

22 November 2013

Program to give young carers of someone with a mental illness something to smile about

Young carers of people with a mental illness in Randwick and Botany Bay have a chance to participate in a FREE three day program being run by Carers NSW during the Christmas school holidays.

Young people between the ages of eight and 12 who have a family member or friend with a mental illness are invited to join in the SMILES program which is filled with art, music, games, educational activities and fun.

SMILES (Simplifying Mental Illness plus Life Enhancement Skills) is designed to help young participants to achieve an increased ability to cope effectively with family life; discovering untapped creativity; using that creativity as a self support; a new sense of self expression; a reduction in feelings of isolation; an increase in self-esteem; and connecting with other children who are having similar experiences and offer informal friendship and support.

One of the aims of SMILES is to reduce the sense of isolation that young carers experience and to allow them to talk freely with others who understand their everyday concerns and experiences.

Carers NSW CEO Elena Katrakis said, "Through the SMILES program, young carers will experience the sharing, learning and building of existing coping skills and gain the opportunity to form new friendships and networks of support, knowledge and experience."

One previous participant of SMILES commented that they "had a brilliant time and learned heaps". The children are able to take home a handbook and all the art that they create at the program.

This program will be held as part of the Carers NSW Family and Carer Mental Health Program, which is funded by NSW Health.

SMILES is offered free of charge and a healthy morning tea, lunch, and afternoon tea will be provided.

What: Three day education program for young carers of someone with a mental illness

When: Wednesday 22, Thursday 23 and Friday 24 January 2014, 9am-3pm daily.

Where: South East Neighbourhood Centre, Shop 83a, Eastlakes Shopping Centre

For further information or to register, please contact Lyndal Brown, Carers NSW Mental Health Respite: Carer Support Education and Activities Officer, on 9280 4744.