

Inclusion...it's Child's Play



Natasha Milanko is an award-winning Western Australian teacher, a photographer and the mother of 5 year old Ella, who was diagnosed with cerebral palsy at twelve months of age. She has published two picture books which give some insight into a child's experiences living with a disability. The picture books, based on Natasha's photographs of her daughter and her special friend, Tessa the Tiger, are called *The Hair Flower Box* and *Tessa's Best Friend*. Natasha's aim is for the books to help educate children about disability which will in turn promote understanding, acceptance and inclusion. She hopes to play a role in establishing positive and realistic attitudes towards children with disability.

Through her experiences as a mother of a child with CP, Natasha says she has realised three important

things about children and disability. "Children are not afraid to ask questions, they are able to accept the given answers and quickly move on without judgement. Children are perfectly placed in early childhood environments such as the classroom to learn about disability."

Natasha will be hosting a book reading during The Centre's CP Awareness Week celebrations this year and will also conduct an educational activity session for young children. The picture books are aimed at 4 to 8 year olds.

If you would like more information on Natasha Milanko, her picture books or CP Week please see her website www.natashamilanko.com or contact Amy Brett, Public Relations and Communications Officer, on 9443 0246 or amy.brett@tccp.com.au.



Natasha and daughter Ella with Natasha's picture books

Innovative voice therapy helping children with cerebral palsy

During 2010 and 2011 Stephanie and Charmaine, speech pathologists at The Centre, were trained in the Lee Silverman Voice Treatment (LSVT/LOUD). LSVT/LOUD is an intensive research-based treatment program which was originally developed for people with Parkinson's disease and used to improve speech and functional communication. Some children with CP have weak muscles in the neck and throat which can cause problems with their voices. Stephanie and Charmaine wished to trial LSV Treatment with the hope that it would help in improving speech and communication in children with CP like it had for people with Parkinson's disease.

Stephanie and Charmaine recorded speech samples from seven children before and after therapy and played them to other speech pathologists. The speech samples taken after LSVT/LOUD therapy were rated as louder and easier to understand. The children and their families also commented on improvements in everyday communication. As a result Stephanie and Charmaine were able to create a therapy package for speech pathologists to use when treating children with CP who have speech difficulties. This project, which was funded by Non-Government Centre Support (NGCS), has helped to make positive change in the lives of some children with CP and their families.

If you would like more information on the LSVT/LOUD initiative at The Centre please contact Stephanie Mitchell on 9443 0378 or stephanie.mitchell@tccp.com.au.



Stephanie and Charmaine