

Dwarfism Awareness Month

What is it?

October was officially recognised as "Dwarfism Awareness Month" by the Little People of America (LPA) in 2009. October was chosen as the month to celebrate dwarfism as it's the birth month of the late Billy Barty, founder of the LPA. It is now celebrated around the world, with several countries passing a resolution to officially name October as Dwarfism Awareness Month.

The Short Statured People of Australia Inc. (SSPA), with the support of the Australian Federal Government joined the LPA in 2012 and officially declared October as Dwarfism Awareness Month. Dwarfism Awareness Month is now listed on the Department of Health's website, along with all other major awareness days and months relating to health: www.health.gov.au/calendar

Why do we need it?

Dwarfism is a medical condition that is not fully understood. Generally, there is insufficient knowledge about dwarfism. This lack of knowledge has driven speculation and superstition about dwarfism, enabling discrimination.

The declaration of Dwarfism Awareness Month has been a huge step forward for people living with the condition and their families by providing an opportunity to educate society and create general awareness.

What do we hope to achieve?

Acceptance – for people born with a condition of dwarfism, the challenge is to be accepted and integrated into everyday society – this can be hampered by the common misconceptions and lack of education around the condition.

How you can help?

Purchase a wrist band:

- Wristbands "Standing Tall for Dwarfism Awareness – October" are available for purchase from Sandra Lundie for \$3.00 each. Email Sandra to order yours at: sandra_lundie@live.com.au

Hold an event:

- Contact your local Bunnings/Woolworths/OfficeWorks store and host a BBQ.
- Host your own bbq, afternoon tea or dinner party and educate your family and friends.
- Ask your local school or your own workplace to run a casual clothes day in support of Dwarfism Awareness.

Contact local media:

- Contact your local newspaper and inform them about Dwarfism Awareness Month.
- Contact your local radio station and ask to have an interview to help push the message.

Public speaking:

- Contact your local Lions Club or RSL and seek an opportunity to speak at one of their gatherings.
- Contact your local high school and provide an educative speech on life with dwarfism.

Distribute flyer:

- Print off the Dwarfism Awareness Flyer available on the SSPA website: www.sspa.org.au; and ask if you can place it on the window of your local library, milk bar, newsagency, school, university and help spread the word about Dwarfism Awareness.

The facts, the figures and the questions answered

What is dwarfism?

Dwarfism is a condition of short stature caused as a result of a medical or genetic condition. There are over 350 distinct forms of dwarfism and skeletal dysplasia's.

Key facts:

- Dwarfism affects bone growth. It does not affect cognitive, IQ or intellectual abilities.
- 80% of people with dwarfism have average-height parents and siblings.
- Females with dwarfism can give birth to children. The child may be born with average stature or dwarfism.
- People with dwarfism are generally not taller than 4' 10" at adult height. The typical height range is 2'8" to 4'5".
- People with dwarfism live long, fulfilling lives – they go to school, go to work, find partners and raise children just like their average-size peers.
- The most common form of dwarfism is Achondroplasia. Achondroplasia affects approximately 1 in every 20,000 births.
- A person born with dwarfism born to average-size parents is usually caused by a spontaneous mutation and can happen in any pregnancy.
- People with dwarfism work in all sorts of vocations: teaching, nursing, genetics, media, medicine, acting, law and all kinds of trades.
- People with dwarfism can compete in a range of sporting and recreational activities – like for all people, sports are a good form of exercise and help maintain a healthy weight.
- Preferred terms for people born with dwarfism are: short stature or little person. However the most preferred terminology is always simply the person's name. For people without dwarfism, the correct terminology is 'average-height' rather than 'normal'. The word 'midget' is highly offensive to the majority of the short statured community.



More information:

Short Statured People of Australia Inc. (SSPA) – *Equality of Opportunity*

The SSPA is a non-profit organisation that provides support and information for people with conditions of dwarfism, their families and other interested members of the community. The SSPA is made up of volunteers who aim to educate the community, provide peer and parent support, participate in programs that benefit the dwarfism community and promote the achievements of people with dwarfism. The SSPA's main aim is to assimilate people of short stature into society with the goal of equality of education and social status, and of employment opportunities.

Website: www.sspa.org.au

Facebook: search 'SSPA'