Introduction

Welcome to the fifth edition of Celebrating Learning, the regular Newsletter from Brimbank’s Community Learning Strategy. It has been an exciting time for Brimbank’s Community Learning Strategy, as usual. We have worked with Council’s Volunteer Coordinator (Christine Bell) to undertake volunteer recruitment for a number of educational and homework programs around the municipality. We have also had another very interesting, challenging and inspiring Ideas That Work seminar (24th July) run in conjunction with Brimbank Youth Services and St Albans Connect. See report back inside.

Celebrating Learning shares information about lifelong learning and works to build Brimbank as a learning community. Please contact Learning Coordinator (address below) if you have any comments or would like to contribute any items for this newsletter. In this edition you will:-

- **Hear** about our Ideas That Work seminar held in July with visiting Professor Jim Diers, community engagement specialist from Canada and our own Catholic Education Office Melbourne’s Family School partnership program;
- **Celebrate** winning NAB Schools First students in our midst!
- **Get information! Link** to lifelong learning!
- **Release** a book into the Wild...do you know about Brimbank’s Read and Release project?
- **Discover** some new resources. Read an inspirational story!

If you have any queries or would like to learn more about Brimbank’s Community Learning Strategy please contact:

Deb Chapman, Learning Coordinator at debc@brimbank.vic.gov.au or learning@brimbank.vic.gov.au

Tel: 9249 4177 or 0409 207 741.

Deb works Mondays, Tuesdays & Wednesdays.

Or visit Brimbank City Council’s website at www.brimbank.vic.gov.au
News

Congratulations to St Albans Heights Primary School's Year 5 students, Michelle Nguyen and Austin Lai, on winning one of only 10 national awards in the student award section of NAB Schools First awards. Michelle and Austin propose to start a Holiday Club at their school in partnership with Brimbank Council. “The Holiday Club will broaden student interests and hobbies and promote learning in a safe and friendly environment. By including sports, the program will encourage physical activity and increase fitness too.” For further information see website http://www.schoolsfirst.edu.au/sf-2012-schools/st-albans-heights-primary-school-vic.php

This is a great achievement for our community, and one to be celebrated! Congratulations Michelle and Nguyen and all at St Albans Heights PS. WELL DONE!

Other News

Read and Release! From 28 August onwards specially marked books will be released into the 'wild' throughout Brimbank (such as bus stops, shopping centres and cafes). Labels inside each book encourage people to pick up the 'Read and Release' book wherever it is found and register it on the Bookcrossing (www.bookcrossing.com) website. After you read it you can then leave the book in a public place for the next random reader to discover. You will be able to follow their journey at www.brimbanklibraries.vic.gov.au 'Read and Release' books will begin to take on a life of their own as they travel from reader to reader and throughout the world! What fun and a great way to build our readers in Brimbank.

Lots of other events coming up locally with

Adult Literacy and Numeracy Week
28 August-2 September

Adult Learners Week 1-8 September. Theme: "It's only the beginning: Later Life Learning and Career Shifting". Please visit http://adultlearnersweek.org/

For further details see our library website at www.Brimbanklibraries.vic.gov.au

A particular favourite to support will be Random Acts of Reading hosted by local charity, The Smith Family on Wednesday 26 September from 12pm. Join us in our “lounge room” at the Sunshine Plaza forecourt to read, to be read to or to listen. And encourage reading in our community. See you there!
Improving life chances for young people through education: Ideas for engaging parents and communities.

Over 40 people came together to listen to some local and international voices and work with each other to build ideas on 24th July 2012. Jim Diers gave an inspiring session about the need for, and some great examples of, community engagement in education from a North American context.

Greg Woolford and Gill Baxter are local Family School Partnership convenors with Catholic Education Office Melbourne. They shared with us the theoretical underpinning of this work and then some powerful examples from the work they are doing with local schools around Brimbank.

Copies of both powerpoint presentations are available. Please contact learning@brimbank.vic.gov.au if you would like a copy.

Enduring Ideas:

- Enable the community to set the agenda. Bottom up community engagement brings better ideas and better results. Use funding and formal institutions to articulate that voice and action those ideas. Create opportunities for really listening.

- There is no ‘one’ road map. 5 people can do better than one head.

- Engage the parents through their children. Meet them where they are at.

- “postcodes should not be defining kids’ learning journeys”

- There will be many reasons put why you can’t do it...need to get past barriers and do it anyway.

- There are many resources in our communities; including people, schools and other buildings not being used to their potential. Focus on what we have.

- Think about learning broadly...only 18% of young people’s learning takes place at school. Communities can buy into education: write books, teach courses, do walking tours ...

- Do we focus on “needs” or focus on “gifts”. Our communities have many assets, recognise them. Agencies need “needy people” and often that is internalised. Welfarist attitude says that “your future isn’t tied to your community, it’s tied to our services” Instead of recipients people can become citizens in communities.

- Create envisioning sessions and ‘dream’ projects. Series of gatherings. Envisage the future...close your eyes and think what a (e.g. senior friendly) community might look like. Use ‘open space’ technology. Design an awesome community!
Some specific ideas shared, e.g. breaking down barriers at schools to make people feel more comfortable in that space, enabling African community to connect with newsletter at local school, establishing *Time Banks*; e.g. language learning, learning exchanges.

After the speakers, we used our own version of ‘open space’ technology to set our own agenda and break into 5 smaller groups to discuss in more detail issues of concern. These included

1. Kinda Kinder,
2. Taking lessons of engagement to other schools,
3. Recognition of informal learning, especially with newly arrived,
4. Engaging parents at secondary schools, and
5. Extending physical resources of schools.

We are continuing to work on some of the ideas raised. More heads and participants always welcome. If anyone wishes to get further details or notes of any group, please contact Deb Chapman at debc@brimbank.vic.gov.au.

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**You cannot open a book without learning something!**

*Confucius*
Forthcoming Events

Australian Learning Communities Network

Learning for the New Economy

Australian Learning Communities (ALCN) Conference
September 23 – 25, 2012
Victoria University, City Campus,
300 Flinders Street, Melbourne

Learning for the new economy themes:

- Power of Social Capital
- Children, Our Beginning, and
- Communicate to Learn (the role of social media)

For further information go to www.alcnconference.net.au or contact Peter Blunden, Lifelong Learning, Melton Shire Council, ph: (03) 9747 5312, m: 0407 968187
email: peterrb@melton.vic.gov.au

Summary will be available in next newsletter. Watch this space!

Anti-poverty week: Human Rights Matters! One day conference being held Wednesday October 17th at Catholic Social Services, East Melbourne. Further details here:

As part of The Australian Mathematical Society’s conference being held at University of Ballarat there will be a fascinating Education Afternoon held on **Tuesday 25 September**. It will include several short non-technical talks and a public lecture.

This is a free event for current and prospective mathematics teachers, and undergraduates.


We are building Brimbank as a learning community:

**Please join us, and share this information!**
The story of Sophia, Mohamed and St Albans library:

Brimbank’s English and Children’s Services Project Officer met Sophia at the St Albans Library. The project worker had seen her at this library a number of times attending Story time, borrowing books and using the computers. Sophia approached the project worker to ask about childcare for her 4 year old son. She initially appeared fearful and tense.

**Background:**
Sophia is 24 years old and came to Australia from Iraq 2 years ago and speaks very little English. She came to Australia with her son to be with her husband however her relationship did not continue and she describes her in-laws as ‘very bad people’. She now lives with her sister and her son as a single mother. Her son Mohammed is now 4 years old and has been very sick. As a result, his kidney was removed and he is now much improved. Mohammed speaks Arabic at home and understands little English. He has also not attended any Early Years services. Sophia and Mohammed are very isolated with few friends and with only her sister to provide family support.

**Support to family:**
Sophia also had very limited knowledge of Early Years services. Using an interpreter, the project worker explained the various Early Years Services available to her. The mother expressed an interest in kindergarten. Sophia does not have a car or drive so she was only wanted her child to attend kindergartens within walking distance. The kindergarten closest to her has a 15 hour a week program which usually requires the parent to pay the gap between 10.75 and 15 hours per week. Sophia stated that the fees were not affordable for her. The project worker contacted ECMS (Kindergarten Cluster Management) and they requested that the project worker complete a funding application to wave her fees. Ultimately ECMS found an alternative way to cover the costs. The project worker then assisted Sophia to complete 2 enrolment forms. Mohammed now attends the kindergarten at no charge for the parent however the process of enrolling had been complicated and was very confusing for Sophia. Mohamed loves attending kindergarten and being with other children.

The project worker enquired about Sophia’s plan to study English. She stated that because her child is enrolled in kindergarten, she will wait 6 month until he starts school next year and then attend English classes. Sophia also had no knowledge of any of the schools in the area. The project worker contacted one of the nearby primary schools and they suggested that an appointment be made with an Arabic speaking staff member to introduce the parent to the school. Sophia was keen to visit this school and asked the project worker to come with her. The project worker will make this appointment on Sophia’s behalf and enquire with other schools in the area.

The project worker then asked Sophia if it would be ok if the Little Muslims Playgroup leader was contacted on her behalf to find out if they could offer her any support. Sophia stated that wants to make new friends so she was happy for this to happen. An Arabic speaking group member is now making contact with Sophia to extend whatever support they can.
Sophia was also introduced to an Arabic speaking staff member at the library. Sophia now regularly comes to the library when this staff member is working.

**Conclusion:**
Sophia and Mohammed have benefited from the support they have been given. This family was very vulnerable due to Sophia’s age, their English language proficiency, their lack of knowledge of services and their isolation. This family now has more knowledge, more opportunities to be educated and socialise with others and to feel part of the community. Sophia now appears more relaxed and happy.

**Many thanks to Sarah Bethune, English and Children’s Services Project Officer for this story and her work!**
(names have been changed)

**Resources**

- Victoria University has a regular program of events for past students and supporters. Check it out at [www.vu.edu.au/alumni-and-donors](http://www.vu.edu.au/alumni-and-donors)

And last but not least, congratulations to Brimbank Family Day Care Educator Chai Fong Khew who has been recognised for her excellent work, winning an *Educator of the Year* Award from Family Day Care Australia. What a great start she is giving many children! WELL DONE and THANK YOU!

Did you know... how we are born to learn...?

See some fun animations at
http://www.born-to-learn.org/

If you would like to be removed or know someone who would like to be added to this mailing list please send an email to: learning@brimbank.vic.gov.au