

SUPPORTING YOUNG MUMS STARTING OUT

An innovative and unique program run by Connections UnitingCare is offering young mothers the opportunity to gain more knowledge and further their skills by becoming a Peer Support Worker with its Starting Out program.

Starting Out, a community-based support program for young, pregnant and parenting women up to the age of 25 years is hosting an information session for potential Peer Support Workers at Connections' Croydon office at 185 Mt Dandenong Road on Friday 19 March.

Peer Support Training helps young mothers with knowledge and communication skills that can be used to mentor other young parents. Whilst completing the course, participants take steps towards furthering their education and future employment opportunities as they are taught the skills needed to support other women.

Connections UnitingCare Starting Out Program Manager, Sue Campion believes that having Peer Support Workers who have experience in dealing with the real issues is what makes the program work.

'Starting Out is a great program, making a real difference in the community. The program works because it has young mother's talking to other young mothers about the real issues as well as providing a directed forum for people to share ideas and issues with their peers,' Sue said.

'This whole program is about having women who have experienced many of the feelings and uncertainties that are expressed in our sessions and to ensure that they are provided with the advice and support in a friendly and non-judgemental environment.'

For Emma the support of Starting Out allowed her to talk to people in her situation, people who understood the challenges and difficulties young mums face and to share her issues and concerns with other people her own age. Through Starting Out, Emma is now a Peer Support Worker with Connections and is enjoying the challenge of juggling motherhood and employment.

'The thing is being with Starting Out for ten years, if it wasn't for them I wouldn't know where I would be.' Emma said. 'I've said this I don't know how many times for so many years, that the people there are amazing and can help you with not just showing you how to play with your baby right, but they can also help you if you're feeling down.'

Starting Out offers a range of services such as pregnancy and relationship counselling, pregnancy and birth education support, parenting support in-home, support for families in transitional housing and playgroups for parents and their children where they can meet, play and learn in a supported environment.

» Information Session: Friday 19 March 2010 (2:00pm-3:30pm). Hall at Connections Croydon Office, 185 Mt Dandenong Road. Children will be catered for. Call 03 9724 2222 to note your attendance.

Media: Connections Starting Out Program Manager Sue Campion and Peer Support Worker Emma are available for interviews. Contact Connections Communications Officer, Kirrilee Torney on 03 9271 0816 or kirrilee.torney@connections.org.au