

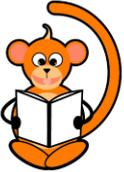


LET'S READ Newsletter

December 2008



Welcome to the last edition of the *Let's Read* Newsletter for 2008. This edition highlights the Let's Read launch in Exmouth, W.A., inspiring reading session stories from Queensland, and community news updates from Victoria and the Northern Territory.



XMAS & New Year Break

- Let's Read National Office (Vic) will be closed for Xmas & New Year break from 22nd December 2008 to 2nd January 2009. If you wish to place an order for 'Let's Read Resources' please fax it to us before 20th December 2008.
- We are in the process of reviewing the price of Let's Read books due to increasing book production costs. After sustaining the same cost of \$6 per book since 2005, we will reluctantly be increasing the cost to \$7 in the new year. The updated resources order form with the new price list can be downloaded from the secure section of the Let's Read website. The new price will be effective from 1st of January 2009.



Bendigo Let's Read News

From John Jones, Project Coordinator

Let's Read in Bendigo is part of a broader community literacy strategy in the Eaglehawk area and was celebrated through a 'Literacy Festival' on Universal Children's Day.



The festival involved storyteller, Galosh the Gnome, story readings hosted by secondary college students in twenty businesses in the shopping strip, and a celebration in Canterbury Park with local entertainer, HeyDeeHo.

About 500 young people, dressed as nursery rhyme and fairy tale characters, from local primary schools, kindergartens and playgroups took part in the day with the 'Let's Read' balloons proving to be a great hit.



They all enjoyed a sausage sizzle prepared by the local Rotary Club and received a show bag with a complimentary book. The Festival certainly achieved its goal of raising the profile of literacy in the community and local businesses are keen to further support that strategy.

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Let's Read Launch in Exmouth with a Teddy Bear's Picnic

From Susanne Dominik, Let's Read Coordinator

WOW - What a great day it was! After weeks of preparation and the input of a lot of people, we were finally able to launch Let's Read in Exmouth with a Teddy Bear's Picnic. It was held at Krait Street Playground, which offers shade and a gazebo which was perfect for setting up the information and food.

I had sent out and posted invitations well ahead of time and it worked! The launch was a big success with 53 children and 45 parents attending.

The park was decorated with Let's Read coloured balloons, banners and we set up a table with Let's Read information for parents to read. I made up Let's Read bookmarks and flyers for everyone to take home and we gave a certificate to each child that dressed up their teddy bears.



After the families settled down I gave a quick introduction to Let's Read and thanked everyone that helped and attended. That was followed by Story Time - all Let's Read trained professionals sat on a picnic blanket and read to a smaller group of children and parents. Then Jackie Cutler did a yoga activity with the whole group which was followed by morning tea.

Even the weather was kind and although it threatened to rain all morning, the first drops only fell once we had packed up. ☺

We are now finalising the strategy to deliver Let's Read to the Exmouth community and will keep everyone updated.





Reading and Communicating with Kids (RACK)

Emma Clewlow, Project Coordinator

I live in Katherine in the Northern Territory, 330km south of Darwin. The objective of my position with RACK is to visit local and not so local, Aboriginal communities to encourage parents/caregivers to read to their children on a regular basis.

Since taking on my role only three months ago I have established Reading Mentors in three communities. I visit two of these communities weekly and we hold 'reading picnics'. I will bring along fruit and juice and plenty of reading material for everyone and we will sit, eat and read together. The parents/caregivers who do attend the 'reading picnics' really enjoy reading to their children and we all have lots of fun.

On one of my recent visits to 'Rockhole' Community the children particularly enjoyed singing along to 'Wheels on the Bus' and wanted to sing 'over and over' again. I gave the parents copies of this book for them to sing along at home.

Each Community is very different and each visit can be very different from the last. I have learnt over the past couple of months not to expect too much on my visits but keep them consistent and quite short. I am confident that in time reading will become part of everyday life within these communities.





Queensland Reading with Children sites

*In Queensland, Let's Read is delivered in 11 locations as part of the Reading to Children Initiative that is funded by the Queensland Government. A vital part of our Let's Read project officers' role is to train mature age volunteers to conduct reading sessions with local children. Reports from events held in **Mt Morgan** and **Bundaberg** are below.*

Mt Morgan Family Fun Day

Jane Ganter, Project Officer, Rockhampton, Qld

Saturday 25th October was a significant day. It was the first opportunity for volunteers to conduct a 'Read Aloud' session at a community event. The Mount Morgan Family Fun Day was the brain child of Ben Lodewikus, of the Mount Morgan Youth Centre (Anglicare).

The Family Fun Day was very well attended by many families, and there was a wonderful atmosphere as people patronised a variety of activities, including the 'Let's Read' tent. Our area was clearly defined with banners, colourful floor mats, cushions, a black board showing the name of the reader, and plenty of books and toys.



About 30 children visited the 'Let's Read' tent. Their enjoyment of the stories was evident through their eager participation and responsiveness. The children enjoyed stories such as 'My Friend Bear', 'Do like a Duck Does', 'Owl Babies' and other great picture story books. Some children stayed through for three or four books.

At the end of each reading session, each child received a 'Let's Read' postcard, with a 'book worm' stamped on the back, and a short message to acknowledge their participation.

We were impressed with the co-operative and responsible behaviour exhibited by the children, not only in the Read Aloud sessions, but throughout the day.

My overall impression was everyone enjoyed the Family Fun Day immensely, and we hope it will be a regular event for the Mount Morgan community.





Shopping Centre Reading Session

From Cheryl Henningsen, Project Officer, Bundaberg, Qld

We had our first Reading Session at our local Hinkler Central Shopping Centre on Wednesday 15th October. For the 2 volunteers who attended, it was their first "reading session" as well, and both were very nervous. They did a great job and I had very positive feedback from the parents who attended. We had one lady circling the shopping centre while we set up, waiting for the reading to start.



There was lots of one-on-one reading as most of the children were under 2 years old. All the parents came in and joined their children on the mat. We had 10 rubber ducks to go with the Eric Carle Story "10 Little Rubber Ducks" and they were a huge hit.

The older children listened to "**Dear Zoo**", "**Giraffes Can't Dance**", "**Big Rain Coming**" and many others. I chatted to parents throughout the session and all were very impressed with the Let's Read Project and happy to hear that we had something like this in Bundaberg. The Centre Manager came out and watched the session several times and at the end told me that she was very surprised at the result. She felt we would be sitting 'twiddling our thumbs'. They are really keen to have this continue.



We are planning monthly reading sessions for 2009.

Staff updates – Farewell to Sonja Pase and Richard Kaa

The Let's Read team recently farewelled Sonja Pase, National Program Manager and Richard Kaa, Evaluation Coordinator.

Sonja Pase joined Let's Read as National Program Manager for 12 months, working effectively across the two partner organisations (The Smith Family and Centre for Community Child Health) to oversee a significant review of Let's Read operations and guide the implementation of two exciting state-wide Let's Read projects in Queensland and Tasmania. Whilst managing this enormous work load, Sonja managed to maintain her delightful sense of humour and to be a caring listener for her staff. After a well-earned break, Sonja has returned to her previous position at FaHCSIA.

Richard Kaa was one of the original Let's Read team members and made a significant contribution to the early development of Let's Read. Richard was instrumental in providing the research base that Let's Read was built upon. Starting with the role of National Trainer in 2005 he then became the Research Coordinator in 2007. We will miss Richard's large presence, sense of humour and positive attitude. Richard has moved to a role with a municipal community health service, which will benefit from his skills as both researcher and psychologist.



Evaluation Update

Evaluation resources and processes are currently under review. Please direct any queries about local evaluation resources and support to evaluation@letsread.com.au.

There will be more news on evaluation coming soon.

Feedback

Have you had a wonderful idea? Developed a great new resource? Overcome a challenge? We'd love to hear about it. Help other Let's Read communities to thrive by sending us stories and photos to share in our next newsletter due out in March 2009. Contact us at metty.joseph@thesmithfamily.com.au

From Let's Read National Team

“Season’s Greetings & Best Wishes for the New Year!”

We look forward to working with you in 2009.

