Helping Families Helping Children - Semester 2

Central Australia / Barkly

Lajamanu
The Lajamanu playgroup run by Sheree and Rochelle now has a container in the park to store our goods and a water tap. Lynda and Belinda have been regularly going out bush with the community elders, cooking bush tucker and talking about how healthy kids do better at school. The team started a home beautification program – taking cuttings of pretty plants, growing them in pots and planting them with families.

Ntaria
Leanne and Helen have been increasingly busy with weekly workshops and guest presenters from community organisations and government departments from Ntaria and Alice Springs on specific topics. Some of the weekly themes covered have been; quitting smoking, ear health, trachoma and hygiene. The ongoing nutrition program has been successful with women participating in the preparation of food most days. We have also been taking children to the preschool to get them ready for school next year.

Elliott
This semester, Elaine and Rose have been busy engaging with the community and delivering playgroups and nutrition workshops at the council recreation centre. The playgroups are attracting fathers in Elliott to come and play with their children and a lot of positive family interactions have been observed. For National Children’s Week the team had planned a family picnic at the lake, however due to rain the picnic was held at the recreation centre. NAPCAN kindly donated $500 towards the event which was a huge success in family and community engagement.

Ali Curung
We say goodbye to Di George, Family Support Officer, and Maurine O’Keefe, Family Liaison Officer. We hope to have the Ali Curung program running in full capacity next year.
Papunya
The Papunya program started in early September and already Helen, Family Educator, has started engaging with the community and agencies to provide support for parents. Working alongside the school and the local clinic, Helen has started a ‘walking bus’ program which allows daily interactions with families and provides lots of opportunities to talk about school readiness and positive parenting practices. Working with the clinic Helen also runs weekly play sessions which provide a forum for getting simple health messages to families. Each week the team discusses a simple message with the clinic staff. The FaFT-IPSS program is becoming a place to build relationships as well as being a window to the community, and best of all its fun for everyone!

Top End & Katherine
Kalkaringi / Daguragu
Margaret and Dianne have been very busy this semester, which is shaping up nicely! Welcome Dianne King who joined the FaFT team as a Family Liaison Officer in August and congratulate to her for successfully completing her First Aid Certificate in term four. On 17 August our new mini-van arrived, which helps the team run playgroups at Daguragu twice a week and Kalkaringi three times a week. The team celebrated Freedom Day at the river on 20 August with the whole community, which was lots of fun with children swimming, kangaroo tails being cooked in an earth oven, and of course a family BBQ.

Gunbalanya
We have started! Welcome to Nualas Scannell, Family Educator and Michelle Bangarr, Family Liaison Officer. To publicise the playgroup and celebrate Children’s Week, the team had their first ‘fun in the park’ playgroup session on 28 October. One grandmother commented that this playgroup is a ‘good thing to do as the young mums can come and learn about looking after their kids’, and the team felt happy with the number of people who attended. The location was good as people going to the shop were able to see us. ‘It was also good that families wanted to know when we would be setting up again so they could bring their friends and family’ said Nuala.

Nguiu
Vanessa and Arthurina have been very busy this semester delivering daily playgroups and modelling healthy lifestyles. The team is looking forward to moving into the new room at Jimani Child Care in which daily playgroups will run during the wet season. The team will work closely with the child care staff to deliver weekly parent workshops, cooking activities and develop resources in Tiwi language.

Wadeye
Welcome Doreen O’Hara who has started the Wadeye program. Doreen has lived in the community for six years and has lots of great program ideas which she has been discussing with community members, agencies and the traditional owners.
Maningrida

During Child Protection Week, the FaFT-IPSS team developed and distributed a questionnaire in the community and outstations. Michelle, Samantha and playgroup leaders Tanya, Verity and Selina set up playgroups outside the stores and asked community members to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire asked the community about their meaning of the word safe and how this definition relates to keeping children safe in community. Through the playgroups, families have started to analyse their child’s learning during activities by reflecting on their interactions and observations. The analysis of learning is encouraged through families collecting their children’s photos, work samples and learning stories in a portfolio.

‘Gerry the Germ’ came to visit and received mixed reactions. Participants received hand washing instruction and were given the opportunity to see firsthand how many germs live on hands that have not been washed correctly.

Farewell Irene

We say goodbye to Irene, Regional Coordinator for the Top End and Katherine regions. Irene has been with us since the start of the program in August 2009. We wish her all the best in her future plans with her family and thank her for her commitment and hard work.

Arnhem

The highlight of this semester was delivering a two day workshop to 24 adolescent girls of Angurugu. Together with two ladies from health, a sexual health and the core of life program was addressed over the two days. All the girls participated, and there was much laughter at times! The Dugong Resort kindly donated the conference room, along with the services of Shanice, a beautician, who treated the girls to a ‘professional nails treatment’ and a tour of the spa. Following hamburgers and a movie everyone camped over in the sports hall. Having some older Indigenous women there was invaluable and Melva excelled with her knowledge in health and language.

Milingimbi

A new playgroup facility was officially opened in November. There has been a lot of interruption due to funerals in the community which have taken most of the families away. However, there are a few mums and children still interested in coming to the playgroups. We have some cooking classes, BBQs and rehearsing for our playgroup concert have been well as playgroup graduation day.
Gapuwiyak

We are still pressing on with the Stronger Numeracy and Literacy in Communities (SLNC) pilot of playgroups located in the community. The playgroups are run by four playgroup leaders – Natasha, Jessica, Raylene and Meredith. The best regular venue is on the council lawns in the centre of the community. Our presence there with FaFT-IPSS posters and literature is raising the profile of the organisation in the community. The dietician and visiting dental workers visited Gapuwiyak, exchanged information and providing additional support.

Eunice and Jane, playgroup leaders, are running a playgroup for young children with ongoing hearing loss and their parents. The playgroup focuses on auditory training and has been developed in partnership with Royal Deaf and Blind Society.

We welcome Emily Bramich, who will start with FaFT-IPSS Program as a Family Educator in Gapuwiyak in 2011. Emily also attended FaFT-IPSS regional cluster training for Arnhem on 2-4 November with Jessica.

Galiwin’ku

A new Family Educator, Belinda Morton, joined the Galiwin’ku FaFT-IPSS team in July. The FaFT-IPSS program has focused on linking with other community based services with weekly visits to the playgroup from community educators and nurses from Marthakal Homelands Resource Centre and the local clinic to support parent education on health (including bush medicine) and child development. Camp based playgroups have been initiated which focus on partnering children who are failing to thrive. Seven playgroup sessions are run each week as well as a healthy cooking excursion to local homelands each Wednesday. A successful secure food box project was run with volunteers from across the community in September, and another planned for November. The team is excited about supporting parents whose children will transition to preschool in 2011.

Umbakumba

The playgroup program is in full swing with the more popular Wednesday mobile playgroup. A major focus of these mobile playgroups is on mothers’ helping to prepare healthy snacks for the children. The women organise one mother to bring some pre-cooked damper, and they share in the preparation of a fruit platter whilst the children participate in various play-based activities. Other popular activities during playgroup time have involved parents creating a poster which included their child’s photo, handprints and name, and a nature walk where parents and children collected various natural items from community bush land to paste on a tree poster. These activities focused on parents and children working together. This is just a small peek at what has been going on at Umbakumba. We look forward to many more exciting adventures before the year is over!
Yirrkala
Semester 2 has been a busy and exciting time for the Yirrkala FaFT-IPSS program. At the start of Term 3 the program moved into its new headquarters in the old preschool building. Abi and Bernadette are excited to offer playgroup sessions, parent workshops and other activities from this great community location and young mothers now regularly attend sessions. Yirrkala School supports the program by offering the school bus and a driver to collect families in the morning and drop them home at lunchtime. This is working well especially when it's raining! The team also recently welcomed a new staff member, Tara Buckskin, as the Gunyangara Playgroup Leader to support sessions at Ski Beach. Tara is a community member from Birritjimi and brings a wide variety of skills and experiences to the role.

Numbulwar
Denise and Joanne have been busy home visiting and building partnerships with families through Books in Homes. The image to the left shows a home visit to a dad and his young child. We sat on their verandah reading, laughing and singing songs together. The team also started a stall on Thursday afternoons at Numbulwar School selling children’s books, stationary, activity packs, hair baubles and self feeding starter packs for children. The ITEC women’s group has also contributed homemade pencil wrap cases. Our stall was very successful as we ran out of items after 2 weeks. A visiting health specialist continues to support the parent workshops. Rhonda, child nurse from the clinic, regularly accompanies us on home visits giving her expert help and guidance particularly to young mums.

This semester we say good bye to Denise Watts who has been a Family Educator for Numbulwar since the program began in 2009. We wish her all the best in her future plans with her family, and thank her for the commitment and hard work she has undertaken in Numbulwar.

What’s been happening...

Counsel the Family on Care for Child Development Training
Department of Education and Training is working in partnership with Menzies School of Health Research, NT Families and Children and Department of Health and Families to roll out training for the Counsel the Family on Care for Child Development Program. This program was developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). It supports the efforts of families and community members to raise healthy happy children. The Northern Territory Government agencies are working together to adapt this program for use in remote Indigenous communities and will train community workers to help families give their children the best start in life.

The FaFT-IPSS corporate-based team participated in the initial training. They worked with Dr Jane Lucas from WHO and UNICEF to adapt the program to suit the NT Indigenous context and trial the adaption program in Yirrkala in November. We are very excited about working with our partners to develop consistent key messages around bonding, attachment and early stimulation. We are hoping to roll out the program across all sites in collaboration with other agencies.
Certificate III in Community Services

This semester, Family Liaison Officers and playgroup leaders started their Certificate III in Community Services studies through Council for Aboriginal Alcohol Program Services (CAAPS). CAAPS is an Indigenous organisation and has been running the Certificate III in Community Services in a variety of contexts. We are very confident in their ability to deliver relevant and high quality content which will help build capacity of our Indigenous workforce in an empowering and authentic way.

We have just completed the first regional cluster training sessions in Nhulunbuy, Lake Bennett and Alice Springs. Everyone got a lot out of the cluster training, and felt it was a good opportunity to focus their work at a regional level. The Family Liaison Officers and playgroup leaders who were involved in the training were excited about putting what they have learnt into action.

Click for Learning With Family Resources


Merry Christmas everybody!
Have a joyous and safe new year.