

Kylie Graham



When I first heard that we were starting a MyTime group at my son's school, I saw it primarily as an opportunity to get to know other parents in my school community. We were new arrivals at Mitchelton Special School that year and I really only recognised a few faces and shared the occasional smile or nod at the end of the school day.

"I am pleased to say MyTime surpassed these expectations and turned out to be so much more."

I not only met some wonderful parents but also formed some special friendships. I think about a quotation I read recently that says:

'Friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another, 'What! You too? I thought I was the only one.'

I think this sentiment definitely applies in a group of parents like ours. There is something compelling about sharing the ups and downs of our lives with others who are walking a similar path. It builds bonds that are very strong.

I have found MyTime to be a place for both giving and receiving. As a group, we share lots of laughs and triumphs. We can laugh about things that would make other parents cringe – we have had to develop this skill to survive in the face of constant challenges. Our triumphs also may not be the same as other parents' triumphs. We have learned to celebrate the little things; people in our group have a unique understanding about this and are genuinely happy to acknowledge and appreciate those successes, however small they may be. Sometimes, there are moments of sadness and despair too. It is to be expected. Everyone is sensitive to those moments and I believe we are fortunate to have a few parents in our group who instinctively know how to offer the right encouragement and support when that happens. It is a gift we all need from time to time.

Mixing with MyTime friends has made me realize that there is always something new to learn. I thought I knew about disability having worked for a community organization where I ran support groups and spent a lot of my time listening to and helping other parents of children with autism. At our MyTime group, there are children with a range of disabilities and medical conditions – not just autism – and I heard some amazing stories of adversity and courage. It opened my eyes and helped me to keep my son's challenges in perspective.

I am very grateful for the opportunity to be part our MyTime group – we do some great activities and have lots of fun together.

"I feel quite sure that you can never have enough supportive friends in this life and I think the MyTime philosophy actively encourages us to connect and be enriched by the experience."