Hello, my name is Dominique Smith. I am the Steps Together Project Officer with the Drug Education Network Inc. Welcome to the second edition of the Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Community Newsletter. It was great to receive so much wonderful feedback on the first edition and thank you to all the people who have joined the mailing list.

The 9th of September was International Foetal Alcohol Awareness Day, and the Drug Education Network sponsored a range of events in northern and NW Tasmania. Burnie TAFE students held a ‘Freeze for FASD’ in the town centre and used emails and mobile phones to spread the word to encourage community participation. Community Services student interest in participating evolved from a presentation by DEN staff at the TAFE College. The group were able to plan, purchase resources, develop publications and liaise with community members re the event and meet course requirements. Most students commended the opportunity as a practical and innovative exercise that connected their learning in community work with an important event.

Over the past month some 700 FASD posters have been distributed across Tasmania as part of a health promotion campaign. The posters will be displayed in child care centres, child health centres, doctor’s surgeries as well as neighbourhood houses and enhance community awareness already raised through the 500 Living with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: A Guide for Parents and Caregivers booklet distributed earlier this year.

The mission of the Drug Education Network Inc. Tasmania is to work with communities to minimise the harms associated with drug use through the provision of effective, evidence-based information and programs. As part of the consultation process, a Learning and Support Needs Assessment is in circulation for service providers and caregivers. The needs assessment will assist planning for future training programs and identify service delivery needs in the community. For a copy of the Learning Needs Assessment in please go to our website www.den.org.au and check ‘Programs’.

I encourage people to fill in the feedback forms and then send them back so we can keep providing quality service and resources to you. For those outside our immediate region, please complete the form. This may be useful for planning in other Australian communities.

Kym Crawford, Principal of Karratha Special Education Centre in Western Australia, recently returned from a Churchill Scholarship study tour to USA & Canada. Kym travelled overseas to investigate best practice in education for students with FASD. The interesting and comprehensive report prepared by Kym is attached to this newsletter.

Elizabeth Russell has a released a new book called “Strategies for Employment Service Specialists”. This book has been written for service industries who work with individuals that suffer from Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder FASD, or have similar characteristics. For more information or to purchase any of Elizabeth Russell’s books please visit her website: www.elizabethrussell.com.au

Next month...in the absence of diagnostic services, can implementing multi-disciplinary teams to support young people at risk of foetal alcohol exposure be helpful?
Walk for FASD Day - 26th September 2008

The Drug Education Network (DEN) joined with 158 Grades 7-10 students from Port Dalrymple School in George Town (Northern Tasmania) and their teachers to walk together to raise community awareness of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). This event celebrated International FASD Awareness Day which is ordinarily held on the 9th of September each year. School holidays meant a later date than normal (26/09/08) and a backup plan was required to compensate for wet weather on the day. Instead of a walk, a BBQ lunch was provided and participating students received hats and other free giveaways (all with the important message) were handed out followed by an assembly. During the assembly Project Officers from the Drug Education Network addressed students on foetal alcohol exposure and how greater awareness of alcohol harms can reduce the incidence of FASD in our communities.

The Walk for FASD event was coordinated by Grade 10 student representatives together with the DEN Project Officer Dominique Smith and was a great success. Dominique reported how “the enthusiasm was positive and the students were very open to learning about how alcohol can harm an unborn child. Most students were surprised to learn that there is NO known safe amount of alcohol that can be consumed in pregnancy”. Many students commented, “Wouldn’t it just be easier not to drink at all?”

Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a term used to describe the range of possible anomalies that can result from foetal alcohol exposure. FASD is a costly and most importantly, a largely preventable disability. Prevention begins with greater awareness of the risk and foetal alcohol exposure is a risk wherever alcohol is consumed. Until more is known about a safe level of alcohol use in pregnancy, the best advice is not to drink if you are planning to be pregnant, pregnant or breastfeeding. “Think Before You Drink.”

The Drug Education Network Inc. (The DEN) is a state-wide organisation operating within harm reduction principles providing health promotion programs, brief interventions and research, in relation to alcohol and other drugs in Tasmania.

The DEN’s services are available to all members of the community; parents, young people, schools, students, teachers, employers and other people interested in Alcohol and Other Drugs. The DEN can also provide up to date information on specific drugs and drug related issues.