



Winter/Autumn 2010

# All of a sudden the light went on

**There are many stories of success at the Cheshire School. This is one of the very best.**

Bailey came to us in Grade One. His primary school had referred him because he had severe learning difficulties, emotional and behavioral problems.

“When he arrived he couldn’t read,” says Leonie Gaff, one of the teachers at the Cheshire School. “He recognized just two written words “I” and “the”. He was very disruptive and had no friends because he would trash the classroom and destroy other students work.”

Bailey’s mother was extremely concerned and very supportive of Cheshire. She did everything she could to help the teachers and to respond to the issues that Leonie would identify. Mum wanted only the best for Bailey.

Over a few months Bailey’s behavior softened. He enjoyed the many Cheshire School field trips that offered such excitement to the 16 students. One term they had a water theme and became pirates and boarded an old tall mast sailing ship... they visited the beach... searched rock pools and went fishing.

Bailey also became more engaged in his school work. His mathematics was quite good and near standard for his age. But his reading...let Leonie tell the story.

“He just didn’t care about reading. I know it was probably a way to just make an excuse for his failure... but he didn’t get it at all. Then I realized he couldn’t process the sounds... it wasn’t deafness... just he couldn’t hear that sounding out C...A...T... spelled “cat”. So we started using shapes and letters in boxes on the table. It is called sight vocals.

“All of a sudden the light went on.” Leonie remembers the moment with great excitement. “The world opened up for Bailey as he soon began to read. We made a huge fuss of his progress and he was shy and a little smile crossed his face. He had never had to cope with such praise before.”

The Cheshire School takes children from ages 5 – 12 that have difficulty in mainstream schools. They come to us for one year only, a time-out for them to develop their self esteem and receive a special education in a safe and supportive environment.

Afterwards they go back into mainstream schooling usually to another school where they have a fresh start.

The relationship that Leonie has with Bailey continues. They talk every Wednesday. He is now in Grade 3 and his reading is up to standard. This year he has already received the Principal’s award for being such a good student.

The wonderful work of the Cheshire School is made possible by its two teachers, Leonie and Diana Green. And whilst this wonderful duo make their magic in the classroom, Geraldine Ryan, our family counselor works with the parents of the children helping them to understand the transformation that is taking place.



*Bailey’s marvelous fruit and vegetable transport vehicle.*

## From the C.E.O.



Here we are now several months into 2010. The activity at our headquarters has to be seen to be believed.

### Building programs at Glen Waverley

A transformation is underway at our Glen Waverley campus with construction work commencing both on our new Training Centre, and Insight's Education Centre for the Blind and Vision Impaired.

The Training Centre has been purpose-designed to improve experiential learning within adult vocational courses such as child care, aged care and education support, and includes computer, student resources and trainers' rooms, as well as facilities for training the vision impaired. To be completed by June this year, this project is funded by the Australian Government through the Teaching and Learning Capital Fund (TLCF) for Vocational Education and Training (VET).

Insight's School for the Blind and Vision Impaired co-location with us will commence operation in March and this year, first offer outreach and training services, developing into a fully operational registered school by 2011 opening its doors to an estimated 50 students.

### Welcome to a new kinder cluster

We are delighted to welcome 6 new kindergartens from the Dandenong area. Together with our current kinders from Monash we are now one big happy family of 18 in total.

Not discounting the tremendous job that parent committee's do - **bestchance** provides the professional management and training of staff as well as some human resource work and payroll. We also make available our many other integrated children's services that could further help families with their needs.

### Survey response overwhelming

You may recall that with the last newsletter, just before Christmas, we provided a survey form and asked our donors to help us find others "just like you". The response was simply amazing. Here are some of the facts.

253 people replied and that was 4.3% of those mailed.

134 or 52.96% of the respondents were aged over 71 years.

40% of all respondents had been supporters of Burwood Children's Homes which means they have been helping us for more than 20 years.

58% are interested to help children's services, 22% welfare and 20% training. Only 10% of donors would consider being contacted by email.

Nearly half of respondents were involved with their church.

Most of the general comments as to why they donate included the motivation to give back to the community and to help children. Others said they liked the range of programs here at **bestchance**.



### Thank you to all for your wonderful support

We felt we wanted to say "thank you" to all those who had given a donation in recent years. As you will read

elsewhere in this newsletter the Wishing Tree program was an outstanding success. Our events attracted support and our newsletter appeals inspired many donations. So this month we sent a special mailing just to say "thanks" to nearly 3,000 supporters and are again, simply amazed to report that so many people made another gift.

Your generosity is very much appreciated by us all and all donations go towards the children's programs.

Lodi Francesconi

## Wishing Tree Program 2009 helps families in need

**bestchance** is very proud of our Wishing Tree program. In 2009 we helped more people than ever before. Here are some of the amazing outcomes:-

143 Christmas Hampers were distributed helping the same number of families to celebrate the festive season.

311 Christmas gifts were provided for families to put under the tree at home.

18 members of our Community Support Volunteer team wrapped the gifts and filled the hampers.

4 staff from Sports Victoria helped fill hampers.

4 staff from National Australia Bank helped with the delivery service on collection day.

We had a significant increase in donations from our donors and members of the community who also offered their time and expertise.

Many clients wrote messages of thanks prior to collecting their hampers. To sum it all up here is just one of them:-

*"Thank you very much for your care and concern for our family. **bestchance** is a great team. Merry Christmas and God Bless".*



# One big happy family

Anne Soulsby has been a volunteer at **bestchance** – Child and Family Care Network for twenty years. She began around the time the Burwood Children’s Home was sold when she helped in the outlet shop “Wanda Round” at Wanda Street in Mulgrave. The shop sold the toys and other handicrafts made by the children. It closed in 1999 and Anne immediately volunteered at Glen Waverley.

“I helped with some of the office work,” says Anne. “I had no idea how to operate a computer and the Business Manager, Brian would teach me by leaving “post it” notes around the keyboard.” Anne laughs out loud. “Where else would you find a top executive teaching a volunteer how to work a computer?”

On a sadder note Anne remembers her late husband. “He passed away eight years ago. Lodi, Pauline, Mary and Brian (the CEO and Executive team,) were all at the funeral and I remember being surprised to see them there and very, very touched. To have them with me at that sad time was special. They

are truly, my extended family.”

Today, Anne is a very dedicated Volunteer whose role includes being part of a very busy group of 14 regular ladies and others who help from time to time.



*Anne Soulsby with fellow bestchance volunteer and staff of Mt Waverley Lions Op Shop*

Our volunteers serve a vital function in meeting simple needs. The very successful Wishing Tree program which this Christmas helped over 143 families was staffed by Anne and her team. The cooking program began when a single Mum became ill soon after bringing

a new baby home from hospital. She needed help with meals. Today, the ladies cook 60 to 80 meals every two months.

The now legendary “Sew and Sews” group of ladies make aprons, bibs, cot sheets, cot doonas, library bags and art smocks (to name just a few things) to help equip the Children’s Centre.

“Family... that’s what it’s all about,” says Anne. “We are one big happy family. We celebrate each other’s birthdays and we help one another as we grow older together. **bestchance** is a wonderful organization... a special part of my life. When my husband knew he was dying, he told me to stay at **bestchance**. He knew they would look out for me after he had gone.”

And so we celebrate the wonderful volunteers who mean so much to us. Thank you Anne, Val, Faye, Yvonne, Marie, Dot, Maureen, Dawn and all the other beautiful people who give so much of their time to serve the interests of all the children and their families who need our help.

## Parenting skills: Don’t despair if children argue

A recent Melbourne University survey found that children could benefit from being allowed to argue and resolve conflict themselves. Adults need to know when it is appropriate to intervene.

Dr. Amelia Church, early childhood lecturer at the university, noted the details of 60 disputes between four year old kindergarten children and found that they were good at resolving conflict. Her study, “Preference Organisation and Peer Disputes: How Young Children Resolve Conflict” found conflict helped the children to develop a sense of social structure and friendships that transcended individual disputes.

Parents that allow the children to argue a little longer often find it does sort itself out. The right time to intervene is when the argument turns distressing or the children might hurt each other. The survey also noted that parents and teachers often didn’t notice an argument until it had escalated and therefore missed many well resolved situations.

Dr Church reasons that where children are providing reasons for their opposition, they are likely to work the problems through and resolve the dispute themselves.

Adults dealing with children arguing should:-

- Find out what the argument is really about and what the children’s conflicting needs are
- Encourage the children to recognize the needs and wants of the other children
- Encourage children to explain the reasons for their opposition
- Encourage compromise where the solution to the dispute takes into account the needs of both parties.



# A positive outlook for Nicholas



*Nicholas - A bright start in his Prep Year.*

We are proud to reproduce as written a testimonial from the Quinlan Family.

We have been lucky enough to use the services of **bestchance** for the last two years for our son Nicholas who has just happily begun his prep year at Whitehorse Primary.

Nicholas was a lively and very active 3 year old when he started at **bestchance**

with a diagnosis of “speech delay”. We struggled to think that we needed this service or were worthy as there are many more children with greater needs... or so we thought.

It took us a while to understand the program (at the Children’s Centre) and the way sessions work. We were being introduced to the world of a new intervention kinder program. They assessed us and in turn, we assessed them.

As our journey progressed our family forged a close bond with our family liaison worker and she became a trusted and very integral part of Nicholas’ wider program. While they did not always have answers or resources to help they were able to counsel and give us tools to seek programs and people that were able to assist.

In this time Nicholas was diagnosed with Autism. Our acceptance and adjustment to this diagnosis and indeed our continued empowerment and

positive outlook for Nicholas can in part be attributed to the dedication and work of the people at **bestchance**.  
Quinlan Family

#### Footnote from **bestchance**:

We are proud of our Early Childhood Intervention services which we believe are “state of the art”. To be able to address significant educational and behavioral problems from a very early age is to be able to effect changes.



## bestchance forms a new partnership

**bestchance** has selected McArthur Recruitment as their preferred employment agency. As such we will receive a high level of professional assistance while enjoying some other significant sponsorship benefits.

McArthur is a specialist human

resources and recruitment consultancy approaching its 41st year in operation. During this period McArthur has provided tailored solutions to the early childhood education and not for profit sectors and therefore understands the importance of supporting the community through sharing their

knowledge and expertise. McArthur is proud to be a preferred partner with **bestchance** and look forward to sharing their involvement over the next year.

**Diary Date:- bestchance winter warmer Charity Ball, Saturday July 31st, Golden Sands Reception**

**bestchance** offers a range of early intervention, development and support programs for children, individuals and families. Further information can be found at [bestchance.org.au](http://bestchance.org.au)

#### Early Intervention

- Early Childhood Intervention
- Parent and Child Support

#### Child Care and Kindergarten Services

- Long Day Child Care
- Kindergarten
- Kindergarten Cluster Management

#### Primary Education

- Cheshire School

#### Youth and Adult Programs

- Vocational Training
- Community Education
- Community Support

CHILD FAMILY CARE  
**bestchance**

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#### Making a difference in your community

Privacy Assurance. **bestchance** abides by the Privacy Principles contained in the Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988 and the Victorian Information Privacy Act 2000. Any Information you provide will be held securely and your privacy respected. For further information please telephone 8562 5100.

