

# Insights

A newsletter for our friends and families

## Getting ready for success: Sam's story

Sam was born with Trisomy 21 (Down syndrome), a genetic disorder that causes developmental and learning delays and distinctive facial features.

Sam spent the first six weeks of his life in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit due to health complications. It was discovered that the hole in his heart he was born with had not closed, causing him significant hypertension (high blood pressure). He also struggled to breathe and feed, and was fed via a nasal gastric tube until he was six months old. At five months of age he underwent open heart surgery.

Sam started in our Robinson House centre at just over a year old. The integrated team of educators, a nurse, and allied health staff worked closely with Sam, Natalie and Mathew to support his transition to child care, where he was included in our everyday play-based learning program with other children while also having his health and development needs met.

Sam settled happily into Robinson House, but at then 18 months old he was diagnosed with Leukemia and Osteomyelitis (a bone infection). Sam had to be taken out of the centre while he underwent cancer



*Sam, who started at The Infants' Home when he was 12 months old, is now in Year 4 at his local primary school in Western Australia.*

***“Sam’s and our family’s time at The Infants’ Home has contributed in so many ways to help set Sam up for his current successes.” — Natalie, Sam’s Mum***

For first time parents Natalie and Mathew, the prospect of finding child care where Sam’s specific health and developmental needs could be met was daunting. However, with no family in Sydney, they needed to find a suitable place for Sam so that Natalie could return to work. Natalie first learned about our child care centres when she contacted our Sydney Hope Cottage postnatal service for help with breastfeeding following Sam’s surgery. When she mentioned her concerns about finding child care for Sam, the nurse encouraged Natalie to contact us.

*“There didn’t seem to be a problem, and putting him on the waitlist seemed very easy. I was just so thrilled that The Infants’ Home had an onsite nurse and social worker,”* Natalie says.

treatment which compromised his immune system, and he had to have several surgeries related to the bone infection. Natalie says, *“I cannot express enough how supportive the staff were at this time. They reassured me that when Sam was better he could come back and not to worry about that. The second time [he enrolled] after his treatment was honestly like coming back home—the support, love and genuine joy in seeing him better—no words can really do it justice.”*

Upon his return to our Johnson House centre, Natalie felt that everyone was always kept on the same page with regard to Sam’s needs and wellbeing, and that the whole team shared in the joy of his triumphs and achievements.

Sam, now aged 10, attends an Education Support Unit within a local primary school in Perth where he and his family moved in 2017. He has achieved some fantastic milestones since leaving The Infants’ Home.

In 2016 Sam transitioned successfully to primary school, and he also began to walk independently that year. Last year he ran right to the finish line in his school’s sports carnival running race, and he still continues to maintain friendships with many of his peers from his days at The Infants’ Home.

**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](http://theinfantshome.org.au).**



## Welcome to 2020 at The Infants' Home

I am delighted to welcome all of our new and returning families for 2020, and hope that you are all settling in well.

Starting child care can be quite daunting for many children and families, and even returning children and families can feel a little unsettled if they're moving to a new room or program with educators they haven't met before. During these first few months of the year our integrated team of educators and allied health staff have been focussing on getting to know individual children and their families, and planning experiences to help promote a sense of security and belonging for everyone.

Congratulations to Murray and Gorton Houses who had their Assessment and Rating visits last December, where they were assessed against the National Quality Standards (NQS). Both centres achieved ratings of 'Exceeding the National Quality Standard'—fantastic results and a testament to the work of our team.

Elizabeth Robinson  
Chief Executive Officer

*each child,  
every opportunity*



## MLC kicks off our 2020 Corporate Volunteer program

In February we welcomed an enthusiastic team of 15 volunteers from MLC for the first of our 2020 Corporate Volunteer days. It was a very busy day for the team as many of our larger scale maintenance and grounds tasks had been on hold over the December/January period when we pause our volunteer program.

Hundreds of volunteers work with us each year to help maintain our equipment and beautiful grounds, create resources for children, support events, and contribute to a clean and pleasant environment for children, families and staff.

Volunteering is a great way to take a break from the office routine, to strengthen team dynamics, and to make a difference for our children.

If your organisation is in a position to form a business partnership with The Infants' Home as part of your corporate social responsibility program, please register on our website or call us on 9799 4844.

## Rigby House veranda makeover



*Before (left) and after: Rigby House's veranda surface upgrade.*

Thanks to a generous donation from the Danks Trust in 2019, the babies and toddlers in our Rigby House centre are now enjoying a new, safer and softer veranda play space. The new tiles, made from recycled rubber tyres, have expanded the opportunities for the children to engage in independent play and gross motor activities such as rolling, crawling and cruising.

## The Infants' Home's children take the next step

At the beginning of this year, just over 100 children transitioned from our long day care preschool programs and family day care services to primary school.

Each year, with the generous support of donors such as The Rali Foundation, we deliver a specially targeted transition to school program for children and their families who are living with vulnerabilities and who need a little extra support and advocacy to navigate this next big life step.

However, supporting every preschool child's transition to primary school is a core aspect of all of our educational programs. We help children and their families prepare for this exciting, and sometimes overwhelming experience in many ways. For families who are unsure if their child is ready to go to school, and are considering delaying this for a year, our integrated team of educators and allied health staff provide advice and guidance to assist them to make this decision. The team also works with every child to help them develop the important social and emotional skills that will ease this transition, such as how to have conversations and build relationships with peers and adults and how to self-regulate and manage big emotions. Practical activities include school orientation visits and practicing opening lunch containers and drink bottles.

We wish our 'graduating class' of 2019 all the best for their first year at 'big school'.

## Working with our children and families during the bushfires

Although The Infants' Home is located far away from where the actual fire grounds were, the recent bushfire crisis still affected many of our children, families and staff. During the height of the fires, and for several weeks after, poor air quality due to lingering smoke haze meant that the children were often unable to use the outdoor play spaces. For the same reason we unfortunately had to cancel our much-loved annual Carols by Twilight family event.

It seemed that every aspect of the media was bombarding us with distressing news and vision of the fires. Our educators were mindful of observing and talking with children and their families about how they were responding to this. In many of our programs this led to activities and experiences that built upon the children's conversations and questions about the fires. In Rigby House a dramatic play animal hospital was set up, while the children and educators in Robinson House explored ways that they could express their gratitude to the firefighters and other volunteers who helped people and wildlife during the bushfires. The children in our family day care services also expressed their reflections about the bushfires through art and craft, and two of our educators, Pooja and Katya, set up donation collection points for the Katoomba Rural Fire Service in their services.



*Rigby House children caring for injured wildlife in their animal hospital.*



*Collecting donations for the Katoomba Rural Fire Service at Bianca's Family Day Care service. Educators Lulu and Nurjahan also contributed.*



## Our history



Engraving from The Illustrated Sydney News c.1879.

In 1879 a 'Moonlight concert' was held to raise funds for The Infants' Home. A quote from *Illustrated Sydney News* and *New South Wales Agriculturalist and Grazier* reported, 'PERHAPS one of the most enjoyable, as it was the most successful, gatherings of the past month was the concert in aid of the Infants' Home, Ashfield. Valuable contributions of fireworks and lanterns were sent where-with to illuminate the ground. The lime light was exhibited very advantageously, and everything seems to have combined to the complete enjoyment of the visitors...!'



## Spotlight on... Fathers' Playgroup

Our fortnightly Fathers' Playgroup is a community playgroup that runs for two hours on Saturday mornings during school terms. The playgroup is for fathers and male carers and their children, aged from birth to school age. The program is facilitated by an early childhood educator and a playgroup assistant who is also a qualified social worker. It helps fathers and other carers such as uncles and grandfathers to connect with each other, share experiences, create stronger social networks, strengthen their bonds with their children and enhance their parenting confidence and skills. Children also have opportunities to participate in a play-based early childhood program where they can learn, gain new skills and develop relationships with other children, while also spending quality time with their dad or other male carer. Learn more about our Fathers' Playgroup and download the current timetable for all of our playgroups on the 'Services' section of our website at [theinfantshome.org.au](http://theinfantshome.org.au).

**Yes, I want to support children like Sam 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 / 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](mailto:fundraising@theinfantshome.org.au).



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