



GREATER SHEPPARTON PLAYGROUP NEWS

*We are family
We are friends
WE ARE PLAYGROUP!*

Edition 2 - February 2007

Happy New Year to all playgroup leaders and families. I hope everyone had a lovely Christmas break. Christmas school holidays are over for another year and I am sure all playgroups are getting ready to start up again for the year if not already operating. In this edition of Playgroup News read about the activities on offer during National Playgroup Week, 25-31 March. Please also note the date for the next Playgroup Network meeting. I encourage as many playgroup leaders to come along and share with others their playgroup experiences while snacking on a light lunch. The translated versions of the Greater Shepparton Family & Children's Services Directory is now available in Albanian, Arabic and Dari. Please contact me at Council (contact details page 4) if you would like a copy. I am also keen to hear any good news stories from playgroups so drop me an email if you have some news you would like to share. Finally, read about the Greater Shepparton Transition to School expo to be held in May - a must for parents of children starting school in 2008. Happy Reading.

NATIONAL PLAYGROUP WEEK

National Playgroup Week runs from 25-31 March and replaces Playgroup Month in May. To celebrate Playgroup Week the Shepparton Art Gallery has organised some special sessions for parents and children running from their workshop room in Welsford Street, Shepparton.

Wednesday 28th March - Cloth Book Making

10.30am to 12.30pm (morning tea included)

Age Group - Parents of young babies (maximum 15 adults)

Cost - \$15 per parent

Tutor - Victoria Ryle, founding director of Kids' Own Publishing Partnership Children's Books

Thursday 29th March - Fun with Finger Painting

10.30am to 12.30pm (morning tea included)

Age Group - 3 to 6 years (maximum 20 children & must be accompanied by an adult)

Cost - \$5 per child

Tutor - Angie Russo Shepparton Art Gallery Education Officer

For bookings please contact Belinda Whitelaw on 5832 9790 on Tuesdays or Thursdays. Bookings close on Thursday 22nd March and payment can be made on the day.



GREATER SHEPPARTON PLAYGROUP NETWORK MEETING

The next Playgroup Network meeting will be held Tuesday 6th March from 1pm to 3pm. A light lunch will be provided. The network meetings are held on a quarterly basis and are a great opportunity to meet and chat with other playgroup leaders. Please RSVP by 1st March if you are able to attend.

LAUNCH OF THE GREATER SHEPPARTON FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES DIRECTORY - 3RD EDITION AND TRANSLATED VERSIONS

The 3rd edition of the Greater Shepparton Family and Children's Services Directory is now available and was launched in conjunction with the Arabic, Albanian and Dari versions of the directory on Tuesday 19th December at the Arthur Dickmann Children's Centre.

The new English version of the directory can be obtained from the Family & Children's Services department at Council if copies have not already been sent to your organisation. You can also obtain a copy or copies of the translated versions from Council. It is hoped in the future the directory will be available in a number of other languages to reflect our diverse community.

GOOD NEWS STORY - NEW PLAYGROUPS

Merrigum Playgroup will commence Wednesday 7th February at the Merrigum Preschool. The playgroup will run every Wednesday (school terms only) from 10am to 12 noon, coinciding with the MCH session on a fortnightly basis. All families are welcome to attend.

For more information about the playgroup please contact Jenny Wileman on 0423 986 642.

First Steps Playtime will commence in February 2007 at the Salvation Army on the corner of Nixon and Orr Streets, Shepparton. The playgroup will run every Wednesday from 10am to 11.30am for children aged 0 to 5 years and their parent/carer. For more information contact Cheryl on 5821 2666.

Send your Good News Story via the contact details on page 4.



GREATER SHEPPARTON TRANSITION TO SCHOOL EXPO

If your child is eligible to start school in 2008, make sure you have Wednesday 9th May marked in your diary. The Transition to School workgroup has planned in partnership with primary schools across Greater Shepparton a major event to be held at the Eastbank Centre. Previously, several small transition information sessions have been held across the municipality, with varying success. After consultation with school principals it was agreed one major transition event for all of Greater Shepparton was the way to go.

The expo will run from 4pm to 7pm with majority of primary schools offering information booths and displays. Parents are able to attend any time during the 3 hour expo. Parents will be able to meet and chat with school representatives and ask any questions they may have about individual schools. Every hour a 20 minute 'School Readiness' information session will be held just outside the main function room for parents to learn more about the transition experience and how they can help their child (and their family) be 'school ready'. Options if your child is not ready for school are also discussed and parents will be provided with an information bag.

Posters and A4 flyers will be sent to all early childhood services (kinders, childcare centres, MCH centres and playgroups) closer to the event.

RECIPES

Playdough Recipe

2 cups flour
1 cup salt
3 tablespoons cream of tartar
1 tablespoon oil
2 cups water
Small teaspoon food colouring

Mix ingredients together (it will be runny) and microwave for 6 minutes, stopping every 50 seconds or sooner to stir. It is ready when it doesn't stick to the spoon. When it is cool, this dough will keep well in the refrigerator in an air-tight container.

Cornflour Paste (Fingerpaint)

3 parts water (3 cups)
1 part cornflour (1 cup)
Colouring
Saucepan

- Bring water to boil in saucepan. Remove from heat.
- Dissolve cornflour in a little cold water and add to hot water, stirring constantly. Boil until clear and thick (about one minute). Add desired colouring.
- This mixture will be very smooth. Offer it to the children while it is still warm to touch.
- A tablespoon of glycerine may be added to make it glossy. A $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of soap flakes may be added to give fingerpaint a lumpy texture.

PLAY IDEAS

Baby Toys

Babies can have just as much fun at playgroup as older children. Why not offer some of the following at your next playgroup session or better still use the session to make the toys as a group activity.

Shakers

Fill a small plastic drink bottle, plastic cream bottle or tin with buttons, pebbles, beads, sand or rice for sound, or scrunched up foil, feathers, tinsel, confetti or coloured water for visual effect. Permanently seal with a few drops of superglue under the top's lid. Hold shaker in front of your baby so he needs to reach for it.

Scrunchy Bag

Stuff an orange net bag with cellophane or plastic supermarket bags. Knot net bag securely at both ends. Makes a scrunchy sound when kicked and grabbed.

Scarf Pull Out

Make a hole the size of a 50 cent piece in an ice cream container lid. Make two holes in the bottom of the ice cream container with a hot skewer. Thread corner of a scarf through one of the holes from the inside of the container and knot it to 6-8 scarves to form one long scarf. Feed and pull 5cm of the last scarf through hole in lid. Put lid on container. Encourage your baby to pull out more scarves.

Taken from Playgroup Victoria resource, A to Z playsheet - Baby Toys



BEST START ELF BOOK BAGS

The Greater Shepparton Community Literacy Working Party has been successful in receiving funding from the Goulburn Valley Community Fund to expand the current baby book bag initiative across the municipality in 2007.

The initiative will deliver Best Start ELF Book Bags to families when they attend the 4 week, 8 month, 18 month and 3.5 year 'ages and stages' visit at their local Maternal & Child Health centre or through the Enhanced Home Visiting service. Staff from Family Care will also be involved in delivering the bags.

At a meeting this year, it was recommended by the working party that the Berry Street Victoria ELF- Early Learning is Fun™ project be implemented across Greater Shepparton as the key early literacy strategy for the municipality.

As a result of this decision, the group investigated funding potential and thanks to a grant of almost \$20,000 from the Goulburn Valley Community Fund, together with financial contributions from Greater Shepparton City Council and coordination by Berry Street Victoria, the first step will involve the introduction of the four Best Start ELF Book Bags for babies and children in our local community.

Currently Best Start has one baby book bag distributed at the 4 month ages and stages visit while in Mooroopna where ELF is currently operating, parents receive 3 book bags at various ages and stages visits. The workgroup believed it was important for all parents using the MCH service to receive the same book bag and that the message about reading to babies and children from a young age and the various benefits of this practice needed to be reinforced at a number of key 'transition' points during the child's life. The new bags should be available from early March.



KEEPING YOUR DETAILS CURRENT

The Family & Children's Services department at Council keeps an up to date list of playgroups operating in Greater Shepparton. To ensure we are providing the correct information to interested parents when they contact our office, please make sure any changes to contact details or playgroup times/days are forwarded to Belinda.

NEWSLETTER CONTACT DETAILS

Belinda Whitelaw: Greater Shepparton Best Start Project Officer, Greater Shepparton City Council
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