



January Special Edition: New Family Services Initiatives

2009 is our 30th year! We have begun celebrating by creating a new program that tailors to the new and changing needs of carers. The program was designed in consultation with carers through a variety of projects.

The research entitled Carer Consultation Project (2007) conducted focus groups and surveys. The research identified that carers need a range of specialist supports that allow carers to talk about mental illness, explore the impact of mental illness on themselves and their families (and their wider living context) and gain access to other carers.

In response to this report a number of new initiatives at ARAFEMI were implemented. These included COPEs (Carers Offering Peers Early Support), the Flexible Options Respite Service, Carer Counseling, Recreation Days and the ARAFEMI Carer Online Support Services.

The Flexible Options Respite Service was launched in March of 2008 and has been established successfully. Our respite staff are dedicated in providing individualised respite packages to carers, both in supporting the family in their own home and providing accommodation at Banyan house. Similarly, our Carer Counseling has had unprecedented referrals and has been invaluable in providing free face-to-face counselling for carers.

Following on from the Carer Consultation Project another paper, *Gathering Lived Experience*

(2008), has been published. This presents a body of knowledge and practical tips around carer needs, peer support and mentoring models. The project involved a survey of 500 studies and scholastic articles. Furthermore, research of programs and publications was carried out for all major mental health organisations in Victoria. From the recommendations ARAFEMI is planning to further develop Family Services with a Peer Support Program and a Carer Advocacy Service.

In the context of the above reports ARAFEMI has designed a new 2009 program for Family Services. This program aims to meet the needs of carers that are 'individual and changing, dependent on the wellbeing of the person with a mental illness and other life factors' (ARAFEMI Carer Consultation, 2007, p.2).

Exciting initiatives include a number of new specialist peer support groups, a series of evening seminars on topics such as dual diagnosis and future planning, and many day workshops aimed at building on the skills and knowledge of carers.

All the best in the new year! We are looking forward to seeing you at our new Family Services support groups and seminars.

References:

Sanders, F. (2007). *ARAFEMI Carer Consultation*. Unpublished Manuscript.

Bartolo, K., & Sanders, F. (2008). *Gathering Lived Experience*. Melbourne: ARAFEMI.

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ARAFEMI Carer Workshops 2009



ARAFEMI aims to promote and improve the wellbeing of people affected by mental illness. The following workshops aim to increase carers' skills and improve their wellbeing; thus the wellbeing of the person with the mental illness is also positively affected. These workshops run for 3 hours from 10am-1pm.

W1 Carers Coping Skills

This workshop aims to assist carers to explore issues in supporting someone with a mental illness. Carers will develop self-care skills and feel more confident in communicating in difficult situations. The course also provides assistance with planning treatment and recovery pathways.

Tuesday 24th Feb and Saturday 20th June

W2 Skills for Supporting Recovery

This workshop aims to assist families & carers of people with mental illness to understand and support recovery. It utilises group work and discussion, videos and carer led experience to help carers maintain hope, explore strengths and feel more effective as a caregiver.

Saturday 28th March and Tuesday 21st July

W3 Challenging Behaviours and health boundaries

Caring for a loved one with challenging behaviour can be emotionally exhausting. This workshop aims to enhance carers confidence and practical assertion skills when managing manipulation and potential violence.

Tuesday 21st April and Saturday 22nd August.

W4 Communication with Professionals – how to get the best from your care team

Helping a family member towards recovery can be a lot easier when you are part of a supportive team. Learn about mental health services and ways to effectively communicate with your relative's treatment team.

Saturday 23rd May and Tuesday 15th September

W5 Carers Week

Stress management and lunch at beautiful Montsalvat.

Tues 22nd October



ARAFEMI Evening Seminars 2009

ARAFEMI will offer new evening seminars for carers of people with a mental illness in 2009. Carers can enhance their understanding of living with mental illness in the family and have the opportunity to meet other carers. These seminars are on Wednesdays 7-9pm.

S1 Compassion Fatigue

Families and carers of people who have a mental illness can experience physical and emotional exhaustion through their ongoing roles and responsibilities. In this seminar, families will learn about how to recognise compassion fatigue, and self-care strategies.

Wednesday 11th March

S2 Grief & Loss

Feelings of grief and loss are common for families and carers of people who have a mental illness. This workshop will explore the experience of grief and loss and mental illness. An experienced grief counselor will facilitate the workshop.

Wednesday 13th May

S3 Dual Diagnosis

This interactive workshop will assist family carers to gain an understanding of Dual Diagnosis (mental illness and use of drugs and alcohol). This workshop's focus is on causation, harm minimisation, stages of change, and coping strategies and self care for the family.

Wednesday 8th July

S4 Future Planning

Planning for the future when caring for someone with a mental illness has individual challenges, as compared to caring for someone with a physical illness. This seminar will explore legal issues, wills, and various options to ensure your family member will be supported in the future.

Wednesday 9th September

S5 Siblings

In this seminar, two siblings will present their experience of living with someone with a mental illness. Some issues that will be explored are the role of a sibling within the family and how to support your own wellbeing.

Wednesday 11th November

S6 Coping with Hearing Voices

This seminar will aid carers to learn about what it is like to hear voices, how to talk with their relative about voices and ways to cope that they can suggest when voices are a problem.

Wednesday 8th April

For more information or to book ARAFEMI workshops and seminars: Call the ARAFEMI Helpline on 1300 550 265 or download the registration form at www.arafemi.org.au.

NOTE: \$5 Booking fee applies for all workshops and seminars





2009 Support Groups

Support Group for Families & Carers of People with a Borderline Personality Disorder

What: Open support and information group for families and carers of people with a Borderline Personality Disorder.
 Where: ARAFEMI, Ground Floor, 270 Auburn Road, Hawthorn
 When: FIRST WEDNESDAY EVENING of each month, From 7.00pm to 9.00pm
 Contact: ARAFEMI Carer Helpline on 1300 550 265

Bridging the Gaps – Southern

What: Education & Information sessions for Parents & Family Carers of Young People
 Where: At Family Life, 197 Bluff Road, Sandringham (Melways ref: 76,K12)
 When: FIRST WEDNESDAY EVENING of each month from 7.30–9.30pm
 Contact: ARAFEMI Helpline 1300 550 265

Bridging the Gaps – Eastern

What: Education, Information and support for Parents & Family Carers
 Where: ARAFEMI, Ground Floor, 270 Auburn Road, Hawthorn
 When: 2nd Thursday Evening of each month from 7.30–9.30pm
 Contact: ARAFEMI Helpline 1300 550 265

Bendigo Relatives and Friends Support Group

What: Open support and information group for carers of people with a mental illness
 Where: 51 Creek St, Bendigo
 When: Starting Feb 2009, SECOND SATURDAY of each month 1-3pm
 Contact: Sandra Attwell at Golden City Support Services, 54342777

ARAFEMI Bipolar Consumer Support Group

What: Open support group for people experiencing bipolar disorder
 Where: ARAFEMI, Ground Floor, 270 Auburn Road, Hawthorn
 When: THIRD WEDNESDAY EVENING of each month From 7.30pm to 9.30pm
 Contact: ARAFEMI Helpline 1300 550 265

ARAFEMI Bipolar Carer Support Group/ARAFEMI Bipolar Combined Carer & Consumer Support Group

What: These groups alternate monthly to provide additional support to carers of people with bipolar disorder and people experiencing bipolar disorder.
 Where: ARAFEMI, Ground Floor, 270 Auburn Road, Hawthorn
 When: FIRST THURSDAY EVENING of each month from 7.30pm to 9.30pm: Combined group commencing 5th March (bi-monthly), Carers Group commencing 2nd April (bi-monthly)
 Contact: ARAFEMI Helpline 1300 550 265

NOTE: If you are attending a group for the first time please call the designated contact prior to attending.

Groups Starting later 2009:

- Support Group for Carers of Young People
- Support Group for New Carers

Other ARAFEMI Carer Services:

- Carer Library
- Flexible Options Respite Service
- Online Support
- Carer Counselling
- Recreation Days
- COPES (Carers Offering Peers Early Support)



For more information call the ARAFEMI Carer Helpline 1300 550 265 or visit www.arafemi.org.au