

SUPPORT

Haven for young mums

GROUP HELPS OVERCOME FEELINGS OF ISOLATION

Ami Humpage

STRUGGLING to cope with isolation and judgment, teenage mums in Melton are finding the support they need from their peers in playgroups.

Data from the Victorian Child and Adolescent Monitoring System shows the number of teenage girls aged 15-19 giving birth in Melton jumped from 37 in 2007 to 54 in 2011.

And last year 33 teen mums gave birth of the 900 babies born at Bacchus March and Melton Regional Hospital.

But groups like the free Caroline Chisholm Play and Learn playgroup are helping mothers and mothers to be aged 16-25 to get out of the house and support each other.

Stephanie Mumford, 20, was 18 and studying year 12 at Staughton College when she found out she was pregnant with now two-year-old son Mason.

She said she was lucky she was able to finish school and had the support of her now fiancé and family.

But she said without the



Stephanie Mumford with Mason, Alannah Nicholson with Ruby and Jessica McGillivray with Ellie.

Picture: DAVID SMITH

playgroup she would be stuck at home.

"Playgroup is great for both Mason and I as it gets us out of the house and socialising," Ms Mumford said.

Single mum Jessica McGillivray, 18, was only 15 when she fell pregnant with her now two-year-old daughter Ellie.

She said from the very beginning the healthy mums and bubs group really helped her, but as Ellie got

older and she moved to other groups she found some people could be judgmental.

"The best thing about the young mums group is we are all the same, we don't feel like idiots and we learn from each other."

Alannah Nicholson, 19 agreed.

She was 17 when she fell pregnant with now 18-month-old Ruby.

For her the hardest thing was not only raising a child,

but watching her friends walk away.

"I have great family and my partner and his family but this group has really helped us socially," she said.

Caroline Chisholm Society Family Support Case manager Daya Adelan said demand for groups like this was rising and the aim was to address issues of isolation for young mothers.

She said assistance from Melton Council and Play-

groups Victoria helped keep the service free.

The playgroup meets every Wednesday from 10.30am to 12.30pm at 2 Westmelton Drive, Melton West. Details: 93617000.

Djerriwarrh Health Services also runs a Healthy Mother's, Healthy Babies Program as well as the Moorabool Young Parents Group and Melton Parent and Baby groups. Details: 5367 2000 or djhs.com.au

fast lane

Jobs campaign

Know a young person looking for work or want to give a young person a go in your business? Then look out for your paper next week for Jobs 2014, our bold campaign to create work for Australians aged 18-25. The campaign will run across over 100 News Corp Australia newspapers with the aim of creating 2014 new jobs for young people.

Apply for grants

Schools are invited to partner with charities and apply for grants of up to \$5000 from the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation. For the In Our Community grants program, supported by Leader Newspapers, schools can submit ideas for projects tackling social issues such as health, the environment, ageing and homelessness. Last year, the foundation provided almost \$130,000 in grants to 36 community-school initiatives. Applications close Friday, July 4. Details: lmcf.org.au/inourcommunitygrants

Need a roof restorer?

SEE PAGE 26

EDUCATION

New \$4.48m centre will boost childcare options

FAMILIES living in Melton's booming eastern corridor will soon have more childcare options available.

Melton Council and the State Government have pooled their resources to fund a new \$4.48 million Burnside Children's and Community Centre.

The centre will provide an extra 132 kindergarten places, plus occasional care, Maternal and Child Health, parenting groups, early childhood intervention service, and playgroups.

Mayor Bob Turner said around 33 families move in and 42 babies are born in the

city each week, and in Burnside a 30 per cent increase in ages 0-4 years is expected in the next decade.

"This announcement is very pleasing for our growing municipality and recognises the need to direct additional funds into early year's services," he said.

"It will enable the council to expand its capacity to deliver quality early learning opportunities for our youngest residents, deliver programs that reflect their interests, and encourage discovery and play."

Children and Early Childhood Development Minister

Wendy Lovell said bringing children's services together in the one place made sense for families.

"It is not only more convenient for families, it allows a child's progress to be better monitored, ensuring any problems can be identified and addressed early on.

"This development is fantastic news for current and future generations of children in this community."

Melton Council has committed \$2.88 million to stage one of the centre. Construction is expected to be completed by the end of next year.

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