



Media Release

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Baby Bridges helps families with kids aged 0-5

Building a bridge to link parents who are caring for a child with a disability, is how coordinator Geraldine McKinnon describes Baby Bridges.

“Baby Bridges is a new program in Brisbane’s southside for mums and dads who have a bub with a disability,” she said.

“Sometimes new parents who have come home from hospital with a child with a disability, or parents whose toddler has been recently diagnosed with a disability, feel isolated and unsure what services are out there.”

“They may not realise there are other local families going through similar experiences. This program aims to bring those mums and dads together, and build stronger links with service providers.

“This can be a time when parents feel overwhelmed, and so we felt there was a gap there that wasn’t being met. We wanted to be able to offer parents the chance to meet and talk face-to-face with service providers.”

One mum, Sarah Lambert of Manly, came with daughter Holly,2, to Baby Bridges this week with the hope of meeting other families.

“This is an opportunity to meet other people and build a network in the local area. It’s going to be a big help to find out about services that relate to Holly and our family,” she said.

The program combines respite for the parents, with early intervention-style therapy from professionals in a playgroup setting for the infants and pre-schoolers. It’s delivered as a free six week course, consisting of a three hour session, one day a week.

The response from families since the courses started in August this year, has been very positive, Geraldine said.

“Parents who attended the program say they really benefit from face-to-face contact with other families who are in a similar situation, as well as disability sector professionals.

Lisa Welch of Stretton did the course last month and recommends it to others :

“Baby Bridges was a safe place to talk openly and honestly about our family situation without being judged. The peer support was excellent because the mums were going through similar things.

"We were all pretty talkative by the end of the six weeks and during the course I learnt of services I hadn't heard of before.

"It was a really good thing. My 2 year old son Jorge enjoyed it and I'm hoping to keep in touch with the people I met," Lisa said.

"This is an innovative program which we believe is unique to Brisbane ," said Geraldine McKinnon.

"We developed Baby Bridges to give parents the chance to take a much-needed break from the caring role and use this respite time to network and get information that helps them navigate through the 'maze' of disability services, funding providers, early intervention and educational options, and much more.

"I'm astounded how many families don't know about the more common support services, such as assistance to enable their child to attend daycare or kindy, or funding to help the family with the extra costs associated with caring for a child with a disability.

"It's hard because there's really no 'one stop shop' to find out all you need to know. The information-sharing that goes on in Baby Bridges is helping parents pull together all these pieces of information," she said.

Bookings are being taken for course places starting in 2008.

Fast Facts:

- Baby Bridges is a new program coordinated by Clear Horizons, a service of Capalaba-based Horizon Foundation, with funding from FSG Australia and Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre – Brisbane South.
- There is no cost to families.
- Venue is the Anglican Church, Corner of Windamere Road and Newhaven Street, Alexandra Hills.
- It's being held on Mondays from 9.30 am to 12.30 noon. Currently in summer recess. Families are asked to contact the Coordinator for course dates. Bookings are being taken for 2008.
- Bookings with: Geraldine McKinnon, Coordinator, Clear Horizons (a service of Horizon Foundation)
- Phone contact: 3824 8370 / Geraldine's mobile: 0402 200 118
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