We are heading towards an exciting second half of the year, and the much anticipated annual Norwest Disco is only weeks away!! This year we have teamed the day of the Disco with our Annual Family Meeting which will start at 6:15pm sharp. This is a great opportunity to give us feedback on what’s going on at the centre, and help us to shape the year ahead!

We are delighted to announce we are finalists in the inaugural Child Care Week Awards, in not just one, but four categories:

- Best Activity during Child Care Week
- Best Environmental Activity or Program
- Best Program or Activity illustrating “children are connected with and contribute to their world”
- Best Program or Activity illustrating “Children have a strong sense of identity”

These awards for our fantastic Multicultural Menu and the program of activities surrounding that, as well as the Environmental Project lead by Becky. Sponsored by the government’s Department of Education and Training, as well as Child Care NSW, the awards are recognition of the outstanding teaching programs that your children are a part of here at our centre. They highlight the fact that your kids are participating in some of the best learning programs in Australia, and that our highly qualified team of teachers, are doing an outstanding job every day. Our submissions for the awards are in folders right next to the sign in sheets for you to take a look at – we encourage you to take ten minutes and read through them. We’ve include a summary of the Environment Project in this newsletter.

Throughout this month your child’s portfolio will be going home with you to enable you to have a relaxed read of all the great things your child has been doing. Your child’s portfolio is an extended and individualised version of what can be found in the day books each day. If you would like to organise a one-on-one meeting with your child’s Group Leader, please feel free to organise a time with them. We would also really appreciate it if parents could take the time to make a comment on the Parent Comments Sheet in the portfolio, before handing them back for the second half of the year. As always please feel free to provide input into our daily programs through the parent input section of the day books for each group.

As many of you know after receiving a letter in your family pockets, our lovely Lorna who went on maternity leave back in December 2009, has decided that she loves being a mum so much, she’s going to keep doing it, and won’t be coming back to the role of Director at Norwest. There is a dominance of baby dust in the air here at the centre, with so many of our staff, and families making babies, and in September, I will be heading off on maternity leave to have my second child.

Spotlight on Ashley

Ashley Hochstetter (nee Vengoza, whom she left as in mid last year to have her son) will be returning and stepping into the role of directing our great team. Both Lorna and Ashley will be in regularly over the next few months to continue the mammoth handover task.

Ashley has been with us since January of 2005 and has been on maternity leave for the last year. Ashley is enjoying transitioning back to work and is excited about her new responsibilities and challenges of her new role. Ashley is really looking forward to continuing to enrich the children’s lives and sharing as much of her knowledge with all the great teaching staff here at Norwest.

Ashley is married to Matt (who many of you know from his part time work at our centre) and they have a 1 year old son named Adam. Ashley is currently studying her Bachelor of Education at Macquarie University, upgrading her Diploma in Children’s Services.
Dates for your diary:

**July**
15th – Police Visit
23rd – Disco, Family Meeting, (and awards!)
25th – Hide and Seek Baby and Kids Market (we’ll be doing face painting – flyers in your pocket)
28th – Hills Business Expo (we’ve got a stand, flyers in the foyer, drop in and say ‘hi’)

**August**
1st – National Tree Day & National Friendship Day
6th – Jeans for Genes Day
14th - International Left Hander’s Day
21st – Children’s Book Week begins
23rd – Keep Australia Beautiful Week Begins
27th – Daffodil Day

**September**
1st – National Asthma Week
3rd – Father’s Day breakfast and Australian National Flag Day
5th – Father’s Day!

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**Disco and Annual Family Meeting**

Is on Friday 23**rd** July 2010!

The Disco starts at 6pm sharp.
Tickets are $6 before the event or $7 at the door. Adults are free!

The Disco is a great success each year and a much anticipated event on our yearly calendar.

This year whilst your children are dancing away at the Disco you have an opportunity to share your ideas and have a say in things at Norwest, at our Annual Family Meeting.

Please see or email Sarah for tickets to our fantastic Disco.

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Congratulations to **Rebecca** for being **June Staff Member of the Month** for her continued dedication and strive for educating children, and for always supporting and mentoring staff.

Congratulations to **Michele** for being **July Staff Member of the Month** for some fantastic achievements with her challenging multicultural menu and feedback from families.
Welcome to Laura!!!!

Laura used to work at school camps – with kids from 4 years to grandparents, leading a range of activities – abseiling, canoeing, rock climbing, ropes courses and lots of fun team building and learning. She lives with her partner Matt in East Kurrajong – they have pigs, chickens, ducks and a dog! Laura has signed up to complete a Cert III in Children’s Services, she’s 20 years old, she plays hockey on the weekend. And the thing that you wouldn’t guess about Laura: her favourite food is lasagne!

Baby News

Congratulations to Louise on the birth of baby Charlotte May born 7th June 2010. A healthy 9lb 5oz and 52 cm long.

Congratulations to Jules on the birth of baby Noah Thomas born 11th June 2010. Also a healthy 9lb 7 oz and 53cm long.

Staff Training

Congratulations to Nesha and Amanda for recently completing their Post Graduate Certificate in Special Education – Inclusive Support Early Intervention.

Congratulations to Lauren for recently completing her Certificate III in Children’s Services.

Many staff in attended Inclusion of Children with Special Needs in Child Care Centres – facilitated by the Star Association, hosted at our centre for all other centres in the area.

Gail recently attended Let’s talk about it – Assisting children’s speech development – Hosted by Speech pathologists at Westmead Children’s Hospital

Caitlin and Jessica – watched and learnt about Australian Baby Sign Language and Dunstan Baby Talk and are now putting it in to practice

Ashley has recently learnt about our Child care Management Systems and our key software programs, as well as ‘Taking the Risk out of Child Care.’, and is off soon to a course on Diversity.

Our Psychology Intern Musa also lead a workshop for all staff on Positive Psychology. At the same staff meeting, we had a fantastic workshop called “Where has my Mummy Gone?” which helps staff focus on empathically working with children through Transitions.
Safety Audit

Congratulations to all of our team for achieving a practically perfect score in our recent independent safety audit. Well done!!

Parent Survey

A big thank you to all of our parents who completed our annual anonymous online parent survey! The survey is one of the ways that we ensure we’re doing a great job – that you’re delighted by your experiences at the centre, and that you and your family are happy. It’s also one of the ways that we listen to your constructive feedback, and think about better ways to provide top quality Early Childhood Education. We were pleased that the overwhelming majority of feedback in all areas was either excellent or very good. Where we received less than fantastic feedback, it was really helpful when parents added comments to help us work out how we could improve – we’ve got a list of some things that we can work on, and appreciate the feedback. As always, you don’t need to wait for a survey to tell us what’s on your mind – send an email at any time to let us know how we’re doing.

Congratulations to Monique, who received the highest number of parent recommendations as our most outstanding staff member!

Staff Satisfaction Survey

In keeping with our award winning Positive Staffing Policies, we recently conducted our annual staff satisfaction survey. Similar to our parent survey, it was an anonymous online poll designed to work out what we’re doing well, and where we can improve. It’s important to us that our staff are happy, satisfied, motivated and enjoying their jobs – if they are, then they’re able to provide a warm and loving environment for your children every day. Happy staff leads to happy experiences for our kids. So we were delighted to confirm that our team are really positive about their roles, and experience a high degree of job satisfaction.
Current info on Sleep equipment and sleep patterns

As a proud supporter for Red Nose Day, which was on 25th June, the staff here at Norwest thought it would timely to refresh information on children sleeping. **SIDS and Kids Safe Sleeping** is an evidence based health promotion campaign developed for health professionals, childcare workers, new and expectant mothers, parents and anyone who cares for babies and infants. Since its inception in the early 1990’s, the campaign has reduced the incidence of SIDS by 85% saving over 6000 babies lives. Vigilance is still required in delivering Safe Sleeping messages to the broad community as sadly the cause of sudden infant death syndrome remains unknown with more research into the cause still needed.

For information specific to babies and infants, please visit the SIDS and KIDS website and check out the resources or alternatively, on the shelves in the foyer is the SIDS resource kit for the centre.

Children aged 3-5 years need around 11-13 hours of sleep every night. Some might also have a day nap of about an hour.

**Sleep** is important for children’s health, growth and development. When children sleep well, they are more settled and happy during the day. Getting the right amount of sleep also strengthens your child’s immune system and reduces the risk of infection and illness. A preschooler’s rapidly expanding imagination can sometimes get in the way of a good night’s sleep. It is important to listen to your children’s fears and ideas to ensure they do not trouble their sleep patterns. Understanding sleep and sleep patterns is one starting point for helping your child develop healthy sleep habits and a positive attitude towards sleep.

For further information on sleep and sleep patterns for children of preschool age, please go to:
- [http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/sleep_the_hows_and_whys.html/context/754](http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/sleep_the_hows_and_whys.html/context/754)
Thank you for being a part of our Family at Norwest Child Care Centre!

Current Regulation Changes and Accreditation results

With Regulation changes about ratios coming into play in the next few years, we thought it would be a great idea to reiterate that here at Norwest we currently work at higher ratios than is required. Our staff have higher qualifications than are needed with 5 university trained early childhood teachers working here across the week, as well as a number of staff studying Certificate III’s and Diplomas of Children’s Services and Bachelor of education at University. Our focus on staff contributed to Norwest achieving 100% in the National Child Care Accreditation Councils’ Quality assurance program of Accreditation. [Something that is virtually unheard of in the early childhood industry]. We are all extremely proud of the continuous efforts of our team in providing the children that come to Norwest with a high quality play based approach to learning. We love hearing positive feedback and thank those of you who often provide feedback and advice.

For further information on Regulations please speak with Rachel, Ashley or Nesha.

Ratios
By 1.1.2012 - 0-2 years: 1:4 (currently 1:5)
By 1.1.2016 - 2-3 years: 1:5 (currently 1:8)
By 1.1.2016 - 3+ years: 1:10 (current)

For further information on Accreditation and information about child care please visit the following websites: National Child Care Accreditation Council

This chart, displaying our perfect accreditation results, is on display in the foyer

Spotlight on Gail Pringle
Started at Norwest in: November 2009
Working in: Bush Room – Wallaby Assistant
Family: 6 Grandchildren
Favourite thing to do on the weekend: Spending time with good friends and family – having and sharing a laugh!
Something you don’t know about Gail: She loves music and soppy movies

Spotlight on Caitlin Fiander
Started at Norwest in: March 2010
Working in: Ocean Room – Room Leader
Family: Caitlin lives with her Grandfather and her Dad in. She has 3 brothers all of them older. Her Mum and Stepfather live up the coast and run a B&B.
Favourite thing to do on the weekend: Spend time with her family and friends and go dancing
Something you don’t know about Caitlin: Loves to ice skate and has ice skated for about 13 years!
The Ocean Room

The Ocean room’s interest in the world around them, especially our natural environment has grown dramatically over the past few months. The children have been growing their own plants, touching and watching them grow each day. It has very exciting! It has opened up a whole new variety of questions and activities related to our outdoor play.

Another interest we have been exploring in our room is the season Winter. It has been a great way to explore a plethora of sensory craft activities that are both fun and exciting. We have created snowmen and Eskimos, and decorated the room with some wonderful snowflakes. The children have had an awesome time making them and in the process made many personal snowstorms!

All of our children have shown a huge interest in play dough, we have been making it as a group and colouring it together. Play dough is fantastic sensory experience for this age group, allowing them to squeeze and manipulate the dough with their hands and fingers.

The Ocean room is excited to announce that a few of our older children will be graduating to the Rainforest room shortly, due to this we will be combining the Dolphins and the Penguins into one group which will mean a smoother program for the room. This leaves just two groups in our room which will be maintained by Taryn for the Dolphins and Caitlin for the Rainbow Fish. With Briana, Lyn, Kylie and Jess assisting each child in their play and routines.

The Rainforest Room

The Rainforest room have continued to show a great interest in the book “We’re going on a bear hunt” by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury. This book has formed much of their play based investigations with the children not only enjoying reading and listening to the story, they have also enjoyed watching the story come alive on DVD and role playing their own “bear hunts”.

Another keen interest for the children has been exploring their creative skills through finger painting. From the sensory feel of the paint squishing through their fingers, the children have moved onto exploring “goop”, mixing cornflour and water to create the thick white paste. The children have loved threading this through their fingers and letting it drip off each finger tip. Many of the children seem fascinated by the texture of the goop. To add to the textures of the goop, the children have also been exploring their sense of smell when peppermint and orange essence were added to the goop.

The Rainforest room has also experienced some slight changes to the environment to cater for the children’s growing interests and investigations. We would love your feedback and ideas about these changes and the current interests of your children at home.

Soon Fernanda will be back from Brazil...some of the children have commented about Fernanda being on the plane...I think the children thought she was on the plane the whole time! Another jet setter in the room will be Ally who is heading to Norway for about a month to visit her partner Musa’s family and introduce her baby Amelia. We are sure they will both have many stories and photos to share with the children to enhance their multicultural awareness and understandings of each other.
A Healthy Breakfast...

Just like adults, children need a healthy breakfast to kick start their days and their metabolism. Research has found children who eat breakfast have better levels of concentration, increased problem solving abilities, and a more positive attitude about learning. Children who have a healthy breakfast will have better memory and communication skills and develop greater ability to communicate and handle social situations therefore influencing their abilities to relate to others. Children who miss their morning meal are often more restless and easily distracted. Children love finger foods that are quick and easy. Some great options include: wholemeal muffins, banana bread, cereal clusters, fruit bars like oven baked bars, sliced fruit or dried fruits, low fat and low salt dairy snacks like cheeses and yoghurts. See Michele for more info!

The Bush Room

The Bush Room has been getting into the swing of the winter over the last month, with the cold snap coming on quickly and limiting our potential outdoor activities, the Joeys and Wallabies have been finding other opportunities for gross motor activities. For example because we have not been able to go and dig in our wonderful sandpit, we have been using the lovely outdoor space to create an obstacle course over which we can practice our balance, coordination and turn taking skills. We have also been embarking on a project that is aimed at beginning an edible garden that the centre can look after and grow our own fresh produce. That is the ultimate goal, but we are starting from the roots up, as it were. Gail has been taking small groups of Joeys and Wallabies with her to rejuvenate the worm farm; adding a new box of 500 worms and rearranging their living quarters so that they are more hospitable. This was a fantastic learning opportunity, as the children were able to put on the child-sized gloves and engage in hands-on learning. Emergent literacy has also been a major focus for our children, as they are continuing to practice their fine motor skills and reproducing the letters to write their name. The Joeys have also been involved in a number of numeracy activities that have helped them to consolidate their concrete understandings about number, as well as colours and using their natural curiosity and observations skills to locate particular colours in their environment.

The Kangaroo group have been following a few interests over the last couple of weeks. The children’s construction work is becoming more detailed and collaborative. 'Mobilo', 'Lego' and block work are often combined to make "tiger cages" or "cities", operating on three dimensions. As well as this, the magnetic constructions are becoming more complex. We have seen three dimensional 'playgrounds' and 'cities' created using these connectors and the children are quite proud of their work. This has led us to begin a display book with photographs of the children's favourite pieces in addition to our daily display shelf. The group has been reading, painting and thinking about aspects of NAIDOC WEEK. Through learning about contemporary Aboriginals, and reading 'dream time' stories as well as looking at modern and traditional Aboriginal art, the children are developing their understandings of what 'Aboriginal' is going beyond the stereotypes. We recorded some of these and will continue to add to a mind-map of ideas about this week. Come and see the children's work - in their shelf, in the display book and on the mind-map. We hope as portfolios continue to go home over the next couple of weeks that you enjoy reflecting on the snap shot of your child's learning contained therein.
As Albert Einstein quoted many years ago, “Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better”. The richness of the natural environment is a wonder to all children. Children have a naturally innate curiosity that provokes them to explore and engage with their environments. They holistically investigate and interpret their world to gather meaning and create their own theories. Through an array of developing sensory skills children are immersed in an environment rich in colour, flavour, smell and purpose. Children are connected closely with all aspects of the environment and pursue these abundant characteristics through their sense of sight, smell, touch, hearing and taste. They confidently seek pleasure in many of the small things that we as adults tend to take for granted as we get caught in the complexities of our busy lifestyles. When given opportunities, children follow their strong interests and explore through hands-on scrutiny the diverse aspects of our natural environment. The environment is the future for all our children. It is often stated that we do not inherit environment from our ancestors, rather we borrow it from our children. Exploring and engaging in the environment is an important aspect of understanding its intrinsic worth. Whilst environments are diverse across our country and around the world, our team at Norwest felt it was important for children to connect with and understand their immediate environment. Children need to be able to learn and understand how they influence locally, and then how they can potentially influence many global environments.

The environment is a key concern for all of us at Norwest Child Care Centre. Earlier this year solar panels were erected on our roof to allow for natural solar heated water and electricity. The centre has a supersized recycling bin where room recycling stations are emptied, allowing children and staff work together to minimise our impact of consumable waste. On top of this there are worm farms, compost bins, growing kitchen gardens, a large rain water tank for sand and water play, a cartridge recycling station and the use of recycled materials throughout the centre.

With autumn almost over and winter kicking in, many children were starting to notice the changes taking part in our environment. Things like leaves changing colours, falling from the trees and lining our playground, the cooler weather, the clouds and rain of recent times were all notable factors that the environment is a diverse, changing source of interest for the children to explore. The idea about exploring the natural environment was investigated to enable children to learn and understand the importance of caring, sharing and connecting with the many different aspects of the world we live. “Our environment – it’s a living thing”.

The environment has endless possibilities for exploration and discoveries. This project is aimed at children belonging to their environment and their world, children being the individual they are and create meanings, and becoming an advocate for maintaining environmental sustainability through developing understandings with a range of resources and daily activities.
Our focus for this project relates to the Early Years Learning Framework Outcome Two. **Children are connected with and contribute to their world**, in particular “children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment”. Throughout the project and much of our everyday experiences, at Norwest we relate to the Early Years Learning Framework practices, principles and outcomes.

Core to the Early Years Learning Framework is the meaning of relationships, learning and knowing your identity and developing the connections with the environment. It is about Belonging, Being and Becoming. To belong, one knows where their roots are from, and how this influences one’s life. It is acknowledging that an individual first comes from a family, then a cultural group, a neighbourhood and a wider community. Being a child is about enjoying opportunities to explore and develop. It is about being able to challenge one’s ideas and thoughts to gain understanding, without judgment. In a child’s world the present is the most influential time. They take risks and face challenges head-on as they actively explore, investigate, research and connect.

At Norwest the involvement of families is an important aspect of children’s learning and focus, particularly in the investigations of the environment. Through Mark Engall, owner of Engall’s Nursery Dural (Serena and Catherine’s father) and Jen Kumar (Joel and Daniel’s mother), the children were able to explore the environment from totally different aspects. Through Mark, the children were taught to respect and value plants and living aspects including demonstrations about how to plant and maintain a kitchen garden. Through Jen, the children were able to explore how another culture utilised various objects in their environment. The children explored how different ingredients can combine to create different recipes.

Using plants and herbs from our garden in cooking enables and encourages a deeper understanding and respect for the environment in having a purpose. At Norwest, we often use such plants in our cooking experiences with the children, creating herb dampers, scones and biscuits, salad and side dishes. Children are able to witness and discover firsthand the importance of how to care and nurture plants.

In their activities, the children were also given opportunities to research and explore how the weather changes and affects the environment. The children discussed and shared their observations and, created pictures depicting their visual understanding of the weather changes. This extended on the children’s understandings of how they live in the environment and how the weather can influence all living things, people and plants included.

Throughout our project activities and experiences, the children were able to experience a holistic approach to their development and learning. They were able to explore sensory development through touching, tasting, smelling, hearing and observing. The explored their social development through sharing, learning, talking, discussing, respecting, connecting, communicating, enjoying, enquiring, investigating, valuing, education, scaffolding, and searching. They developed their cognitive skills through developing mathematical concepts, discovering scientific ideas, using and exploring language and literature, understanding their own health and well being. As for their personal development, they are busy seeking answers, investigating, researching and sharing knowledge, gathering information, developing and understanding ideas and concepts, hypothesising and creating theories.