



Breathing New Life into the Spirit of Childhood

Spirit of Childhood innovative parent education programs are benefitting the parents and children of the Murwillumbah community. The programs provide positive outcomes for parents and children. A group of 21 mothers and children are gathering under the foothills of Mt Warning to learn new skills and strategies about being a parent. The Mt Warning Pre-School is hosting the group which is an initiative of and supported by Save the Children and The YWCA Murwillumbah Communities for Children Initiative; which is an Australian Government funded program committed to building a community that 'will support its children to have the best possible start in life so that they arrive ready for school'.



Young children enjoy the activities and games at the workshops

The program's aim is to provide a positive environment in which parents and children can extend and increase their knowledge about the many aspects of parenting including good nutrition, the benefits of joy in early learning and the importance of songs, games and stories to create the foundations for literacy and numeracy and nurturing touch.

Vicki Ridley, project worker for Save the Children said – "This is a much needed program in the community. Many of our young mothers are isolated and overwhelmed with the responsibility of raising their children and the Inspir=Ed programs provide the necessary tools and an experiential learning environment in which to significantly empower parents in the role as their child's first teacher."

Jane Hanckel, co-founder of the Spirit of Childhood Foundation and course facilitator, based in Mullumbimby, believes this lost art of nurturing parents and children must be available to all families. "We have worked with health professionals and early childhood professionals from across Australia who have called for this program to be made nationally available. The program is universal in it's appeal – it works for all communities from socially disadvantaged communities across the board to even providing a fantastic support for women with post natal depression."

Allana, a first time mother and one of the program's participants said- "I found the program very inspiring for not only myself as a new mother but also as a worker in the industry. We have cut down TV time in our house resulting in our baby being calmer. This course has inspired me to change my personal teaching styles and philosophy – to encourage the process rather than the result...making family and family input a priority in programming and planning...how simple things can be just a good if not more important than complex things. I loved everything we did – I would love to do more!!!."

A community health nurse from Murwillumbah has taken the training into help with the families homes where she goes to do support visits with high risk families, who are isolated and with women with post natal depression.



Allana at the Inspir=Ed Spirit of Childhood workshop

The nurse comments that the kids and families have responded amazingly. In one instance a child with ADHD saw the simple dolls being made and started interacting and becoming engaged with the objects and activities, which encouraged the mother to do more activities with her child. Children's basic needs are that of creativity, security and connection.



Sarah and daughter at the Mt Warning Pre-School Inspir=Ed Spirit of Childhood workshop

Aboriginal mothers and children at a centre in Sydney are also benefiting from the program where it has been running since the beginning of this year.

Save the Children and the Inspir=Ed Spirit of Childhood will be running another 6 week program for mothers and children in the Murwillumbah area. The next Inspir=Ed sessions will be for expecting mothers and fathers providing new skills and strategies to help parents prepare for their amazing journey of parenting.

Other programs are planned in Murwillumbah and at the Mt Warning Pre-School.

Please contact Jane Hanckel 02 6684 6073 or Vicki Ridley 0447 139 200 for details of forthcoming programs

JPEG version of photos available.

For further information please contact

Jane Hanckel Spirit of Childhood Foundation, 02 6684 6073 jane@spiritofchildhood.org

Vicki Ridley Save the Children, Communities for Children, Murwillumbah 0447 139 200 m.bahplay@scfq.org.au