The FREE Newsletter of South Eastern Community Connect

South Eastern *Families* Connect

Dec 19

Connection, wellbeing and quality of life.

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Welcome!

What a year it's been.

Early in the year we opened The SECC Community Hub to the public following our massive 'renovation rescue'.

We've loved welcoming people to the new space and running numerous programs for young families, teens, seniors, and the community.

We've also enjoyed seeing new programs take off, such as Park Fitness in Eastlakes Reserve; a Meditation & Walking Group; and Social Drumming—as well as seeing a number of new OSHC services take form. If you want to see what's happening any day of the week, simply click through to our What's On page at www.secc.sydney now.

It's exciting to be able to celebrate our wonderful CEO Kate Melhopt's 10-year anniversary this month. Find out more about her achievements over the years on page 6.

Our volunteer journalist Catherine Schulte has also provided us with a really practical guide to avoiding Christmas stress.

Enjoy, and thanks for journeying with us in 2019.

Alison Leader, Editor.

Welcome to the team

Michael Hawthorne

Say hello to Michael. He recently joined our Community Strengthening Team, bringing a range of new initiatives to SECC. Our new manager of The SECC Community Hub has lots of ideas for helping SECC expand and grow in the local community.

Meet our staff

SMOOSH supervisor brings a fresh approach to learning

It's always exciting when someone new joins our team, especially when we know they'll be making a big impact in the lives of others.

This is certainly the case with Gail Richards, who has joined South Eastern Community Connect as the Nominated Supervisor of our SMOOSH program at three different south-west Sydney schools.

Gail oversees sites at Bankstown, Bankstown South, and Birrong, and has so much to offer our children and families at these locations.

The right credentials

Gail is no stranger to OSHC services, bringing with her 15 years of experience as a Supervisor, Coordinator, Children's Services Coordinator and Acting Area Manager, in both Sydney and the Newcastle/ Hunter area.

She has a Diploma in Children's Services, Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood, First Aid Training, Child Protection Training, and has participated in a range of other professional development courses.

"I have a passion for learning, and I hope to share this with the staff as we enrich young minds in our care through play and mindful experiences," she says.

"I believe play builds children's self-worth by giving them a sense of their own abilities, helping them to feel good about themselves.

"Plus, it's fun!"

An explorer at heart

Gail also has a bit of a travel bug, so during her annual leave she loves to explore other countries and their cultures.

"I also spend time travelling back to Newcastle on the weekends to catch up with family and friends," she says.

"I enjoy being outdoors soaking up the sun, as well as catching up on my favourite Netflix shows.

"I look forward to meeting all our parents and children, and I can't wait to explore this new journey with you all."

You can contact Gail to ask about vacancies at Bankstown Public School, Bankstown South Infants School, and Birrong Public School by calling 0416 244 504.

Parents *only*

Have you browsed our toy library yet?

Our online toy library allows you to look at over 500 toys in 19 categories in the comfort of your home and then email what you want to hire for the next day (pick-up at Mascot). Toy Libraries allow you to test new toys without buying them, and therefore save you money.

For more info head to: bit.ly/toylibrarymascot

Learn to use the park fitness equipment

We run free Park Fitness classes every Monday (4pm) and Thursday (5.15pm) in Eastlakes Reserve, behind Eastlakes Shopping Centre. Our personal trainer shows you how to use the park equipment and tailors the program to your fitness levels. Call 8338 8506 to put your name down.

Eastlakes Reserve, Evans Ave

Join our sewing classes for parents

Learn to make or repair clothes, hem uniforms and sew basic projects.

- **Beginner Classes:** Mondays 10am to 12pm during term time.

Where? 1007 Botany Rd, Mascot **Cost? $10 per class**

Find form-filling support in Eastlakes

Are you having trouble filling out official forms and applications? We can help you understand the process, guide you through to completion, and help you submit your official forms and documentation.

Monday to Thursday by appointment.

Get out your green thumb in Mascot

If you enjoy gardening, or want to learn more about gardening, then join us each Friday at 10am at The SECC Community Hub garden. It's a great (free) way to have fun, and little ones are welcome. Please bring a hat, gardening gloves and any seeds you might like to plant.

Where? 1007 Botany Rd, Mascot

Meet our staff

Talented early childhood expert takes on six centres

There was never any doubt in Anthony Hoban's mind he'd pursue a career working in education.

It was just a matter of where and when.

And so it happened that, following his training, he worked in a number of early childhood centres and gradually moved into management roles.

The passionate Early Childhood Worker has been overseeing OSHC sites in Sydney for several years, and this year joined the South Eastern Community Connect team as our SMOOSH Manager.

Anthony manages our five SMOOSH OSHC sites in Sydney, including primary school programs at Bankstown, Bankstown South, Birrong, Eastlakes and Hampden Park, and is soon to take on a sixth in Campbelltown.

He's excited about developing the SMOOSH brand and offering dynamic new community services.

"Community is about having a feeling of wellbeing and knowing you're supported..."

A true people person

Anthony has been passionate about community work for some time, volunteering with organisations such as St Vincent de Paul, the Sydney Children's Hospital, and Youth Off The Streets.

"Community is about having a feeling of wellbeing and knowing you're supported," he says.

"It's about having people around you to provide you with opportunities you might not have had elsewhere."

Anthony's all set to develop the skills of his Early Childhood team across all sites, build relationships with staff – and bring a warm and friendly face to everyone he meets.

"I look forward to working collaboratively with staff to ensure the children we support feel safe, happy, and included."

For more on our SMOOSH programs, call Anthony on (02) 8338 8506.

Meet our staff

What Katy did next: The making of a CEO

This month, Kate Melhopt celebrates 10 years at the helm of the South Eastern Community Connect ship. Here, we chart her journey so far.

Kate Melhopt has always had a heart for people, especially those in crisis.

Her dream in her teens was to become a child psychologist or social worker – and once she left school she pursued studies in social work, education, and psychology in her home country of New Zealand.

London calling

After graduating, Kate worked as a psychiatric social worker for a year before heading to the UK to begin important work with mentally disordered offenders in London.

This involved transitioning people from secure units and hospitals back into their community.

After three years in that role, which included court diversion work, she became the manager of a community support team and an Afro-Caribbean and Asian mental health team working largely with Bengali and Pakistani communities.

Support work in Sri Lanka

Kate stayed in England for 10 years before moving to Sri Lanka to do volunteer work with a British charity working with local not-for-profit organisations to support the mental health of the local communities. Here, she assisted in the establishment of supports for people experiencing mental illness and impacted by trauma.

She worked with volunteers and local mental health specialists to build the capacity of an emerging mental health team of allied health professionals and worked initially with war-affected communities, followed by tsunami-affected people for two-and-a-half years before coming to Australia.

Meet our staff

Meeting a need in Surry Hills

In Australia, Kate wrote policies and procedures for a credit agency before moving into the manager's role at Surry Hills Neighbourhood Centre.

Here, she was able to implement a range of services in areas of child care, OOSH programs, social engagement programs, support groups, English classes, and assimilation programs.

At this centre she met the centre's accountant John Ferguson, who was also the accounts manager at what was then known as South East Neighbourhood Centre (SENC).

Greater diversity at SECC

Once John heard the news CEO David Atkins had resigned, he told Kate, and she applied for the role. She was successful, and started as CEO of SENC in December 2009.

Kate was attracted to the diversity of services and funding streams on offer at SENC, as well as the range of programs, wider geographical coverage, and potential for growth.

When she started at SENC there were two operations managers under her, but within 18 months she restructured and streamlined the services in recognition of the skills and capabilities of existing staff. One of her achievements was also to re-brand SENC as South Eastern Community Connect (SECC).

Over the last 10 years, SECC has become more outward-looking, with all staff possessing a high level of skills and knowledge.

"We now provide whole-of-life services as opposed to just families and aged care services," Kate says.

"We have more specialist streams such as our Dementia Day Centre, and our geographical coverage has grown to include the south east and inner west of Sydney.

"Programs have grown. Funding sources and the level of funding has grown. And our ability to seek out opportunities has grown too."

A self-sustaining model

"We've been a lot smarter and more strategic in identifying where we want to go and the type of people we need working alongside of us as we go on that journey," Kate says.

"We need staff that are energised and passionate about what we're doing and want to move forward. At the end of the day we're accountable to the community and our funding bodies to deliver the services we're funded for."

Profile: Kate Melhopt

"We're responsible for looking beyond government funding to achieve that.

"Our goal is to become more self-sustaining, which is part of the reason we recently opened The SECC Community Hub in Mascot."

This venue offers the capacity for room hire, cooking classes, markets, and a range of services that are more accessible and comfortable for the community.

"We're looking to set up a café to generate income to feed back into our programs, for example," Kate says.

"We need to be able to continue to fund them so we can build ourselves up and generate income, from our home care packages to our youth and OOSH services, and life skills training."

A crowded space

Kate says the not-for-profit space is more competitive than ever.

"People often overlook grassroots organisations such as ours which have staff with real connections to the community," she says.

"Our point of difference is that we're not just about income generation – we're about contributing to the community.

"We need funding in order to support our services and deliver the programs effectively."

Kate's vision for the future

SECC's professionalism and expertise has grown exponentially.

"We've become more strategic and identified where our strongest capabilities are," Kate says.

"But I'd like us to increase our brand recognition, with SECC recognised for its expertise in the field and its high level of professionalism.

"I'd like to see us generating our own income without being reliant on funding or applying for grants. I'd like us to discover new revenue streams and move into the future with more financial security."

So what gets Kate out of bed in the morning?

"I genuinely love what I do most days," Kate says.

"I really do love it.

"The fact the organisation continues to grow into self-sustainability is really satisfying.

"Working as part of a team that's incredibly supportive is wonderful too. When numbers are low on some days we all pitch in and help each other out because there's a culture of team work and mutual respect here."

> "This isn't a hierarchy. We all just chip in and do what needs to be done in the moment."

Everyone is equal

Kate sees staff take on tasks they might not have thought they could take on.

"This team is a diverse team, with a wide variety of languages and cultural backgrounds," she says.

"The way we engage with one another is reflective of how we engage with the community. We trust our staff to go the extra mile – and if there's a problem we work collectively to solve it.

"Everyone is part of the team – no one is better than anyone else. Everyone has something they bring to the table, and without that we wouldn't be who we are.

"This isn't a hierarchy. We all just chip in and do what needs to be done in the moment."

Kate's 10-year anniversary is on 14th December, 2019.

South Eastern
Community
Connect
Community Hub

Bayside Council
awards
WINNER

TAI CHI CLASS 10th ANN IVE

A five-step plan for kicking the right goals this festive season

Feel like the wheels have fallen off your Christmas planning? Never fear. **Catherine Schulte** has a five-step process for *nailing it* this festive season.

In years past, my Christmas planning was pretty good. I worked in retail so I knew when and where the sales were on. I could go out pretty much any time I liked and get things done.

Fast forward to now, and I have my little girl, who will be 22 months in December. She has limited patience for my shopping trips (unless I have endless internet access to watch her favourite TV shows on my phone...)

Time has become even more precious, and planning all the more important. So I've created a five-step strategy for organising myself in the lead-up to Christmas. Because maybe, like me, you're also short on time and wanting to stick to a budget so you don't go into debt paying off all your Christmas gifts in 2020.

So before I even consider planning, I need to know the following:

1. Where will Christmas be?
2. How many people are coming, and who am I buying for?
3. What is my spending budget?
4. Where do I need to go? How will I manage my time to avoid stress?
5. What do I need to know about the postal system and Christmas?

1. Where will Christmas be?

Confirming plans for Christmas Day is a big one, and the first cab off the rank. Knowing where you'll be and whether you'll be expected to bring something is important to know. Will you need a Secret Santa gift, or a dish to share? And if you're the host, start with your guest list early, and check the RSVPs so

you can accommodate the food bill in your budget, on top of gifts. Decorations also add up.

2. Who, what, why, when and how?

Who am I buying for specifically? You should start building a list at this point.

What kind of things would I want to get them?

Why am I getting them these things? Will they have a use for them?

When can I shop for them? What does my calendar look like?

How am I going to get there? Plane, train or automobile?

3. Budget with a capital B

Budget, budget, budget. Exactly how much do I want to spend on each person now that I know exactly who I'm buying for and what I'm getting them? This is where you need to start checking out prices in catalogues and in online stores. Try online catalogues such as salefinder.com.au or prepare yourself with tips at this link: www.thesimpledollar.com/ultimate-guide-to-online-shopping/

4. Peak times and places

When do I need to go to the shopping centres? What about the markets? What are the online shopping close dates for shipping? Markets usually have a website listing opening hours, and if you're looking online, the website will usually tell you that they have a deadline for online purchases to arrive before Christmas. You may also want to send it straight to the gift recipient.

5. Don't miss your deadline

If you're posting gifts, you also need to be aware of the closing dates and prices for Australia Post. It's worth checking out their website early and marking it in your diary. Shipping alone can be expensive. Paying to expedite it is like handing over your wallet.

Last year, on-time packages posted domestically had a cut off date of 17th December which was about a week prior to Christmas Day.

If you can stick to a plan, you'll find things run a bit smoother. Christmas time can be messy, with the potential for us to feel overwhelmed and disorganised. This can lead to spending far more money than you actually have.

Why not embrace the experience of making a plan, then tweak it and make it better for next year? I do this with every major event I have, whether it's a birthday, a major holiday, or an anniversary. When you're stressed or overwhelmed, it's so easy to forget where to go for budget decorations, cost-effective gifts, or low-cost food.

They answer is always in the preparation.

Save on holiday stress by planning your Christmas budget and working out a shopping schedule.

Classes and workshops

Playgroup fun ahead

We'll offer a range of supportive, expertly run playgroups at 10am weekdays in 2020. Join us!

Mondays

SECC Community Hub, 1007 Botany Rd, Mascot

Tuesdays

Eastlakes Public School, 7 Florence Ave, Eastlakes

Wednesdays

Hall 1, Kensington Park Community Centre, Kingsford

Thursdays

The Tote Building, 100 Joynton Avenue, Sydney

Fridays

Lexington Hub, 3-7 Lexington Place, Maroubra

Note: Playgroups run from 10-12 during term time, from week 2.

Call 0421 741 866 or email familysupport@secc.sydney for more info.

Need a bit of extra support?

We offer Family Case Management assistance to families who need a little extra help. Call 7903 0607 to find out how we can support you.

What else is on offer?

- CPR & First Aid for Babies and Children: Sessions through the year
- Cost: $20 ($10 is refundable)
- Regular parenting workshops such as Triple P, PlayPower and Dads & Bubs Bonding: bit.ly/SECCprograms

Classes and workshops

SECC English Classes

South Eastern Community Connect (SECC) runs English classes every Friday for parents and grandparents with childcare. Held from 10am to 12pm during school term in the new SECC Community Hub in Mascot, the classes include an interactive lesson which involves both parents/carers and their children.

For the first 90 minutes we provide an English class while our childcare staff take care of your children. The last part of the class is an interactive lesson which includes the kids and involves singing, reading and learning new words and themes to help with preparation for pre-school. We also offer support with parenting, integration and socialisation. **Cost: $20 per school term.**

Call 0421 741 866, email familysupport@secc.sydney, or register at bit.ly/SECCprograms now.

Play Power for Parents

We will be running workshops to help empower new parents in their role.

Sometimes implementing small changes can make a big difference in the parenting role.

Next year we'll be running workshops which help parents make the most of everyday moments with children from birth to three years. Participants will learn to build loving relationships with their children and capitalise on daily routines. There will also be talks on play; having fun and relaxing with your children; and building self-esteem.

Keep updated: bit.ly/SECCprograms

SECC Community Hub, 1007 Botany Rd, Mascot

SMOOSH NEWS

Five special locations

We now run SMOOSH programs in five schools: Bankstown South Infants, Bankstown Public, Birrong Public, Hampden Park Public and Eastlakes Public. Here are some 2019 highlights.

Caring for our world

Welcome to all the newly enrolled families at our four new SMOOSH services. It's been wonderful getting to know parents and kids across our schools.

It was great for our staff to be able to engage with the school community in a variety of ways, including attending P&C meetings and networking with locals in the area.

One of the most exciting things was to see the response to The People's Pantry. This food drive resulted in a large number of donations from parents and children, who pitched in to

help community members doing it tough after a long winter. It was great to see their community spirit coming out.

We also announced our new Eco-Friendly and Sustainability program at all SMOOSH sites. We now have four coloured bins for collecting paper, plastic, green waste and re-usables . A great initiative which the kids are embracing.

It was also wonderful to appoint Gail Richards as the Nominated Supervisor of the South West Region. Gail brings with her 15 years of experience as a Supervisor, Coordinator, Children's Services Coordinator and Acting Area Manager. Welcome, Gail!

Setting up camp in Campbelltown East

South Eastern Community Connect is expanding its education services even further and taking on a sixth school.

Campbelltown East Public School will be the location for our new SMOOSH service in Sydney's south-west, and we'll set up there from early 2020.

We're excited to see what this new service will mean for the school and the community nearby. We pride ourselves on high-quality before- and after-school care, as well as excellent vacation care programs for all school-aged kids in the local area.**To find out more, contact Anthony on (02) 8338 8506 or 0415 816 866.**

South Eastern Community Connect FAMILY ACTIVITIES

February to April, 2020

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Toy Library Hire & return 10am - 4pm **Mascot Supported Playgroup,** **1007 Botany Road, Mascot** 10am - 11.30am	**Eastlakes Supported Playgroup** Eastlakes Public School 10am - 12pm	**Toy Library** Hire & return 9.30am - 12pm **Kensington Park Supported Playgroup** Kensington Park Community Centre 10am - 12pm	**Green Square Supported Playgroup** Green Square Community Centre, 3 Joynton Ave, Green Square (entry via Portman St)	**Toy Library** Hire & return 10am - 4pm **Lexington Hub Supported Playgroup**, 3-7 Lexington Place, Maroubra	
				Parents' and Grandparents' English Class With childcare 10am-12pm (during school term)	

Programs and classes run during school terms only. For the complete list, go to bit.ly/SECCprograms.

Our Toy Library is now open during school terms and school holidays at the SECC Community Hub, 1007 Botany Road, Mascot.

SECC Head Office: Shop 84 Eastlakes Shopping Centre, Evans Ave, Eastlakes. Tel: 8338 8506
SECC Community Hub: 1007 Botany Rd, Mascot. Tel: 7903 0607