



MontroseAccess

MEDIA RELEASE

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World First Program Comes To Townsville

Townsville businesses are being called upon to loosen their purse strings and help support children with physical disabilities. The funding drive is to help pay for a globally unique program which is coming to the city for the first time later this month.

The special program, designed by charity MontroseAccess, is for children with the life limiting neuromuscular condition, Duchene muscular dystrophy (DMD). The program offers speech, occupational and physiotherapy, as well as the chance to come face to face underwater with sharks! It's the only program of its kind in the world.

Affectionately known as Shark Bait Kids, the program is the brainchild of MontroseAccess physiotherapist Sue Nicklin. Sue said, "Hydrotherapy is a massively important part of the program for kids with Duchenne muscular dystrophy. But instead of regular drills in a pool, we decided to make it more exciting for our clients and two years ago we started teaching them diving. At the end of their training program, they get to dive in a special location with marine life. The experience is life changing."

Twelve children from around the Townsville, Cairns and Mackay areas have signed up for the program and will undergo four days of training, learning how to breathe using air tanks as well as how to control their movements under water before diving with colourful sharks at Reef HQ on the 22nd and 23rd of January.

The program has had remarkable success around the Brisbane area over the last two years thanks to generous financial support, however there is a desperate need for assistance in Townsville. MontroseAccess is now working with the organisation Muscular Dystrophy Queensland, who have offered to help by calling Townsville businesses seeking donations, but further support is required.

Sue said, "These kids spend a lot of time in therapy, while their school mates are experiencing other things. For once, these children get to return to school for the New Year and say 'I went scuba diving, what did you do?' It's about social inclusion and it's about quality of life. This simple act really does make a significant difference to these kids and we need support."

"The program is also being used as a study on the respiratory benefits hydrotherapy has on children with this condition. We can't argue that the therapy will slow down the DMD process, but we can demonstrate a remarkable lift in mental wellbeing, confidence and even social interaction. Anecdotally, the families themselves will say how much of a positive impact this program has on family life, because this condition is something that affects an entire family unit."

Anyone wishing to make a donation and support this program can contact MontroseAccess' Miriam Rodda on (07) 3881 7906 or via email mrodda@montroseaccess.org.au.

Images are available of Shark Bait Kids children diving with sharks.

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