being able to be a solitary individual who doesn't need to reach out and need others.

Yet surely we were built to need others. From our very first moments when two people came together to create us, we've been at our best when we're in relationship, in connection and in communication with someone else. We shine when the presence of others breathes and blows through us; we're in touch with the best within us, and our soul can hold a little better the mystery that we are.

I recently watched the movie, *"The Other Boleyn Sister"*, which is the approximately accurate depiction of Mary, the sister of Anne Boleyn, who was King Henry VIII's second wife. As well as the pathos and desperation of the characters and their times, what struck me was the ways in which people can't do anything – for good or for ill – which doesn't affect others around them. Moments of wreckage and moments of healing can't be confined simply to the orbit of one individual.

As people associated with Mamre, we know very well the ways in which one life affects another. Yet I think we also need to be reminded how easy it is when we're experiencing those seasons of struggle to "hold in" and try to tough out the difficult times. Why do we do this? Perhaps it's so we won't bother others, perhaps it's because we don't want to make a scene (as we might imagine it), perhaps it's because saying something will show we haven't got what it takes (once again, as we might imagine it). Perhaps it's because we were raised to believe that somehow we're more virtuous if we don't grumble. Yet what happens to us in this space of "holding in"? After a while, we have to admit that we become either cranky, irritable, moody, depressed or blaming – and we've certainly lost our sense of humour along the way.

After a while, others might begin to notice how we're beginning to "fold up" on ourselves, much like a piece of beautiful cloth being folded and put into the cupboard for protection. Our capacity to let others in and to let them enrich us shrinks to a fraction of what it was. The very thing we most want – to know we're

loved, wanted and that we matter – is the very thing we don't seem to be able to let happen. Yes, the experience of solitude and carrying ourselves as our heaviest burden can stretch the heart, but we also must watch



when the carrying

starts to rip our heart, and when it begins to curdle the solitude into loneliness, and the loneliness into bitterness.

Of course no one can totally satisfy anyone else, and it's sad when in forgetting the limitations that bind us all, we see someone put this weight onto another – only to see the friendship crash to the ground in hurt and disappointment. Yet we were built to lean on and hold each other, and for both individuals and families there are seasons when we need others to not only lean upon but to incorporate into the orbit of our lives. Rather

than this showing that we're falling short, it's a sign that we're allowing ourselves to be human: deeply and lovingly human. If we feel we don't need to let others into our hearts, then perhaps we might need to do it for our children – for they need to learn how to be human and interdependent too. Perhaps they can teach us!

Patrick Oliver

If you would like to contact Mamre, you can do so in the following ways:

Phone: Stafford 3622 1222

Mt Gravatt 3291 5888

Pave the Way 3291 5800

Kedron 3357 9190

Post: PO Box 1095

Stafford City Q 4053

PO Box 949

Mt Gravatt Q 4122

Email: mamre@mamre.org.au

Website: www.mamre.org.au

"...it's a sign that we're allowing ourselves to be human: deeply and lovingly human."