

Celebrating life-changing milestones: Arianna's story



Three year old Arianna has Sotos Syndrome, a rare genetic disorder characterised by distinctive facial features, overgrowth in childhood, and learning and physical developmental delays.

Having spent the first seven weeks of her life in a neonatal intensive care unit receiving specialist paediatric care, Arianna was then in and out of hospital over the next 12 months due to recurring respiratory illnesses. Shortly before she turned one she required emergency life-saving surgery to relieve excess fluid around her heart. Arianna's development was delayed, she had very low muscle tone, and she was unable to feed normally. It was a confusing and frightening time for Arianna's mum Heather and her family.

Adjusting to this unexpected and challenging new life as the full-time, round-the-clock carer of a child with significant special needs began to take its toll on Heather's mental health. However, any respite from

her role of carer, even for one day a week, seemed unlikely. Then Heather heard about The Infants' Home.

After learning that we had the staff, facilities and expertise to provide care and education for children with additional needs in our mainstream child care centres, Heather enrolled Arianna in our Murray House centre for one day a week. Our integrated team of educators and allied health staff (including speech therapists, occupational therapists, social workers and a child and family health nurse), worked with Arianna, her parents and her external therapists to develop a family support plan

“Arianna is valued here and that's what's important to me.” — Heather, Arianna's mum

to meet Arianna's health and development needs.

Staff learned how to tube feed Arianna as she was unable to eat solid food, and how to put on and remove the brace she has to wear for 16 to 20 hours each day to manage her scoliosis. Arianna was unable to sit unsupported due to very low muscle tone, so a customised chair was made for her so that she could participate in activities with the other children.

Arianna began to achieve some significant milestones. She became independently mobile, and can now keep up with the other children physically, although she becomes fatigued quickly due to her condition. She can eat solid food, and Heather

says that Arianna loves the meals that are provided at The Infants' Home, and definitely eats her fair share. Although non-verbal until she was two, Arianna's language is now in the low-normal range for her age.

Arianna now attends our Robinson House preschool centre three days per week. An exciting milestone for Arianna and her family was a recent invitation for Arianna to attend her first play date with a child in her centre. *“That's massive for us, because when you have a child with additional needs, one of your fears is whether your child will ever have friends”*, says Heather.

For Heather, having a place for Arianna at The Infants' Home not only ensures that her daughter can play, learn and make friends just like any other child. It also means that Heather can step out of her role of carer for a little while each week, creating better balance in her life, and giving her the respite she needs be a resilient mum, carer and advocate for her child.

You can help families who need the services that only The Infants' Home can provide. To make a one-off donation or to sign up to be a regular giver, please use the form on the back of this newsletter, call 02 9799 4844 or visit theinfantshome.org.au.



A time to reflect, plan and grow

Welcome to the first full issue of our *Insights* newsletter, which will provide quarterly updates for our families and friends about what has been happening at The Infants' Home and how our supporters have been involved in our programs.

As our 145th year draws to a close we reflect on the highlights, achievements and challenges of 2019, and begin to plan for our 150th anniversary in 2024. We will keep you up to date with our plans in future issues of *Insights*.

2020 is also shaping up to be an exciting year as we plan for the opening of a new service on our Ashfield site in response to the changing needs of our community. 'MacCallum House', will be a community-based preschool service, providing a sessional preschool program during school terms only. Please visit our website at theinfantshome.org.au for further information.

We wish all of our friends and families all the best for a happy and safe festive season, and a prosperous New Year.

Elizabeth Robinson
Chief Executive Officer

*each child,
every opportunity*



HNF helps create our first kitchen garden

In October we welcomed a team of volunteers from our long-term supporter, the Herbalife Nutrition Foundation (HNF), who assembled some fabulous new raised garden beds, called 'Vegepods' for us, and helped the children plant herb and vegetable seedlings. This project was funded through a HNF Champion Fund grant to enable us to set up a working kitchen garden onsite.

The children, educators and kitchen staff worked together to plan which vegetables and herbs would be best suited for use in the kitchen to prepare children's daily meals, and for children to use in their own cooking projects. Groups of children visit the kitchen garden throughout the week to observe the plants' progress, care for them and to harvest the produce.

The plants are growing well, and are already beginning to produce a healthy crop of zucchinis (see inset above), cucumbers and capsicums, as well as lots of fresh herbs.

HMAS Sydney II Wreath Laying Ceremony

The Infants' Home is proud of our long relationship with HMAS Sydney, having been their adopted charity for over 50 years, since 1965. The commissioning of NUSHIP Sydney in 2020 will see us celebrate our continuing partnership with HMAS Sydney.

On 19 November we were honoured to attend a Wreath Laying and Memorial Ceremony in Sydney's Martin Place to commemorate the 78th anniversary of the sinking of the HMAS Sydney II on 19 November 1941, and the loss of its 645 officers and crew. The Infants' Home's President, Mary Verschuer (pictured right), laid a wreath in honour of their memory.





‘Mindfulness’ workshop presentation at the 2019 Early Childhood Australia conference

In September, Johnson House centre Director Amy Jones and occupational therapist Justine Tarrant presented the workshop *‘All mixed up! Supporting children to unpack feelings and emotions through mindfulness’*, at the Early Childhood Australia Conference in Hobart. Justine (pictured above with a group of children engaging in mindfulness exercises on an excursion to Auburn Botanic Gardens) and Amy highlighted the work they have been doing in Johnson House preschool to help children practice mindfulness in their everyday play and relationships. The presentation included many practical ideas that participants could take away to help embed this program into their own centres, and Amy and Justine received some great feedback from other child and family service practitioners.

Gorton House children make new friends at Bupa aged care

Recently there has been a growing interest in how inter-generational contact between children and older people may positively impact both children and adults. This was highlighted in the recent ABC TV series *‘Old People’s Home for Four Year Olds’*, which aired in August, and followed what happened when a group of preschoolers began visiting retirement home residents for weekly interactive activities. Since April this year the children from our own Gorton House preschool room have been going on fortnightly visits to residents at the Bupa Aged Care Ashfield. This experience has given all participants, both young and old, opportunities to make new friends and learn from one another, as well as giving the older adults a sense of purpose and helping the children to understand and value older people.



Family Day Care Sydney Wide educator Lulu recognised for excellence



Family Day Care Sydney Wide educator Lourdes Hernandez Alvarado (pictured above) was recently announced as the regional winner for the CBD, Inner West & Eastern Suburbs region in the 2019 Excellence in Family Day Care Educator of the Year Awards.

Lourdes, who is known as Lulu by the children and families in her Amigos Family Day Care service in Burwood, has been an educator with The Infants’ Home’s Family Day Care Sydney Wide scheme for five and a half years.

Lulu’s nomination was one of over 5,000 nominations that were received as part of the Excellence in Family Day Care Awards from all around Australia.

Congratulations Lulu!

Family corner

Chef Charoen, from Wests Ashfield Leagues Club, works in our onsite kitchen to prepare children's daily meals through our food service partnership with Wests. This recipe is a favourite with the children.

Herbed Chicken Drumettes (serves 4)

Ingredients

- 1 kilogram chicken drumettes
- 3 cloves garlic, crushed
- 100 grams crushed ginger
- ½ teaspoon paprika powder
- ½ teaspoon turmeric powder
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ bunch parsley, chopped
- ¼ bunch coriander, chopped
- 100 millilitres olive oil
- 100 millilitres water



Method

1. Clean chicken drumettes and trim any fat.
2. Combine all other ingredients in bowl using a stick blender, and blend until smooth (if you don't have stick blender, chop the fresh herbs finely with a knife and then mix together with the other ingredients).
3. Place chicken drumettes in marinade, cover and place in fridge to marinate for 2 hours, or overnight.
4. Preheat the oven to 180C.
5. Place drumettes on an oven tray lined with baking paper. Bake for 15 minutes, then turn drumettes over and cook for a further 10 minutes, or until cooked through.

Our history



Lady MacCallum was The Infants' Home's longest-serving president. For 41 years, from



1905 until 1946, Lady MacCallum stewarded The Infants' Home through two world wars and the great depression. She oversaw the building of many new buildings on the Ashfield site, and the expansion of the kindergarten. As well as donating her time to The Infants' Home, Lady MacCallum would also often donate money towards building projects, or Christmas gifts for the children. *Photo: Nurses and babies on The Infants' Home main lawn in the early 1900s.*



Yes, I want to support children like Arianna through The Infants' Home and ensure each child, every opportunity!

I would like to provide a donation of \$ _____ today, **OR**

I would like to become a regular giver, please debit \$ _____ monthly from my credit card.

My donation will be made by: cheque (made payable to The Infants' Home Ashfield), **OR**
 credit card (Mastercard / Amex / Visa)

Card Number _____ / _____ / _____ / _____ Expiry Date ____/____

Name on card _____ Signature _____

My contact details:

Name _____ Address _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Please return this form in the enclosed reply paid envelope, call 02 9799 4844 or email to fundraising@theinfantshome.org.au.



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