



MontroseAccess

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Never Too Young To Learn

You've heard of Master Chef, even Master Chef Junior; well now there's Mini Chef. A program designed on the Sunshine Coast by MontroseAccess Occupational Therapist, Tegan King, to assist children with physical disabilities.

The cooking skills program is about more than just a flair for the creative in the kitchen, it's a practical skills program designed to equip these young chefs with basic skills they will need in life. The program has been running for seven weeks and the final Mini Chef session will be on Wednesday December 8th at the Holy Trinity Anglican Church on the Sunshine Coast.

"There are more common therapy exercises that can be used to assist children, but the difficulty with these exercises is that they feel like therapy. This course is great fun and an incredibly social way to get these young children to perform tasks to improve skills such as leadership, teamwork and enhancing hand skills," said Tegan King.

A complete recipe guide is provided for the participants so their new found skills can be practised at home. Amongst their culinary repertoire is pizza, hamburgers, pastas, snacks foods, camp cooking, cupcakes and party food. And to celebrate the final cooking session on Wednesday 8th, the Mini Chefs will cater the event for their parents and siblings.

Marie Medcalfe, mother of eight year old Breanna who is one of the Mini Chef's and uses a wheelchair, said: "For me, it's lovely to see the smile on her face when she tells me what they've cooked that day and that she's received a gold star for 'cutting with a knife' or 'kneading dough' or that she was 'head chef' She is always enthusiastic about trying the recipes at home, which we've done on several occasions and Breanna has been able to help."

2010 marked the first ever Mini Chef program with the help of Holy Trinity Anglican Church who offered their kitchen for a small fee. The Mini Chefs were even dressed accordingly with hand made aprons and chefs hats.

"That's true, this program has really captured the imaginations of the therapy staff, the kids and their families alike. Cooking is such a simple activity to do, and yet the benefits are incredible. You simply need to see how excited these young children are when they produce something edible from raw ingredients. The smiles alone are worth the work," said Ian Jones, MontroseAccess Recreation Officer who helps to run the course.

But there are real physical benefits too. The food preparation and use of kitchen utensils helps to improve dexterity, fine motor skills and even develop some muscle strength. MontroseAccess aims to run the program again next year. Media are invited to attend the final cooking session at 4pm at the Holy Trinity Anglican Church – Meridian St, Bokarina.

For further information, to arrange an interview or high res images, please feel free to contact MontroseAccess' Communications Manager, Adam Harper, on (07) 3717 1184 or 0404 871 360 or email: aharper@montroseaccess.org.au