

CHIPS 2013 WRAPPER

CHRONIC
ILLNESS
PEER
SUPPORT

E M P O W E R I N G Y O U N G P E O P L E



Liz Dixon Award



Liz Dixon was an inspiring participant of the ChIPS Program. Liz's courage, positive attitude to life, joyous spirit and commitment to those she cared about will be forever remembered by the ChIPS community. To keep her memory and love of the ChIPS Wrapper and arts alive, we created The Liz Dixon Wrapper Award for Creative Arts. This is awarded to the ChIPS member with the best creative submission into the magazine.

2010/2011 Winner – Jessica Marshall

Previous winners:

2009 Winner – Geri Herd

2008 Winner – Scott Campbell

2007 Winner – Karen Lay

2006 Winner – Louise Pellegrino

2005 Winner – Elisha Mont

**ChIPS isn't just about chronic illness.
It's about being an adolescent and getting on with life.**

ChIPS aims:

- To continue to provide ChIPS members with opportunities to interact with peers who have a similar understanding about life with a chronic illness.
- To provide ChIPS members with the opportunity to develop and utilise skills, such as leadership and peer support, and raise self confidence through opportunities provided within the program
- To provide ChIPS members with the skills and confidence to increase their ability to deal with life with a chronic illness
- To provide ChIPS members with the opportunity to actively raise awareness in our community, not just about ChIPS but about living with a chronic illness

Contact ChIPS at:
Royal Childrens Hospital
50 Flemington Road
Parkville, 3052
Ph: (03) 9345 6616
www.rch.org.au/chips

Chris Balnaves Award



Chris Balnaves (Bellsy) was an amazing ChIPS member. He joined ChIPS in 1997, and shortly after it proved impossible to find anybody who didn't know him, or at least know of him! Chris was once said to be the heart of the ChIPS community, attending all the social events and reference committee meetings he could, whilst always making the effort to introduce himself to new people and befriend as many Chippers as possible.

One of the highlights for Chris was the annual ChIPS camp, which he took delight in organizing and participating in. Chris won the first ever Walsh Perpetual Trophy and proved to be a very competitive team leader, trying his hardest at every camp to win it back. Unfortunately, we had to say goodbye to Chris as he passed away in 2003.

The Chris Balnaves award for Most Outstanding Camper was created to honour and remember Chris for who he was, and his dedicated contribution to ChIPS and the spirit of the program. Chris was an amazing and inspiring person who will always be remembered and truly missed.

2011 Winner – James Williams

Previous winners:

2010 Winner – Jordan Hammond

2009 Winner – Scott Campbell

2008 Winner – Stacy Cumming

2007 Winner – Louise Pellegrino

2006 Winner – Bree Regester

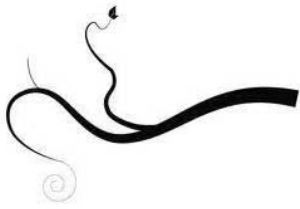
2005 Winner – Andrew Selvaggi

ChIPS Wrapper



2013





Editors Ramblings



THE END IS HERE.

I'm sitting here huddled in a barricaded room, listening to the eerie sounds outside. It's 6.35pm, on my last day on earth. I have no illusions I'll survive what's outside this room. I watched my friends leave, saying that they'd brave the outside to try and find a safe place, but I couldn't bring myself to go with them. Oh no, the door is moving... the groaning is getting louder. This is Jemma Young, signing off for the last time.

Yeah okay I'm not future Jemma from channel 8 news and I wasn't talking about the zombie apocalypse when I said the end is here. I just couldn't help myself. I've been watching The Walking Dead too much I think. I'm actually talking about the end of the year, and the end of my time as Publications leader. 2013 has been a long, eventful but ultimately good year.

January hailed in with the Harry Potter camp and then we were straight into it in February with the beginning of Reference Committee. The year started out with the Publications committee only having 3 members, Caitlin Martin, Bridget Bourke and myself, and our amazing mentor Jordo of course, so to combat small numbers we decided to pool resources with the Advocacy committee. Numbers may have been down a little, but we managed brilliantly. I've loved being on Reference Committee for the past 5 years, especially this year as I was able to challenge myself by being on, and being a leader of a new committee I'd never been on before.

I think the highlight of my year was producing 2 ChILL newsletters, which I think were fantastic. Kudos must be given to our designer Caiti, who put everything together. I'm trying to remember any interesting things from the past year to include in my final piece, but to be honest the whole year is a giant busy blur. 11 meetings, filled with planning, news and updates for the ChIPS community, and filled with socials and other events. I've read so many articles my eyes are blurring, as well as my memory but I've loved every second of it. To all the ChIPPERS who've submitted articles, written articles at the request of the committee or just read our publications, we thank you.

I've been trying for a few weeks to write my final editors piece, or rambling's as I've taken to calling them. This is my final word. I leave you all in the capable hands of your new Publications leader. Whoever they are, they'll be brilliant. Thanks for a great year ChIPPERS, see you next year.

Jemma Young





Chairperson's Report

Wow! What a year it was, where to start...

Firstly what an honour it was to be asked to chair such an awesome committee!

From all the serious official stuff to the epic socials and camps, I think we'll all agree we achieved quite a bit on the Reference Committee front. Lots of effort and work from all committees and mentors.

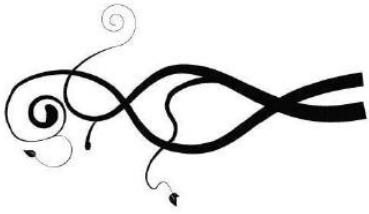
What an amazing job Socials committee did organising the awesome socials we had throughout the year (if I had to pick a personal favourite I'd probably have to say wheelchair basketball). It's also great to see and welcome so many new CHIPPERS who joined us at the socials and camps. Speaking of camps, how awesome was January camp!? Although we battled some pretty hot weather I think everyone tried their best to keep cool and had a fantastic time. Camp Committee definitely did a top notch job if I do say so myself. We also welcomed the long awaited addition of ChIPS iPads. Hopefully this will be great way to showcase some photos and videos to those who might be interested in joining ChIPS, making ward visits more fun and exciting. Let's hope we can welcome even more new CHIPPERS this year.

Like I said it's been an awesome year! Let's see what this year brings for ChIPS.

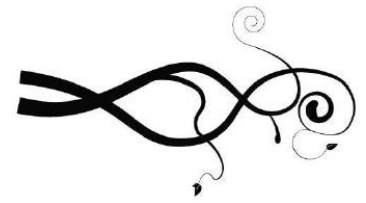
I'm looking forward to another fantastic year for Reference Committee.

Grant Monks





Jarnia's Journal



WOW....an end to another year...and what a year it has been!!!

The year kicked off with the largest ever camp at the YMCA Recreation Camp in Mt Evelyn. The weather was SO hot but we powered on through and did some great things including High Ropes, Giant Swing, Swimming, the traditional t-ball match and who could forget the mythical and magical costume party! Harry Potter was the theme and Slytherin triumphed and took out the Walsh Shield at the end of camp presentation. Huge thanks to everyone that attended for making it memorable; special thanks to the healthcare team and volunteers that came along with us.

Reference Committee kicked off in late February, with sixteen ChIPPERS stepping up throughout the year to take on responsibility for running socials, organising publications, planning next year's camp and promoting ChIPS and the work we do. Reference Committee has done a great job this year and on behalf of the ChIPS membership who have enjoyed the 'fruits of your labour' I say THANK YOU. A massive round of applause must also go to the mentors that have assisted the various committees' throughout the year - thank you Jano, Jess, Elle, Allesha, Karen and Jordo for your contribution and efforts.

There have been a variety of socials this year including High Ropes, Movie Night & Pizza, Wheel Chair Basketball and the Lawn Bowls Xmas Party. It is really pleasing to see lots of ChIPPERS making the most of the opportunities to come and connect with other members. Well done to the social committee for making it all happen!

High Challenge Camp was another highlight in the ChIPS calendar an awesome three days was spent on lots of fun activities and offered another opportunity for ChIPPERS to connect and try new things. It was great to see so many new ChIPPERS come along!

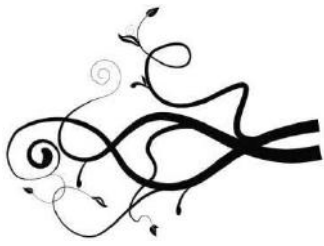
I ran my first Eight Week Group this year, what a great experience! ☺A big welcome to Tia, Rachael and Georgia as they start their ChIPS journey.

So many things have happened on the ChIPS calendar this year and I would like to acknowledge the support Meagan and I have had from the ChIPS peer leaders at all these events. Their passion and support of fellow ChIPERS is truly inspiring.

Last (but definitely not least!!) well done to Jemma, Caitlin and Bridget on the 'Pubs' committee for a huge effort in producing this Wrapper and to all the ChIPPERS that contributed - I am sure you will enjoy the read!

Can't wait for 2014! It's going to be another busy one!
All the best, Jarnia





Meagan's Musings



And so another year comes to an end as ChIPS grows another year older, another year more established and yet another year of inspiring ChIPPERS achieving amazing things. From turning up to their first Eight Week Group or Intensive, to flying on the giant swing to leading a committee on Reference committee to organising the ChIPS camp. All of these are great achievements in their own right, the essence of ChIPS.

For me, as a ChIPS staff member this year has been one of many highlights. I only have enough room to mention a couple so please allow me to indulge for a moment. My first one was witnessing James, Ty and Zak wow an audience at National Australia Bank with their inspiration, passion and poise as they presented their own stories and what ChIPS is all about. The audience was putty in their hands. The second being that we successfully ran three full Intensive programs and 2 Eight-Week Groups this year and having the privilege of running them all with Jano, Jarnia and the peer leaders James, Ty, Shaz, Grant, Rohan, Jemma and Beth. Together we witnessed new ChIPPERS come together and share and connect with complete understanding and without judgement. The High Challenge camp this year was another highlight and seeing how the Peer Leaders took to their role and hugely influenced the successful experience of that camp for all ChIPPERS involved. The ChIPS program thanks all of the Peer Leaders for their ongoing inspiration and commitment. And most recently I have had the opportunity to interview a couple of ChIPPERS for the RCH facebook page. This has been an amazing experience of getting to know the stories of these young people at a whole different level. I thank them for their openness in sharing their stories. Check them out on the RCH Facebook page. There'll be more to come too.

I would like to thank all of the ChIPPERS I get to work with throughout the year. You continue to inspire me in life. I also want to acknowledge the dedication and passion of the staff, mentors and volunteer team I get to work with. I am privileged to work with you all.

And finally my musical recommendation for this year is to check out local Melbourne artist Chela, especially her song Romanticise....
<http://www.triplejuneearthed.com.au/Chela>.

Meagan



Reference Committee

2013

Camp Committee

Sarah Menta - Leader

"I completed VCE dance in Year 10 after doctors said it would be difficult for me to dance professionally again."

Grant Monk

"I hate moths."

Beth Sleeman

"I still have VHS tapes of my favourite childhood movie."

Zak Hanyn

"Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other one thing". - Abraham Lincoln 16th President of The United States of America.

Advocacy Committee

Tyrone Kelly - Leader

"I don't have to straighten my hair, it's already fabulous."

Emily Ryan

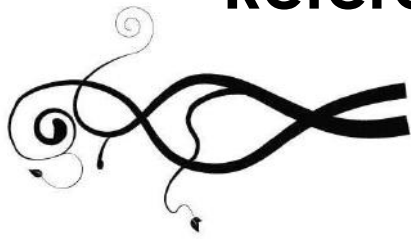
"I'm 2 cm off my goal of reaching 5ft."

James Williams

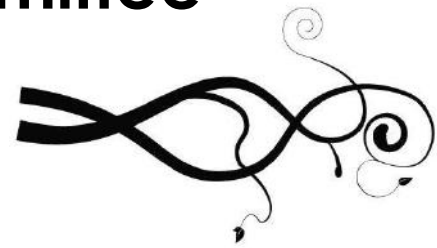
"I break easy... Not very random is it, it's all I got."



Reference Committee



2013



Socials Committee

Claudia Forsberg

“I want to go to Paris because it’s an interesting place and the Eiffel Tower is amazing.”

Eliza Masterson - Leader

“I am ¼ Croation.”

Uli Kaplan

“I like Rock Climbing.”

Adam Cruickshank

“I know every bus route and train line in Melbourne.”

Publications Committee

Jemma Young - Leader

“I want to have a purple feature wall in my bedroom.”

Caitlin Martin

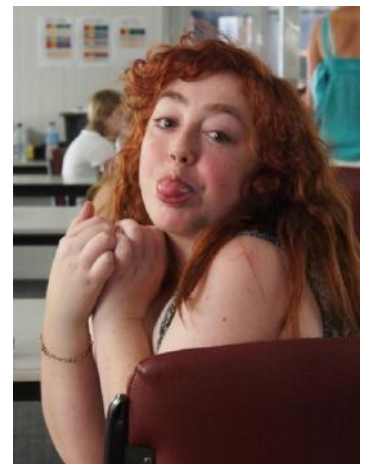
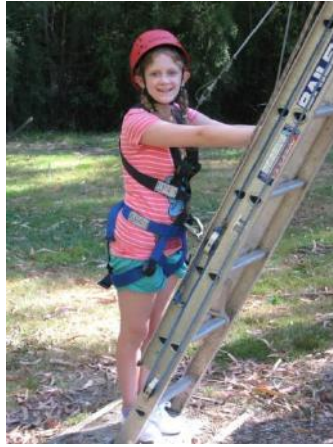
“I am obsessed with change, and have a habit of changing my hair different colours.”

Bridget Bourke

“I own a banana costume.”



ChIPS Camp 2013 Photos



ChIPS Camp 2013 Photos



High Challenge Camp 2013 Photos



Lawn Bowls
Movie Night

Social 2013 Photos

High Ropes
Wheelchair Basketball



Mentor Thanks



Jordo

We would just like to say a huge thanks to Jordo for all the hard work she has put in to the pubs committee over the years as a ChIPPER and as a mentor. I can't speak for everyone but I will be very excited to see her back from Sydney and at ChIPS events soon! Thank you for being such an inspirational mentor and showing me and undoubtedly many others that it's easy to just enjoy yourself in ChIPS and not stress about everything. Thanks for being such an inclusive, kind hearted person. I am excited to have you on pubs with me again through 2014!

Caiti Martin & the Pubs team

Dear Allesha!

Wow! What a year we have had as an advocacy group! All of us cannot thank you enough for the time and endless effort you have put into not just the Advocacy group but in ChIPS as well! Advocacy has loved every minute working with you! The amount of laughing that goes on in the room when we meet is amazing. Your hard work ethic and humorous nature is to be admired! We as a group were so lucky to have you as a mentor and we all hope to see you on board next year!

As a group would like to say a big thank you to you! Thank you Allesha!

Emily Ryan & the Advocacy team

Karen & Jano

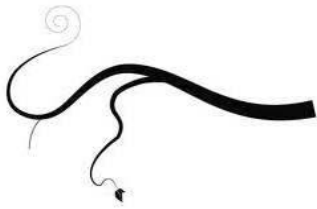
This year on the Socials committee we had the honour of having two mentors, Jano and Karen Lay. Karen was in fact a ChIPPER a few years ago and had come back this year to help Jano with the mentoring of the Socials committee. Together they have ensured we know what to do next with planning a social and ensuring we have buses and activities in place for them when needed. So thank you Karen and Jano for being amazing we couldn't have done it without you.

Eliza & the Socials Team

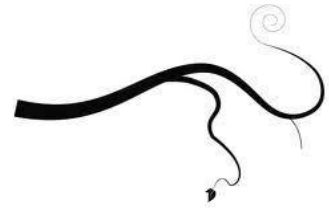
Jess & Elle

Hey everyone, I'm here to give you a little insight on how much I value and respect our camp committee mentors Jess and Elle. Camp would be impossible to organise without the support from these two amazing mentors. Whether it was help with something specific or just need to vent my stress, they made it easy to do so. So on behalf of myself and my camp committee I'd like to say a massive thank you for all the support you have provided to us this year. On that note I must also say a big thank you to Jarnia who did a lot of work with us behind scenes. Thank you once again, you have all made camp as perfect as it could be.

Smenta & the Camp Team

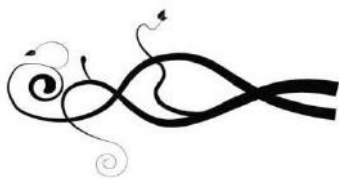


Farewell Shaz

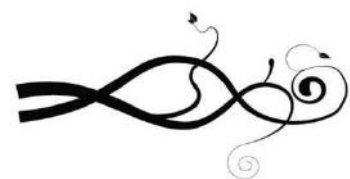


ChIPS isn't just a support group, it's a family of young adolescents battling chronic illness (with dedicated doctors and nurses supporting and guiding us along the way). Each and every ChIPPER is an inspiration in many different ways. But first and foremost I would like to bring your attention to Shaz Sturk, a beautiful young lady who began her journey with ChIPS 6 years ago. If I had the words to describe what Shaz means to me and many other people I wouldn't be able to write them all down as only my heart knows how much she means to me. For me, experiencing ChIPS with Shaz has been a great pleasure, opportunity and learning curve. Her smile brings great joy and hope into my life and of course many others. To me, she is the light at the end of a tunnel no matter what you are going through or have been through - just having her presence makes everything worthwhile. Her tenacity and strong willed spirit in ChIPS has been truly amazing. You will always be in our hearts and although 6 years has come to an end your name and the memories we shared with you will forever remain. Good luck for the future and all the best.

Love always Faith



New Chippers



A huge open armed welcome to this year's new ChIPPERS. We hope to see you at more ChIPS events in the future.

Term 1: Joshua Marijancevic, Chloe Bosch, James Munro, Ebony Kane, Maddy Florescu

Term 2: Rachael Clark and Georgia Grisbey

Intensives:

April: Joshua Bird, Caitlin Rohr, John Masiewicz, Christina Curkowsky, Sam Lawson and Nicholas Gale.

July: Jasmine Harding, Jessica Miljesic, Kiara Clancy, Ari Ajani and Lauren Thorpe

September: Trevor Annells, Mo Elshazly, Sharon Domingue, Rylee Coustley, Tia Karkaloutsos, Cameron Slater, Uma Ganesamurthi



Intensive songs

April

Just Chillin

A song by the April Intensive
Participants 2013

V1

Its moments like these
We need the minties
We make the snakes
And measure them out

V2

We ask the questions
That made us move
We have taken the chance
That makes us groove

Chorus

Just chillin with our ChIPPERS @ FCC
Just chillin with our ChIPPERS @ FCC
Just chillin with our ChIPPERS @ FCC

V3

With knowledge that there are other
people like me
Coming together with smiles and
laughter
Thanks ChIPS we're feeling looked
after.



July

Song: Untitled

By the July Intensive Participants 2013

V1

Why don't people accept us
From their side they have questions
They just try to understand

Chorus

Friends they understand
Bullies are judgemental
You hurt me at the time
But the words hurt me later
Why do you judge us, stop being a
hater

V2

There's jealousy on both sides
'You're lucky you get sickies'
If you want it you can have it
If you had it you'd know

V3

I might not be as bad as you
But I still go through this too
I may have physical challenges
But don't treat me any other way
If it's not seen they say we don't look
sick
If it's seen they make us VIP

Bridge

We're here and were excited
There's fun energy around
We've made friends who are caring
without caring
Thank for the kindness

Outro

We've had friends walk away
Upon hearing of our illness
Now they are just somebody I used to
know.

January Camp 2013

This year's camp started off like any other meeting at the hospital in the early morning, checking your meds in and getting on the bus. The bus took us to Mount Evelyn Recreation Camp and what a beautiful spot to spend three days that was. Lovely bushy area surrounded by practically a forest of gorgeous tall trees.

Once we had gotten off the long bus ride and settled down to be told what was going to be happening over the course of camp, it was revealed that the theme was Harry Potter. In this CHIPPERS opinion probably the greatest idea for a theme since we started going on camp. After all that we were sorted into our teams which in conjunction with the theme were Gryffindor, Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff, Slytherin and one extra team, Phoenix of which I was captain.

The activities this year were ace; we had Archery, Craft, Skits, High ropes and the Giant Swing. Archery was awesome as we had pictures of Voldemort and Draco Malfoy over the targets and we had to try and hit them to score maximum points, it would have helped if when we did hit them the arrows had actually stayed in and not bounced off or fallen out. (That cost us a few hundred points.)

Craft, held by Michelle our lovely art therapist was very fun and very chilled. Sitting there listening to music, making dream catchers whilst Nurse Charlie quoted 'Pitch Perfect' the whole time. Skits always, always puts your mind to the test thinking of creative ways to tell a story using obscure items. This year we had a pair of socks, a CD, a toy car and a couple of other things and in true tradition of the Royal Children's Hospital, my team and I decided to make our skit about a trip to Maccas.

High Ropes was well a few feet off the ground, one thing I like most about high ropes is that at each campsite it's set up differently with different components to it, so you never know what you're going to get and it's like a new experience every time. As always Jano rigged something up so even people in wheelchairs could go up and have a shot. Unfortunately I wasn't feeling very good when we had Giant Swing and couldn't go which was such a shame as it's my favourite camp activity and we haven't done it in years.

There is always more to a CHIPS camp than just the activities though! We have our annual giant T-ball match which has been going on for 3 years now and I always have a blast running it. Then we have what seems to be the highlight of everybody's camp, the 2nd night party WOOOO!!!!!!!!!! This year's theme for the party (Halloween) was broader than usual but still an epic effort by everybody for their costumes. Halloween was a great success the amount of different costumes was amazing, we had scary characters like the Joker from Batman, we had mythical characters like witches and wizards and we had people go as characters from movies like myself, I went as Qui-Gon Jinn from Star Wars.

This brings me to the end of camp and the last morning filled with many hugs, happy thoughts and the awards ceremony. Every camp I've been on, the team I was on has always come last or second last. So this year to place 2nd (especially when the team that came first had 3 more people than my team) was just the best feeling to me, I was ecstatic! I don't think I have ever enjoyed a camp more it was a great theme, I was on a great team, and it was a lovely location to share with lovely people. So thank you to all who participated in this camp or helped organise it, particularly Jemma and Smenta for running it and thank-you for reading this. Can't wait for the next camp!

Beth Sleeman





High Challenge Camp

2013



The September holidays marks a time in the ChIPS calendar when Victoria Police involvement in our Chronic Illness Peer Support Program is truly appreciated. Without their unending support and involvement the annual 'High Challenge Camp' wouldn't exist.

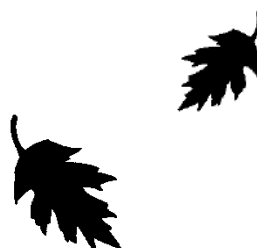
The year 2013 was my first High Challenge Camp and despite initial misgivings, the prospect of a camp run by the celebrated duo Jano and Patty was an exciting one. So with my bag almost packed (turned out I forgot to bring a towel) I joined the assembly of other ChIPPERS in Flemington on a rather crisp morning. Mixed conversations filled the air and collections of bags and suitcases littered the floor as we waited to board the bus to Mt Evelyn, the facility we would call home for the next three days.

The basis of High Challenge is to, as the name suggests, challenge oneself in a safe, relaxed environment. Activities such as the High Ropes course and Giant Swing are apt examples of this, but back on the ground ChIPPERS also have the opportunity to challenge themselves sociably. The array of games lead by the affable Jano and Patty gave ChIPPERS the opportunity to do this, allowing them to make new friends, mix with other ChIPPERS and the chance to better understand the importance of team work, if one wants to win in games such as Pictionary (which, might I add, was one of the most intense games I've ever played) and T-Ball.

Surrounded by pristine woodland and clear night skies, evenings in which we sat around a roaring fire or came together to celebrate the camps Onesie party were personal highlights.

A camp that neither pushes nor forces it's participants to take part in all activities, it was an experience I found rewarding and thoroughly enjoyable. Carrying a different vibe to that of the January Camp, High Challenge isn't about one's group striving to achieve first place, but rather striving to complete your goals, no matter what they be.

Rachel Nixon





Run for the kids



On Sunday the 13th of April 2013 ChIPS participated in Run for the Kids, an event to raise money for The Royal Children's Hospital. As a group we participated in the 5.2 km walk around the city which starts at Alexandra Avenue and finishes in Linlithgow Avenue. There were lots of funny memories made on the day of Run for the Kids, like the rivalry between James and Emily and another rivalry between Emily and Allesha! Run for the Kids was such a memorable experience and cannot wait for the next one!

Emily Ryan



Socials



Term 2 Social- Movie & Games Day

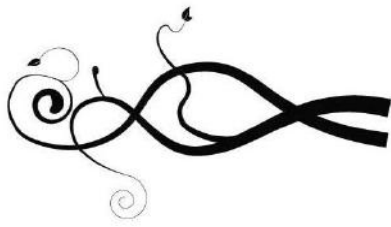
Our Term 2 social was held in the Ella Latham Theatre at the RCH with about 20 ChIPPERS in attendance. We started off the day with a get to know you game – give your name and an interesting fact about yourself to the group. Then we made paper planes and had a basket in the middle of the room and everyone had to try to get their plane into the basket. After all the fun and games we had some pizza and snacks and washed it all down with a drink. When everyone was full and couldn't eat anymore we headed into the Ella Latham Theatre and all grabbed a seat and watched the Walt Disney movie 'Brave' which was a good movie. After the movie finished we all said our goodbyes and headed home. All in all it was a great social.

Adam Cruickshank

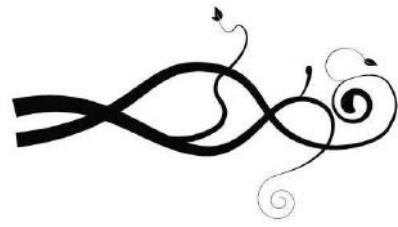
Term 3 - Wheelchair Basketball

I recently attended the wheelchair basketball social, which was a great success. Everyone who attended enjoyed themselves thoroughly. We were privileged to have Sam Bramham, an Australian Paralympian, to run the Wheelchair Basketball portion of the day. We wrapped up the day by playing a game of Celebrity Heads which was full of intrigue & laughter. I had an awesome day at the Wheelchair Basketball social. I just want to take the opportunity to pass on my congratulations to the Socials Committee, who gave us another fabulous social. Thank you from myself & all who attended.

Written on behalf of the ChIPS Family
by Zak Hany.



Socials



Term 4 Social - Christmas party & Bowls.

The closing episode to the lovely chronicle that was the 2013 ChIPS calendar, socials wise anyway, happened to be placed in a familiar setting for our Christmas farewells, you guessed it; a lawn bowls club. On a typical Melbourne day that promised to be anything but predictable weather-wise in the morning, the gods smiled upon us and we were gifted a cloudless sky along with a warm afternoon. A few old faces coupled with many new ones grouped up under the banner of ChIPS for a fun filled day (as all of our socials are) that was far too hot for any exciting physical activity... Unfortunately this included lawn bowls as we managed to cut short our already short amount of set rounds at a grand total of 3 legs (if my memory serves correctly). Much to the excitement of all 16 participants, myself included we said stuff the weather and settled for the best hot weathered lunch known to man, a barby.

Getting to know some of the vibrant personalities of the younger generation of ChIPPERS was an absolute treat and I feel pretty stoked to have received so many laughs (albeit probably pitiful ones) for my craptastic sense of humour. Not to be devoid of exterior entertainment we were surrounded by the very out of place younger community of Fitzroy. I say out of place due to the 80 year olds threatening to fall over bowling on the higher plateau of the venue, with their bad hips and sore knees. In typical ChIPS fashion we managed to integrate and appreciate the happiness around us. As all Christmas socials do, the event ended with an exchanging of valuable KK presents. Something to this day, I still forget to bring to Christmas socials which means I don't receive and then I cry and YEAHH.

Props to the socials committee for putting on yet another stellar event and managing to get everyone talking and laughing together so quickly! Another thank you so much to everyone who attended. If you were unable to come I'm sorry that you missed out, but don't worry. There are many, many more chances to come and have an awesome time. Also to get presents... Lottttss of presents.

by Scott Campbell



'ChIPS Creative' Group

The ChIPS Creative group explored weird and wacky art activities this year. ChIPPERS started the year with a victory banner for Run for the Kids. The second group got to play with icing sugar and sprinkles in a cake decorating session, feasting on their creations. Then ChIPPERS got their hands dirty in making their own miniature garden... a glass terrarium with figurines and plants. Making mess with melted wax and hairdryers caused surprising results. Meagan visited the group, instructing us in how to create our very own puppets. Each member was able to make colourful characters full of attitude. The next session was using mosaic tiles and stones to create masterpieces and fashion designer Scotatto showed ChIPPERS how to work with leather, making awesome leather badges. The list went on....

The aim of the group was to encourage members to share their experiences of chronic illness with their peers in a friendly, relaxed environment. The art making was the starting point for ChIPERS to creatively explore and experiment with a wide range of art materials. It didn't matter what age you were or how artistic, everyone gave the activity a try whilst sharing a laugh. The evidence of this is in the photos of our artwork taken by ChIPPERS.

Michelle (Art Therapist) would like to thank all the ChIPERS that attended, each member has brought their own style, attitude and musical taste to the group. Thank you for making it special, it was amazing to work with such talented of young people.

Now that some of you have had a taste of what a creative group can do perhaps some of you could get together to create your own multi-media group. Maybe guest ChIPERS could share a skill or collectively you can come up with a new group format. The group is yours to be whatever you make it! Michelle leaves this in ChIPERS very capable hands.

Michelle



Life is a Battlefield



Most people don't usually see people like me. In their field of vision, they often see only what they want to see. Maybe they're just not really sure what to do with someone like myself. I don't blame them – a life like mine is in no way an ordinary one with all the challenges it brings – it's anything but comfortable. My best friend passed away barely three weeks ago from a similar illness. I have had a few life-saving surgeries myself this year, one of the many I receive every year. There are others like me. We are survivors who others don't often see or give a chance; even the chance of friendship. Melbourne is my home but many times before I've been at risk of losing that home. Since the day I was born I've been fighting for my life, living with a range of chronic life-threatening illnesses, the main one being chronic lung disease. Despite the odds I'm still alive. My name is Uli. I am only 18 and this is my story.

My fight for life started 18 years ago on June 23 1995. I was born eight weeks early so the doctors knew I was in for a rough start to life, but exactly how rough they were only just beginning to realise. One of the first problems that was clear to the doctors was that I was born with bronchiectasis; a big and hard word to say but it basically means that my lungs are continually filling with fluids, which causes me to get sick a lot. It even causes the odd lung collapse or two – which doesn't really help a lot – especially if you can't breathe in the first place.

The severity of the problem became clearer after my father gave me milk in a baby's bottle to drink from. Little did he know that this simple act of love nearly killed me and forever changed my life. Due to a hole existing between my windpipe and my oesophagus (where the food goes down), instead of the milk going to my stomach, it instead flowed into my lungs and anyone who knows anything about lungs knows this is not a good thing. The milk flooded my lungs causing me to cough and suffocate. Thanks to the hard work of the doctors, my life was saved that day; however they could not stop irreversible damage from occurring. They have been able to do surgeries since then which have lessened the impact of that day, but I never did fully recover. After that I spent the next two and half years of my childhood in hospital. I had a Trachi tube from birth up until two years ago. When that was removed, I was worried about whether I would still breathe without it. But I did and that has become a huge milestone of my journey. To attempt to do something normal would be easy for any other little kid, but for me it was hard to even sit because I had tubes coming out of me left, right and centre; like ropes trying to strap me to the bed and not let me go. All my life I have been in and out of hospital and a regular customer at The Royal Children's Hospital.

Life is a Battlefield

Continued

Like many other struggles in life, school was difficult for me. Being in and out of hospital made it hard to attend school regularly. It meant I had to repeat years to catch up on the work I had missed. Because I looked different to everyone else I was picked on and put down by other students. I often felt like an outcast, like I didn't belong. When other kids were playing footy, I would sit on the sidelines with an oxygen tank. I'm now in year 11 and have caught up on most of my studies. I have now made it the age of 18. I would love to get into the media and television industry. My dream is to write my own book and produce a documentary on my life, to bring awareness to people about living a life with a chronic illness.

I have written this for people who don't know what it's like to live with a chronic illness. To make people aware that everyday life is not as easy for some. It's for the kids who are going through the same thing, but don't have the confidence or ability to explain their journey.

By Uli Kaplan



Thank you Uli for presenting us all with your lovely writing piece.

If anyone would like to put their own writing piece in the next Wrapper please email it to Jarnia or the Pubs team.

Thank you for reading the 2013 version of the wrapper.

If anyone has any articles,
photographs, stories or ideas for
any future Chills or Wrappers
don't hesitate to email Jarnia or
the Publications team!



You can also contact the
publications team on:

Chips.pubs@gmail.com

Or Contact Caitlin Martin
(head of pubs 2014) on:

0481336073

You can contact Jarnia
Cameron on:

Jarnia.cameron@rch.org.au

Or at the chips office on:

(Landline) 93456616
(mobile) 0438155527



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ChIPS Program Staff 2011

ChIPS Team Leader
Jarnia Cameron – jarnia.cameron@rch.org.au

ChIPS Program Facilitator
Meagan Hunt – meagan.hunt@rch.org.au

John Vernon – Manager Adolescent Medicine (Clinical Services)

