

Primary entry #5: Marks Point Public School

MARKS POINT MESSENGER



LUSCIOUS: Kyle and Mitchell can't wait for their "bellissimo" lunch.

Serving up home-made delicacies

By **KYLE SHIRLAW** and **MITCHELL CLARKE**

BELLISIMO is the word used by students at Marks Point Public School when canteen manager Sharon Higgingbottom whips up her legendary home-made lasagne.

Ms Higgingbottom decided to make home-made lasagne to get away from frozen and processed food products.

"This way chemicals are avoided in the process, and most kids love lasagne and are familiar with it and tend to go for meat ingredients rather than vegetables," Ms Higgingbottom said.

To keep the fat content down, low-fat mince, milk and cheese are used in the ingredients.

Ms Higgingbottom said the secret ingredient was love.

To maintain a healthy, balanced diet, lasagne can be enjoyed in moderation with salad, a tub of diet light yoghurt, apple slices and a bottle of water.

Another home-made treat is the Italian bean soup, which is low in fat and high in fibre and protein.

The canteen is part of the NSW Healthy School Canteen Strategy and all food that is served by the canteen has to be approved by the Hunter New England Area Health Service.

In addition to their healthy canteen, Marks Point students participate in the Active After School Program, daily PE and have fruit breaks.

Trifecta for champions

By **MITCHELL DYET**

DURING the past three years Marks Point PS has achieved an amazing trifecta by winning the Hunter Region PSSA softball knockout competition three times.

The school can attest to producing some of the Hunter Region's best softball players, thanks to training by coach and Marks Point PS assistant principal Debbie Lowe.

Preparation includes batting, glove work, sliding, basework and fielding practice. Drills run through lunchtimes and during holiday periods. Squad players train over a 12-month period and through hard work, commitment and dedication, some players are promoted from the school's knockout team to the Hunter PSSA and even to shadow State teams.

Three players, Jye Heming, Billy Drinkwater and Alexander Wells are examples of this success.

Team captain Alexander Wells was thrilled to be part of the Hunter Region's winning team.

"It was my second year, two wins, it felt fantastic," Alexander said.

Hunter Region shadow squad



ON THE BALL: Softballers Alexander Wells, Oskar Muir and Lachlan Wells.

members were becoming the norm, Mrs Lowe said.

School Principal Jo Swadling said that three factors combined to

make the school so successful.

"Firstly, a passionate and dedicated teacher, who inspires students to achieve and excel in all

areas," Mrs Swadling said.

"A teacher's love of the game, with all its advanced techniques and higher-order thinking skills, has led to a free donation of time toward coaching and training a squad of both boys and girls.

"The students have learnt so much and are keen to play the game at a high level.

"Secondly, the school supports the sport through the implementation of a junior T-ball program to give younger students the basic ball skills, which enables progress to our squad with confidence.

"A glove hire agreement ensures no child is disadvantaged in not having equipment.

"Thirdly, parents and community support, with donations toward uniforms, allows our students to feel valued and part of a team. Transportation to competition venues is never an issue."

Mrs Swadling said that she could not be any prouder of the staff, students and parents and their enthusiasm for the team.

"Our teacher is an outstanding role model to these students and her enthusiasm is infectious," Mrs Swadling said.

Bridge to nowhere:

What do you think of the NSW Government shelving the consultation program for Swansea Bridge crossing?

By **DARBY FLIPPENCE, MONICA HEWITT** and **LAURA REYNOLDS**

THE \$200,000 promised from the NSW Government's 2007 budget has been put on ice, as discussed in *The Herald* ("Bridge too far, again", March 25).

The funding was to secure a public consultation program that would focus on design issues for a new crossing for Swansea Channel.

The Messenger spoke to members of the community for their reaction.



DEBRA SOUTHWELL, Charlestown: It is an important issue for Swansea residents.



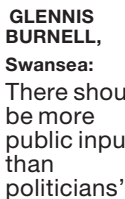
JOHN COBBIN, Caves Beach: The Government saved \$200,000 and doesn't take notice of what you and I think.



KEN CARLESS, Swansea: It needs to be a tunnel. They've done it in Sydney.



ANDREW McGRATH, Blackalls Park: Absolutely appalling, for 15 years I have been stuck regularly.



GLENNIS BURNELL, Swansea: There should be more public input than politicians'.



SCOTT PETERS, Mount Hutton: It has been an issue for a long time.



TONY SOLANO, Caves Beach: Why waste time if they are not going to do anything?



BRETT RUTLEDGE, Eleebana: It's a joke about the \$200,000 consultation.



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Attempted abduction affects the community

Editorial

By PETER WILSON and KHAN FLETT

CHILD abduction attempts in Lake Macquarie communities have highlighted the fact that every child should have the right to feel safe and that children's safety is everyone's responsibility.

According to Senior Constable Tony Tamplin, thousands of children up to 18 years of age go missing every year.

Ninety per cent are gone overnight or come home to their families within a week. Someone, somewhere is responsible for the 10 per cent who do not make it home - a horrifying thought for any parent or community.

Abduction attempts have recently affected families, friends and communities. The Marks Point community experienced this scenario when a year 6 student encountered a situation at a bushland reserve on Sunday, March 2 at 2.30pm.

This was the fifth alleged attack of seven that spanned more than eight weeks.

According to the student, a man with long, grey hair, aged between 30 and 40, tried to drag him into a metallic silver Toyota vehicle.

The lure was a map. "He grabbed my wrist, so I kicked and punched him as hard as I could to get away," the victim said.

This incident had a traumatising impact upon the boy's family and the wider community.

"The reality was that someone tried to steal my child," his mother said.

Education about strangers begins at home. Parents need to talk freely about dangerous situations. Parents need to walk to school with their children and choose the safest route. This means including busier streets where there are a lot of people.

"I now have a curfew and have to be home by 5pm," one student said.

Marks Point school principal Jo Swadling and her staff have worked to ensure safety strategies have been activated in the school.

"We are constantly reinforcing to our children that if they find themselves in this type of situation to use protective strategies," Mrs Swadling said.

Since the abduction attempts, police have increased patrols around Lake Macquarie schools.

If children are confronted by a stranger, Police Media Liaison officer Senior Constable Tony Tamplin says: "Don't talk to them, don't go with them, ignore them and walk quicker to get away. Go to get help at shops, the police, and ambulance station and don't panic."

It is everyone's responsibility to keep children safe in our community. Parents, students, teachers, police and everyone in the wider community - we all must be on high alert. There is no one answer for stopping these predators. Everyone needs to be vigilant.



RAINING MONEY: Mitchell Dyet hopes to achieve his bank targets in 2008.

Bahtabah: recovering the habitat

By TARYN SHEARER and ASHLEIGH STEPONAVICIUS

A NEW habitat is unfolding at Blacksmiths after three years of native vegetation recovery work by the Bahtabah Aboriginal Land Council and the Korong Landcare Group.

The council, representing the local communities, claimed the land under the NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act of 1983.

Michael Green, chief executive officer of Bahtabah Aboriginal Land Council, said Bahtabah meant "land by the sea and hillside by the lake".

"The goal of the project was implemented to protect the wetlands in the mangroves, creating a buffer between land and development, so no damage is done to Little Ned's Creek restoration," Mr Green said.

Little Ned's Creek is in the middle of the project and contains an ecosystem that is home to mud crabs and mullet. The area's mangrove population has increased since work began.

Since noxious weeds have been removed, native species of birds have been using the hollows in paperbark trees and green tree snakes have returned.

More native plants have also been planted.

"As long as we are around, we will continue to do the work that our previous ancestors were doing for us," Mr Green said. "We are custodians of the land."

Financial literacy at work

By JOSHUA POWER and DANIEL CABAN

STUDENTS at Marks Point School are passionate about the Lifeskills program, which provides experiences needed in everyday life such as budgeting, banking and saving awareness.

Lifeskills motivates children to work and accept responsibility. It provides students with employment opportunities in areas including gardening and environmental protection.

They are also trained to be proficient auctioneers and bank staff and become competent in operating market stalls.

Wages are paid in "marks", which are the school's currency. The weekly wage for bank staff is 9000

marks. Gardeners earn 8000 marks. Students learn to deposit their marks into their bank books. This inspires students to participate, reap the rewards and, on market day, spend hard-earned marks.

Mitchell Dyet in 2007 accumulated a staggering total of 312,000 marks in a six-month period.

The founder of Lifeskills, Paul Gleeson, drives the financial program along and has an active role in supporting the school's employment minister, Ashley Steponavicius, in school parliament. "The program started at Marks Point in 2002," Mr Gleeson said.

"The improvement in the kids' financial literacy is great. Kids now think if they plan something and put in the work they can bring so many things to a success."

Locks lopped for leukaemia earn lots

By CHLOE CHIVAS and DANIEL CABAN

MORE than 100,000 Australians are affected by cancer each year.

Last year, at the age of 41, mother of three Jasmyne Russell lost her battle with cancer.

Ms Russell was described by her close friend, Tracey Caban, as a compassionate individual who helped others.

"Jasmyne was an incredible person," Ms Caban said. "She was a great friend and a wonderful mother."

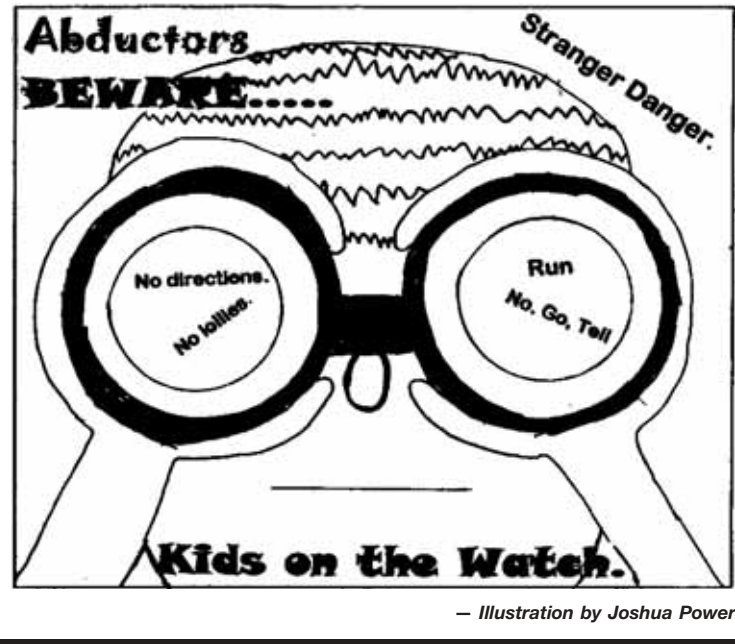
On March 15, 2008, Ms Caban's son, Daniel, shaved off his locks for The World's Greatest Shave.

"At first I was worried about my appearance, but now I look awesome," Daniel said.

Daniel raised \$1015 for the Leukaemia Foundation. He received donations from students at Marks Point PS, Lake Munmorah PS (which is where Ms Caban teaches and Ms Russell's children attend school), Swansea Belmont Surf Life Saving Club and Rock Cave Music.



GOING, GONE: Daniel Caban parted with his hair during The World's Greatest Shave and raised \$1015.



- Illustration by Joshua Power

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What Australian animal is on a five cent coin?
See page 60 for answer.

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