www.latrobe.edu.au/csmch/prism

Program of Resources, Information and Support for Mothers

PRISM

Bendigo Advertiser Thursday Sept 16 1999 P21.

Help for mothers

STICKERS which identify mother friendly" businesses re to be displayed in a range of hops and businesses through-ut Bendigo.

The stickers, "supporting nothers in our community", are n initiative of PRISM (Program f Resources, Information and upport for Mothers), a joint roject of the City of Greater endigo and the Centre for the tudy of Mothers' and Chil-ren's Health at La Trobe Uni-ersity Bendigo.

More than 30 district busines-es have provided service for a nique voucher scheme aimed encouraging mothers to have me "time-out" by using the arious services, offers and sources contained in the vou-ier booklet.

PRISM project officer Wendy rney said the vouchers were art of the PRISM information t distributed to mothers rough the City of Greater endigo's maternal and child alth centres.

"Mothers do a lot of business cally, often accompanied by ildren or a baby.

" This includes doing business th services that provide enter-inment, food and beverages, alth, education, beauty and so ," Ms Arney said.

"Mothers will more often use e businesses that cater best to eir needs.

' There is a lot of business to won if you provide a mother and baby-friendly service," she said.

A welcoming attitude from staff is even more important than the physical aspects of the venue.

Restaurateur and voucher sponsor Diane Hicks, of Diane's Deli, said it was easy to make her business mother and baby-friendly.

"We have high chairs, space for prams to move around, toys for toddlers and parking right out the front of the building," Diane said.

Mother-friendly businesses in the City of Greater Bendigo can contact Wendy Arney, phone 5434-6417, for further information.

MOTHER FRIENDLY: project officer Wendy Arney with a "mother friendly" sticker.

PRISM shines light on mothers

As a unique project to assist mothers in Bayside draws to a close, two mums look back on its success. CHRISTIAN TATMAN reports.

Mum's the word: *Jennifer Stone, left, and Serena Everill wanted to foster a "neighbourly approach" to mothering.* N36SB206

SHORTLY after Serena Everill and Jennifer Stone became officers at the Program of Resources, Information and Support for Mothers, both became pregnant.

It never crossed either's mind they might leave the program – something both felt passionately about.

So began a partnership that has had a profound impact on their lives and those of many women across Bayside.

Both said working as PRISM officers – based at the Bayside Council offices in Sandringham – had been the most rewarding work they had done.

Ms Stone said working on PRISM had taught her "the power people in the community have to influence what happens at their local council if they combine together and do their homework".

She added: "The project has confirmed for us regardless of your socio-economic circumstances, having a baby is a challenge . . . that communities need to support (mothers)."

During their time with PRISM, the pair convinced Bayside Council to look more closely at parks and gardens from the perspective of seating, shade and access for mothers with children.

They also highlighted issues like sleep deprivation, relationship conflict and physical problems experienced by women after childbirth.

"But it's still so hidden . . . people forget what a nightmare it can be at home," Ms Everill said.

"What this project has done is bring that out and say it's normal.

"A woman said to me the other day, 'I feel loopy half the time'. She's a single mother with a six-month-old baby and recently separated and she's going through what we all went through . . . and dealing with the grief of separation.

"It's normal to feel half loopy (as a mother) . . . it's so liberating to be part of something that says sensible things rather than turning people into problems.

"That's part of what PRISM has meant to me."

With their PRISM positions ending, Ms Stone and Ms Everill were keen to continue the job-sharing arrangement; they found the ideal job with the Department of Community Services in the community health policy area.

Bayside became one of eight municipalities across Victoria in 1998 to take part in PRISM – a project undertaken by La Trobe University's Centre for the Study of Mothers and Children's Health.

PRISM is an integrated health and community development initiative designed to trial support strategies for new mothers and their children.

La Trobe University expects initial findings from the project will be available in July with a final evaluation due in 2002.

In Bayside, the PRISM officers held various events for mothers and fathers, wrote a newsletter and a column for the *Advertiser*.

At the heart of Ms Everill and Ms Stone's work had been not only a desire to develop strategies to help mothers but also to portray motherhood in a realistic light.

Ms Stone said the reality for most new mothers was having to cope with sleep deprivation, possible problems with breastfeeding and difficulties just getting out of the house.

She said the "happy families" image versus the reality could also cause conflict within the parents' relationship.

"That first 12 months is so tough on a relationship. They're so sleep deprived. People are so loath to acknowledge they had a row in the middle of the night over who is going to do what," Ms Stone said.

"It's giving women permission to acknowledge what they know in their heart.

"It goes without saying that being a mum is a wonderful experience and a fabulous journey but sometimes it can be really hard and that we need to support each other."

Ms Everill said: "Without judgment. There's a lot of competition about who is coping better, who is looking happier, whose baby is thriving more.

"Members of the community can indulge that or foster a good neighbourly approach."

PARENTING POLICY

BAYSIDE Council recently agreed to appoint a full-time officer to implement the policies developed by PRISM officers Jennifer Stone and Serena Everill.

Councillors (Cheryl Langley, 26) also backed a PRISM report that recommended:

- establishing a Bayside Working Children advisory committee;
- [illegible] and support [illegible] Mothers Association;
- implement family-friendly planning [illegible] shopping centres [illegible] spaces; and
- promote family-friendly policies within the council.

Kit aims to give mothers support

BY **CHRISTINE ABRAHAM**

MOTHERS will be encouraged to pamper themselves in a program soon to be launched by the Melton council.

Melton is one of eight communities in Victoria taking part in the Program of Resources Information and Support for Mothers (PRISM) project.

It has developed mothers' information kits to be launched by chairman of commissioners Mr Alistair Fraser in July.

The kits will include vouchers for a range of discount products offered by local businesses which are expected to give mothers an incentive to take time out for themselves.

After an eight-year study, PRISM has found that 95 per cent of women report one or more health problems in the first six months after childbirth.

The most common ailments are exhaustion, backache, sexual problems and urinary incontinence.

TIME OUT: Sue Samagalski and Christopher, and Nancy Staunton with Tim and Nicole are part of an initiative to boost the profile of mums.

PRISM hopes to address these problems by developing a support network where mothers can discuss their concerns.

Melton's PRISM project worker Ms Kay Dufty said the project aimed to build support for mothers from local businesses, organisations and the community.

Two mothers from Diggers Rest and Melton are on the PRISM steering committee.

Committee member Mrs Nancy Staunton said she moved to Melton from Mooroolbank in October last year.

"Being new, I didn't know what was around — I still don't have a hairdresser," she said.

"I don't know about the bus services and this is something the project encourages — the use of mother-friendly bus services."

Committee member Mrs Sue Samagalski said she joined the project after recently moving to Diggers Rest.

"Mothers run a great risk staying inside. The local trip can sometimes be like a camping expedition because of all the things you need to take with the baby," she said.

The kits will be available in July to December 2000.

'Mothers run a great risk staying inside. The local trip can sometimes be like a camping expedition because of all the things you need to take with the baby.'

— Sue Samagalski, of PRISM

PROGRAM OF RESOURCES, INFORMATION AND SUPPORT FOR MOTHERS

PRISM

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Bookings are highly recommended, as places are limited, and childcare is available. Phone Chris on 5986 0271 to secure a place.

MOTHERS' HEALTH MATTERS

Mothers often worry about their children's health, but put their own health and recovery after birth on hold.

R to L: Ellen Alcorn with Michael, Jenny Bell with Melissa, Rosemary Miller with Talon Sonneveld, Sue Darby with Leigh from the Tyabb Play Group.

There are many aspects to feeling healthy, and able to cope with the demands of being a mother. For many women getting some regular time out to relax or catch up on sleep is important, for others a sport or physical activity is helpful. For most of us, spending time with friends or family also helps.

This day is a celebration of mothers on the Mornington Peninsula. It's a chance to explore the many services and supports available to recent mothers, to try out new activities, meet health practitioners, and chat with other mums.

WORKSHOPS

Are you keen to try a new activity, but not sure where to start? Skilled presenters are giving a 'taster' of the types of programs that they provide for women in your local community.

Baby massage, women's self confidence, meditation, boogie babies, mums on the move, first aid, yoga, pampering massage, toddler tunes and baby bliss... are all on offer as introductory workshops.

CHILDREN'S ENTERTAINMENT

Meet mothers from local playgroups and find out what they can offer to you.

Playgroups are for babies, toddlers and parents too!

Entertainment will be provided for young children throughout the day.

LOCAL SERVICES DISPLAY

We invite you to join us throughout the day to meet staff from many local organisations, all of whom have a special interest in supporting recent mothers.

Family services, maternity units, community houses, recreation centres, nursing mothers, general practice, community and maternal and child health centres will all be represented.

Bev Austin (Maternal & Child Health Services) consults with Dianne Elliott and Matthew.

PRISM PRESENTATION

Mothers are welcome to a brief presentation at 12.30pm about the Prism Project. Find out about local activities, how to be involved and what Prism means for mother on the Mornington Peninsula.

Enquiries: Melanie 5986 0980

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