Milford Lodge Term 4 News, 2017

Dear Milford Lodge Families,

Whilst the busy Term 3 may have finished, we now have only a handful of sleeps left until the BEST DAY OF THE YEAR! Milford Lodge Community Market Day is on again from 9am until 1pm on Saturday 7th October. Market Day began way back in 2009 with no intentions of becoming this big. This year is our 8th annual event (rained out in 2010). Each year, I am amazed by the huge effort put in by all of the volunteers and by the support from our local community. So to each and every person who continually support this wonderful day, we say thank you.

X Team Milford

Please remember that Milford Lodge closes for three weeks over Christmas / New Year each year.
LAST DAY OF SERVICE OPERATION FOR 2017: Friday 22nd December
FIRST DAY OF SERVICE OPERATION FOR 2018: Monday 15th January

Milford Lodge Community Market Day

Saturday 7th October 9am – 1pm

ALL CHILDREN RECEIVE "MILFORD MONEY" UPON ENTRY TO SPEND AT OUR MILFORD STALLS.

The history of Milford Lodge Community Market Day is all about the 3Rs – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. For the past few months we have been accepting generous donations from our families and the community. We have thousands of items – books, clothing, toys, prizes, and more that can all be purchased for a "Milford Money" by children or a gold coin donation by adults (or when the Milford Money runs out!)

This is our most favourite day of the year! It is a great day that has been created with and for the children and their families.

It takes a lot of time and effort by all of the volunteers – but it is well worth it.

We hope you can make it ☺

Please read about our 2017 beneficiaries on the next few pages.

Where Are They Now ?

#12: Samara Welbourne

Hi everyone

I hope that you're loving your time at Milford Lodge as much as I did. I loved the beautiful gardens, the teachers (I remember Sue & Molly) and particularly loved riding the horses and collecting eggs.

I am now 17 years old and in year 11 at Mt Creek High School. I have had such a fantastic life since leaving Milford Lodge. When I was 12 my teacher called mum in to say I needed to improve my writing as it was below the NAPLAN average. So mum got me to write out my fairy house design instructions and 12 months later they were published as a book "How to Make Fairy Houses". Then parents started to ask me to do fairy house birthday parties for their children so at 14 I owned my own business, Enchanted Fairy Houses.

My mum moved us to Bali for 2 years when I was 14 as she was doing volunteer work over there. So I started to use my fairy houses to help the Balinese and the street animals of Bali. The main project I have is to build a library in Bungaya village and I have teamed with a Bali teenager to do this, Tyas. It is almost finished and if you go to Bali you can visit the library.

Helping out in communities here or overseas is something I love doing and one of the best ways that we can do this on the Coast is to get children into our nipper program. Like Molly, I was also a nipper and still do my surf lifesaving at Mooloolaba. It is a brilliant way to have children to do their bit to make our communities better and also to build some very valuable life skills and to develop a love of our oceans. I hope to see you on the beaches as our new nipper season starts.

Samara came to visit Milford Lodge a few years ago and share her Fairy House book and workshop with our children. We are so proud to be able to share our Market Days funds with Samara for her Bungaya Library Project. What an amazing young woman! ☺ - Molly

https://www.sunshinecoastdaily.com.au/news/samaras-helping-to-change-lives-in-a-balinese-vill/3195354/

After amazing feedback in 2016 for our inaugural Village Ways, there were some concerns as we came closer to the 2017 event over the number of delegates. With a few weeks to go we managed to sneak up to 70. This was considerably less than the 90 the year before, however the weekend was another success and again we received fantastic feedback from all who attended.

After a quick welcome, I jumped on the bus with groups A & B and headed to the nearby Ration Shed. The delegates on the morning bus had not been to the Ration Shed before and so began by having the introductory tour.

After the documentary, the groups had time in the dormitories with elders from Cherbourg. We were very fortunate to be there just after local artist Max Conlon had all of his amazing paintings out on exhibit. Max also happened to be there for our morning session and was more than happy to talk about his art with us. When I asked about one larger piece, Eric almost went into another world as he explained communities, and paths people take, and sickness and healing.

I cannot even begin to reiterate his words, but at the end of his story I said to him, "Max – you should have been my keynote! You have basically just summed up what our conference is all about!" Max and his wife go through Buderim from time to time, and he said he would love to come and share some time and art with our children. During our tea break we listened to a few extremely emotional songs by another local elder, who had brought his guitar along at the news of our large group. I later found out he stayed all day and performed these for the afternoon group. There were a few tears amongst both groups, as we listened to his stories of family, pain and suffering.

After another delicious lunch at the stunning setting of Dusty Hill we headed over to the creek bed to explore STEM detectives with Niki Buchan Natural Learning. It is wonderful to watch educators who have never participated in any outdoor or 'risky' training. They are always excited to learn new tricks, will eagerly try out all of the technology available (hand drills, flints, alfoil, etc.), and there is a constant audible train of thought as they share ideas with their team.

After even more delicious food, we spent a few moments browsing through the beautiful timber resources prepared for our shopping pleasure by BRACAS Timber, before heading over to the Cooperage for the Kindness workshop with Wendy Lee. Wendy has a way of touching everyone in her audience with her words. And whilst she is kind and gentle and sweet, she is also to the point and not afraid to let us know what really irritates her when it comes to poor practise when working with children!

Our evening network dinner was also successful – many conversations from the days taking, loads of laughs and of course dancing. A massive thanks to Andrew for the impromptu Ed Sheeran on guitar, cracking disc jockeying and even (what seemed to be quite popular) a smoke machine. Andrew has also just become the latest Milford dad. Luckily what goes on tour, stays on tour ;)

Village Ways

(Continued)

Keeping with the same order of events as the previous year, Sunday was a day for sitting. Sitting and listening. Sitting and listening and being inspired. This order of events also works for those who may have overindulged the previous evening! ☺

Niki was first cab off the rank, with "It's not rocket science." Always very practical advice from one of our regulars, Niki shared her knowledge and advice on play, risk, outdoors, behaviours, boys, girls, weather, multi-age, ratios and everything else she has an opinion on!

With no hesitation whatsoever, we went straight on with local talent Michelle Scheu. Having had some concerns that it may not be the exact content desired by our delegates, my mind was quickly put at ease as Michelle spoke.

Her keynote about "Thinking Play" was on point, and not to mention hilarious. The feedback regarding Michelle was 100% satisfaction, and many Sunshine Coast educators could not believe that they had not heard of her before.

After yet another delicious meal from team Dusty, we gathered again for the final keynote from Wendy Lee – "Documenting Children's Learning – Is Technology a Help or a Hindrance?"

Whilst introducing Wendy's keynote, I was able to publicly thank her. I, like many others, struggled through the 'DAP' (Developmentally Appropriate Practice) years, for the thousands of meaningless, checklist-style, clinical and confidential observations we had to complete on children. All for what?

Recently whilst going through old boxes of documents, I have found bundles of these observations on children.

The families during this time received none of these. Sure, they may have received pictures and a scrapbook of art – but no beautifully written memoirs of their child's time in our amazing setting.

It was after hearing Wendy speak back in 2014, that I finally realised that we could now share these stories with our families. Since then I have been able to share joy, excitement, love, friendship, care and also sadness.

It is amazing when you have someone tell you that your words brought them to tears.

There is a phrase I have stolen from Michelle Scheu, as she refers to the changes in education in 2012 as the "trauma years". Well for us it was the decade leading up to 2012. They were our trauma years. Let us hope we never have to revisit those cold and clinical times!

We specifically asked for this keynote from Wendy, as we watch more and more service opt for documentation applications. We hear stories from families attending other services where they receive little message alerts all day long whilst at work, not just for documentation, but also for when their child has had their sunscreen applied, or been to the toilet. Also having many educators from other services attend training with us at Milford Lodge, we hear stories of teams having to complete 30 learning stories a day. When they tell us this, it is not with a smile on their face. Sadly, some services are still not out of their 'trauma years'. More people in management need to sit and listen to the wise words of Wendy Lee.

At the end of the day, Niki, Michelle and Wendy were all amazed at how well their keynotes overlapped and complimented each other. There was one word that stood out from all three speakers – "Relationships."

Another amazing weekend with inspiring speakers and self-motivated educators in beautiful settings with delicious food, great wine and the greatest DJ on earth! Bring on 2018!

Play Wonder and Learn Conference

I attended this conference which is primarily aimed at prep-year 3 teachers with a degree of uncertainty wondering if the information would be relevant and transferable to our practice and program here at Milford Lodge. I was not disappointed at all and actually took away lots of ideas and knowledge that we can most certainly implement. I found myself amongst a few hundred very passionate early years teachers who travel from as far as NSW and FNQ to attend this annual conference.

Choosing from an array of breakout sessions is always difficult, which is the reason we have decided to not have elective workshops at our own annual Village Ways conference. I always feel I may have missed out on something special.

My chosen breakout sessions were:

1: Robots Rocking Critical and Creative Thinking with Michelle Scheu from Chevallum State School

This session appealed to me having heard Michelle speak so passionately at Village Ways about implementing Thinking Play into her classroom and also having watched Finn –a prep student of Michelle's who attended Milford prior to prep, bounce in the door full of excitement in the lead up to this event sharing with us all the fun and learning happening in her classroom.

I was totally blown away with the depth of investigation that this prep/yr. 1 class had undertaking in their Thinking Play unit of work, which cumulated in their Robotics Fair. Ann attended the fair and again was so impressed by the confidence and subject knowledge around robots that these young children shared with their audience.

I am sure you will enjoy watching the short you tube video of this event

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mblv5c6mSKww

Breakout Session 2: From Scribble to Script- with Julie Elder from Meridian State College

I choose this session because I have always been fascinated by children's mark making journeys. Julie showed us some examples of children's writing from when they first arrived in prep and their progression as the year unfolds. Acknowledging that all children are unique and start formal learning with wide differences of prior experiences means that a one size fits all approach is not going to be very successful. Therefore, prep teachers really value families sharing knowledge of their child's capabilities alongside reading the transition statements that are provided by us to assist teachers to nurture your child's talents right from the start. Julie reminded us that pushing a child to learn how to write will not make them go faster! Instead looking at a child's writing and knowing what to move and how to move them is the key to encouraging progression in this area. In an emotionally secure environment, where their creativity is valued and respected, children will often become confident writers. Boy's writing tends to flourish when the pressure is off, the choice is theirs and the motivation arises from a specific desire to communicate. I am sure you will already have noticed that children's earliest writing often involves their name or their age, as these are of particular significance to them. Julie also emphasised the importance of children needing to see the adults around them write every day.

I must say that I have loved the letter writing project that has been unfolding in the Library recently –a special mention must be given to Ann for leading this. Watching the excitement on your children's faces as they have received letters, cards, postcards and even a couple of books has been a joy to behold. It is no coincidence that after hearing these letters been read aloud to them that the children have wanted to engage in letter writing themselves. I would encourage you to keep up this keen interest in letter writing as well as the scribing of your children's stories, which I take great pleasure in reading with your child whenever I can.

Breakout Session 3: Philosophy for The Early Years with Kelly Ayres from Meridan State College

Philosophy as a subject in the Early Years was not something that I read much about so this is probably why this session grabbed my attention.

Once again Kelly shared videos from this year's prep children in both Term 1 and Term 3 and wow what visible progression in oral literacy skills these young children have made. Kelly commented that children are starting prep with a big deficient in this area.

It was affirming to know that our commitment to engaging in small group experiences with children here at Milford Lodge is really supporting this important skill.

Philosophical discussions can be held after reading a book, an article in a newspaper or any moral situation. As parents I am sure you already engage in these discussions on a daily basis with your children (although at times you may feel you are having another argument with your child, thinking of this exchange of words as a philosophical discussion may help you admire your child's feisty point of view ☺) Children can be supported to give their opinions and reason why they either agree or disagree with something they've heard or witnessed.

I definitely left this session with lots of food for thought, and an eagerness to ensure I leave ample time for discussion afterwards whenever I read a story.

My final breakout session was Inquiry in the Early Years with Alison Bye from Meridan State College.

I couldn't have wished for a more positive workshop to end this wonderful conference. This session renewed my optimism that the tide is turning in the early years of schooling but in particular the prep year. Listening to the success stories from prep teachers who are advocating for children to continue to develop their innate curious problem solving dispositions, which have been stolen by benchmark testing, was very refreshing to hear. Teachers who have being trusted to deliver a rigorous curriculum in line with the stated expectations of the Australian Curriculum are encouraged to be creative in how they teach and it was refreshing to hear so many teachers saying how they are finding their jobs much more enjoyable now.

We discussed at length the Age Appropriate Pedagogies Program designed by Griffith University, which is been implemented in a growing number of schools across Queensland. What began as a pilot project in 2015 with 45 state schools involved expanded in 2016 to include 115 state schools and eight independent schools. Prep teachers in these schools use a range and balance of teaching approaches to deliver the required curriculum and get to utilise their skills, knowledge and expertise within the classroom.

I have attached the following information if you would like some more in-depth information on this project.

https://det.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/about/Documents/pdf/aap-implementation-report.pdf

At Milford Lodge we never think our work is done when children leave to begin their formal learning in school. We follow up with local schools in the first term and enquire how our children are going. It is always lovely to hear them described as "really happy, socially and emotionally well rounded and really ready for prep.''

We network throughout the year with local school leaders along with other Early Childhood Services to help ensure that the transition to school process is a smooth and positive experience for both children and families.

Inspired about the positive changes that are occurring in the early years of schooling I have recently read a book ''Creating Tomorrow's Schools today by Richard Gerver and can highly recommend it to anyone with an interest in exploring schools of the future. The author is a former Head teacher of the internationally respected Grange Primary School in the UK. He takes us on a journey of transforming a failing school into one described as outstanding not by pressurizing already stressed teachers to increase exam results but by developing a curriculum with creativity at its centre, and a passion for a process that had living, learning and laughing at its core.

It was interesting to read that when the teaching team discussed improving engagement they looked to the preschool attached to the School for inspiration. They noticed how these preschool children were offered a great deal of independence, they were encouraged to self-select activities/experiences that were of interest to them, carrying out investigations because they were curious. The teaching team then looked at what learning looks like throughout primary and high school and how this innate curiosity and love of learning was being suppressed and in its place was a teacher standing in front of children talking for the majority of the day.

The school put into practice research undertaking by Howard Gardner and Guy Claxton helping children to understand how best they learn. They gained an understanding of how personal wellbeing, environment and health can affect our readiness and ability to learn. We can all relate to understanding this concept ourselves, some of us work better with music playing, some prefer silence etc. I particularly loved reading about how they looked to highly successful organisations such as Microsoft UK and the importance it places on staff welfare and wellbeing. The school then implemented some ideas into the school, which went a long way to increase engagement and enhanced achievements for all children.

I know many of our parents worry how they can support children prepare for a future very different from which current schooling was developed. I would highly recommend attending a forum, which Peter Gray will be leading in Gympie on Monday 16th October when he will be discussing this very topic.

https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/09/skills-children-need-work-future-play-lego

Written by Nancy

School Stuff Sorted

I am delighted to be donating an Art Folio to each one of your children who are going into Kindy in 2018 at Milford Lodge.
Hi I'm Jo Drennan, a Buderim local and developer of School Stuff Sorted. As a mother of 3, I've had many years of seeing my kids reports, awards, artwork and memorabilia. We would share the joy and excitement of their creations, efforts and awards for a short time but then they would be stuffed into a big plastic box, never to be shared again.
I wanted to find a way to save these special memories for years to come so that I could share them again and again, not only with my kids but also when I am a grandparent so that I can share laughter, joy and tears with my grand-kids as we relive the school days of their mum and dad.
At School Stuff Sorted we're all about celebrating your child's education. We offer a simple storage solution for all of those Reports, Awards, Artwork and Memorabilia that your kids bring home. If you're looking for an easy way to store those treasured memories for generations to come, we have the answer.
If you would like to find out more about our quality Australian made storage solution, please check it out here:
schoolstuffsorted.com

LIVE AT THE LODGE

We are very excited to share a little project…
Lee Hardisty, along with wife Shaye, was our first performer to be filmed at Milford Lodge.
With the help of our good friend Brett Campbell, Milford Lodge is making a DVD.
"Live at the Lodge" will showcase all of the amazing people who come in to our service to share time with our children.
This idea, having finally commenced, is being added to all of the time. Brett has plans to add interviews with children and educators. The finished product will be a mixture of music, storytelling, singing, dancing and more.
It may take 12 months or more, but we believe it will be worth the wait.
Nic Dacomb (The Bicycle Puppet Show) is back in early October, and will be our next filming of "Live at the Lodge." Can't wait! (Thanks Brett ♥)

"Really Ready for School" with Michelle Scheu

Most days, as a parent, I have no idea what I'm doing. But, as my children grow at the speed of light, I try to keep ahead by reading, listening and then coming to informed decisions on how to guide them through the next stages of their life.
So when I heard that Milford had invited a noted educator and long-time prep teacher Michelle Scheu from Chevallum State School to talk to parents about prep readiness, I leapt at the opportunity to attend. My twins may only be 2 now, but they will be in prep before I know it, so I wanted to understand the road ahead.
I took so much away from Michelle's session (and even took notes - nerd alert!). My key learning: you can, and should, make your own decisions for your child every step of the way. Follow your gut.
If you prefer they're in a play-based learning environment for the Prep year, seek one out. Hold your child back a year until they're more mature -- if that's what you think is in their best interest. Keep them home on a Friday if you think they're exhausted from a five-day week at the start of term. Homework, sight words - all of these have a place and time, but for these little people, just being in a school setting can be overwhelming enough. Be gentle.
I also found fascinating the concept that every child finds their little niche that they're good at in his or her own time; the example shared was of one child whose area of expertise didn't become evident until 6th year in school, when his acumen for all things environment was unveiled.
Overall, the advice shared was thoughtful, clearly coming from a voice of experience, and most of all, full of compassion and kindness for children. I'm so glad I attended; I feel better equipped to make future decisions for my children -- and am grateful to Milford for providing this educational opportunity.

Written by Laura Byrne, Milford parent ☺

Professional Development

July ~ August ~ September

✓ Village Ways (Wendy Lee, Michelle Scheu, Niki Buchan, Ration Shed)
✓ Staff Catch Up: "Food, Glorious Food!"
✓ Michelle Scheu "Really Ready for School" (with families)
✓ DETE Network Meeting: Changes to the National Quality Framework
✓ Educational Leaders Network Meetings
✓ Bouncing off the Walls: Behaviour Guidance Workshop
✓ Play, Wonder & Learn Conference
✓ Transition to School Meetings, facilitated by Cathy Clancie @ Chevallum State School
✓ Participating in Research – Beyond Competencies: Examining Knowledge transfer practices of Early Childhood Education

October ~ November ~ December

- Peter Gray (USA):
- Educational Leadership Sunshine Coast "Play" Conference at St Andrews
- Preparing students for the "New Work Order" – Breaking the Mould of Traditional Education for Teachers and Students
- Autumn Online Summit: Physical Development
- Webinar: Changes to the National Quality Framework
- Cultural Competencies
- Workshop with Sue Inglis at Milford Lodge
- Staff Catch up: Reflections on 2017 – Looking forward to 2018 ☺

Thanks again to Andrew & Olivia for inviting us over for the 'statues in the garden' – beautiful works by the very talented people at Monte Lupo arts.

Weekend Workers:

Justin removed around 10m³ of compacted bark from the School House area, and replenished with brand new bark. He has also been busy replacing the ballroom veranda, and fences and gates. Painting, oiling, planting, pruning, pressure cleaning, mowing… "Livin' the dream!" haha! Justin reminded me that we have now worked 6 weekends in a row at Milford Lodge – so I think after Market Day & Peter Gray we might take a little break!

Father's Day Celebrations

What a wonderful afternoon we shared!
Thank you to Nathaniel from Rhythm Culture for coming along – the drumming session was so much fun. We also played games: Tic-Tac-Toe, Connect Four, Bowling, and Giant Tumbling Blocks. A beautiful afternoon with lots of happy, smiling faces ☺

“School Readiness” – Fear Mongering

By Denita Dinger from Play Counts

What would you think if you saw a mother hovering over her two-month old infant drilling her on vowel sounds? Or how about a father coaching his five month old on the finer points to walking? I expect you would think they were at best wasting their time: two month olds can't talk and five month olds can't walk, let alone be taught. Talking and walking are things children just learn. Now imagine that when these babies failed to acquire these capabilities that are clearly beyond their developmental grasp, these parents began to fret that their child was "falling behind." You would think they were crazy. If a doctor told these parents their child was "falling behind" we would think, he was either incompetent or cruel.

Sadly, there are actually people out there doing things like this. I’ve written before about hucksters who assert that babies can be taught to read and there are devices on the market that purport to help babies learn to walk. The good news is that while there are some naive parents who fall for such gimmickry in the misguided attempt to somehow one-up nature's long, successful history of "teaching" talking and walking according to well-established developmental timelines, most of us know better than to worry about these things that virtually every child stressless-ly learns without any special interventions.

My own daughter spoke her first word at 3 months old, consistently saying "Papa" when I played and cared for her: she was putting together full sentences before 6 months. This same "advanced" child didn't crawl until her first birthday and wasn't walking until close to 20 months, a full lifetime "behind" some of her peers. Today, as you might expect, she talks and walks like the rest of the teenagers: if she was ever behind she caught up, and if she was ever ahead, the others caught up with her.

This unsavoury practice of taking advantage of new parent insecurities in the name of profit is one that deserves to be called out wherever it rears its nasty head, and its borderline criminal when they play the "falling behind" card, which is why I'm writing today.

I've had the opportunity these past few years to travel around the world to talk to teachers and parents. Every place I go I find myself discussing this bizarre notion of "school readiness." Often translated in the US as "kindergarten readiness," it is essentially code for reading. It seems that the powers that be in our respective nations have decided to sell parents on the snake oil that if your child isn't starting to read by five-years-old she is "falling behind." They are doing this despite the fact that *every single legitimate study* ever done on the subject recommends that formal literacy education (if we ever even need it) not begin until a child is seven or eight years old. They are telling parents and teachers that children are "falling behind" despite the fact that *every single legitimate study* ever done finds that there are no long term advantages to being an early reader, just as there are no long term advantages to being early talkers or walkers. In fact, many studies have found that when formal literacy instruction begins too early, like at 5, children grow up to be less motivated readers and less capable of comprehending what they've read. That's right, if anything, this "school readiness" fear-mongering may well turn out to be outright malpractice.

But the worst thing, the unforgivable thing, is the cruelty of the assertion that five-year-olds are "falling behind." It's one thing when commercial interests attempt to move their crappy merchandise by playing on fears, but when schools are doing it, when teachers are doing it, that's unconscionable. Listen, I'm a staunch supporter of my fellow teachers here on these pages, but I am calling my colleagues out on this one. Teachers should know better than to help these guys sell this stuff: it's bad for kids, it's bad for families, and it's bad for society. We are the professionals. Teachers need to put our collective foot down, point to the research, rely on our own experience, and if we can't refuse to subject young children to developmentally inappropriate, potentially harmful "readiness" garbage for fear of losing our jobs, the least we can do is refuse to take part in the crass abusiveness of "falling behind." If we can't do that maybe, we don't deserve to call ourselves professionals.

Term Three Happy Snaps