



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

SPARK News

Dear supporter,

SPARK started 2017 with a new Program Coordinator, our regular school holiday activities and planning for the year ahead. With many families arriving over the summer break the SPARK team have been looking at ways to best support them. In this newsletter you'll find out more about our programs for 2017 as well as an update on what we're doing in the community.



Welcome SPARK Program Coordinator Jess

In January SPARK welcomed Jessica Graham-Franklin to the SPARK team in the new role of Program Coordinator. Jess joins the SPARK team from St Vincent de Paul Support Services where she worked as a Project Officer for Ability Links for a number of years. Jess will be supporting the staff program and volunteer officers as well as working closely with SPARK and COMPEER manager Anne Bouboulas.

Refugee Update

According to [the latest figures](#), in 2016 the Fairfield Local Government Area settled close to 5000 refugees, half of all refugees in NSW. Last year Liverpool Local Government Area settled around 1500 refugees, making it the council with the third highest number of refugees in the nation, after Fairfield and Hume in Victoria.



Our focus in 2017 will be to work collaboratively with these communities to ensure they settle well and thrive. SPARK are already working closely with key primary schools and organisations in these areas to ensure these families are supported and connected to the community.

SPARK Programs Term 1 & 2 2017



Bright Sparks Learning Club is underway again at 7 schools with over 100 volunteers supporting primary aged children each week. **Bright Sparks Tutor** continues in three schools and is currently recruiting skilled volunteers. For more information or to apply [click here](#).

Active Kids is expanding to Fairfield Public School in Term 2 to support their high numbers of new arrivals to lead healthy, active and connected lives. **The Circus program** at Liverpool West Public School is planned for Term 2 to encourage newly arrived children to make friends and develop their confidence and resilience.

For newly arrived parents we are running **1-2-3 Magic Emotion Coaching** at Guildford and Old Guildford Public Schools with a **Welcome Dinner** planned for the end of March with Fairfield schools. Our regular **Parent groups** at Yennora and Fairfield Public schools and **Bilingual Book Club** at 6 schools continue to provide engagement in learning - both for children and parents!

Trauma Informed Practice



Working with families from refugee and asylum-seeker backgrounds means that we often work with parents and children with trauma. In order to make the places we work with safe, particularly for the many children's programs we run, we are beginning to implement some strategies from the paper *Making Space For Learning* by the *Australian Childhood Foundation*.

For all our programs this means creating spaces around the principles of predictability, adaptability and connectedness. Over the next few months we will be making small improvements to SPARK programs that will ensure we are providing families first and foremost with a safe space from which they can learn, grow and feel connected. You can read the full paper on the Australian Childhood website [here](#).

SPARK in the Community



SPARK take great pride in working collaboratively alongside the community and this month has been no exception as we continue to build our presence and connection with other organisations, community leaders, volunteers and schools.

In mid-February SPARK staff held a stall at the *Careers Expo* at the *University of Western Sydney* in an effort to recruit more local volunteers. SPARK also presented at the *Fairfield Families and Children Interagency*, sharing the work we do in schools and looking at how we can better link with other Community services.

Lastly, alongside The Smith Family Communities For Children, The PARKs Community Network Inc and facilitators Sandy and Adrian, SPARK were nominated for '*Exceptional Community Partnership in a LGA*' at the Zest Awards for Kids & Blokes Playzone. You can see all the nominations in the category here [here](#).

If you are interested in [volunteering](#), [partnering](#) with or [supporting](#) SPARK please find more information on our [website](#) or get in contact with us at spark@vinnies.org.au



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