

THE FORMATION OF THE SUPPORT GROUP

The Vietnamese Parents with Disabled Children Support Group in NSW Inc. is a charity, non-profit group, all its activities are paid for by donations from its members and benefactors.

The group was formed on 20-11-1999 in Sydney, NSW. At first there were 20 families whose relatives had a number of different disabilities such as Down syndrome, autism, Asperger syndrome, brain damage, cerebralpalsy, deafness and other disabilities.

We operate on the principle of families assisting families, parents making friends with each other to share experiences and learn from each other better ways to care for our relatives. So far our achievements have been very encouraging as can be seen on the next page.

At the present the group has more than 100 families in Sydney. Parents in the group attend meetings and workshops. Our activities are extended to all states in Australia and overseas, there are about 200 families interstate and other families in the US, Canada, France, Britain, Holland and Viet Nam. In Viet Nam experts, teachers and parents contact us by email, phone and letters for help and information.

ACHIEVEMENTS

▲ The issue of disabilities in the Vietnamese community has become an increasing concern but there was no books on disabilities in Vietnamese

in public libraries. Therefore in 2000 the group has arranged to have information on disabilities translated or written and distributed to libraries in all states in Australia. They include:

1. *Down Syndrome*
2. *Understanding Autism*
3. *Raising the Child with Autism*. 2002
4. *Asperger Syndrome and NLD*. 2004
5. *Down Syndrome and Treatments: A Guide for Parents*. 2006
6. *Autism and Treatments: A Guide for Parents*. 2006
7. *Cerebral Palsy: A Guide for Parents*. 2008.
8. *Autism: Adolescence and Adulthood* 2010
9. *Autism: What You Need to Know* 2012

These publications were published with fundings from CabraVale Ex-Servicemen's Club (2002, 2004 and 2006) and Canley Heights RSL & Sporting Club Ltd. (2007). The Honourable Julia Irwin, Federal MP for Fowler has launched the first three books on 31 - 3 - 2003 at the Cabra-Vale Diggers' Club.

On this occasion Pham Lam Ngoc Thao, 23 y.o. with Down syndrome, has played keyboard and sung a song she wrote. Ms Irwin was impressed with the work of the Support Group that she read a statement to the Parliament about the book launch and the Support Group in June 2003, her speech was recorded in Hansad.

The Support Group has distributed them in all public libraries in Australia and other countries in the world where there are Vietnamese communities like USA, Canada, Germany and

Viet Nam. This project aims to increase the awareness in the community about the issue of disability, and promotes understanding of the above disabilities.

▲ On 22 - 12 - 2002 the first issue of the magazine 'Parents with Disabled Children' was published. This is a yearly publication and is distributed before Christmas. This is a forum for parents everywhere, articles from parents for the magazine which describe their experiences in caring for disabled children are welcome. On 16 - 12 - 2007 the magazine is put on the group's website chamevoiconkhuyettat.org.au on the internet, so that parents can have access to information on disabilities in Vietnamese right in their home.

▲ The Support Group has been to:

- South Australia, 3 times, organised by Parks Community Health Service Angle Park and parents.
- Queensland, 4 times, organised by parents and members of the group in Dara.
- Melbourne, 4 times, organised by The Vietnamese-Australian Women's Association, The Aged and Disability Services of City of Yarra and ADEC (Action on Disability in the Ethnic Communities).
- The Children Hospital 2 in Saigon, Viet Nam, 3 times, organised by doctors and staff.
- Other workshops on autism in Viet Nam, 3 times, organised by parents in Ha Noi, Sai Gon and Vung Tau.

▲ Yearly activities in the group consist of three fixed dates: Mother's Day, Father's Day, and end of year. Parents also celebrate birthdays of their children with parties held at home, and have group outings to give the children opportunities to mix with the community, as parenting disabled children is very stressful and parents need time to rest. Parents are showed how to choose a school setting suitable for their children, or which schools offer a better environment.

New members are helped to apply for a range of services that benefit disabled children like ShareCare, Early Intervention Program, Centa Care, Respite Care, Speech therapy, AfterCare, Proof of Age Card. The group also helps members to fill in application forms at Centrelink, apply for disability parking pass, public housing, change of status due to special needs, visit and phone parents giving birth to disabled babies, to raise their spirit and give emotional support.

▲ In addition to disseminating relevant materials, information, holding learning sessions and meetings for parents, the group also has other plans for the future, aiming at parents with disabled children and the community with the view to improve the living conditions of disabled people, helping them to develop their potentials.

▲ Our wish is to meet new friends and families so that we can help each other. Shared feelings will make us feel stronger, and the burden less formidable. Quang, Duyen and the group can be

contacted at:

Email: quangduyen78@hotmail.com

Skype: quang.duyen

or : P.O.Box 282 Bonnyrigg Plaza, Bonnyrigg NSW 2177.

Phone: 02 9823 6041 or 0422 205 900, 7 days a week from 10 am to 10 pm.

Website: www.chamevoiconkhuyettat.org

ACTIVITIES

▲ Meetings are held monthly on fourth Monday from 10 am - 1 pm, at Bonnyrigg Community Service Centre, Bonnyrigg, NSW.

▲ The group's coordinator has talked with the Department of Community Services in Fairfield (DoCS) about the needs of parents. As a result, DoCS started to hold information sessions every four weeks to teach the carers about disabilities.

▲ We work jointly with Centrelink in Fairfield, the Family Planning Association to organise talks about benefits, services for carers and disabled people, women's health, fertility, different methods of contraception for men and women, breast and vaginal examinations, mental health, psychological development of disabled young people. NDIA also comes to talk about NDIS.

▲ Our group cooperated with the Parks Community Network in Wetherill Park, Sydney to have similar activities to the above. We invited experts in different disabilities to come and teach

or share their experiences of how to care for disabled children, with the aim of giving parents necessary knowledge regarding the development of their children.

▲ The topics, the selection of speakers at these sessions, and subsequently their invitations are chosen entirely by the group, because only parents understand the needs of their children. As the meetings are in English, there is always an interpreter at each meeting.

THE VIETNAMESE PARENTS WITH DISABLED CHILDREN SUPPORT GROUP

in NSW Inc. Australia

ABN: 97 130 132 484

Website: www.chamevoiconkhuyettat.org

- Meeting, learning, discussing, promoting issues about disability.
- Publishing books and information about Down syndrome, autism, Asperger syndrome, caring, services.
- Assisting in finding services and school for disabled children.
- Parents helping parents in all states in Australia and overseas.
- Sharing experiences, explaining, answering questions on disabilities by phone or email.
- Donation of \$2 or over is income tax deductible.