Race day fundraiser supporting autistic children's champions

There were plenty of winners to be found at the Broadmeadow Racecourse during the *Steel City Planners* annual Derby Day on October 29 last year. But the real champions are always the staff and families of *Aspect Hunter School* for children on the autism spectrum. That's why *Jirsch Sutherland* not only sponsored a race at this year's event, but hosted an information table about the Newcastle-based school throughout the day.

Steel City Financial Planners hosts the annual *Newcastle Jockey Club Derby Day* and this year's theme was Black and White.

Derby Day is always a community event, with racegoers encouraged to bring their own picnic lunch to enjoy on the lawn or pre-order a lunch platter. Others took the opportunity to relax and socialise in *The Newmarket* with hot food and TV screens, while there was also *Chevals* with a three course à la carte lunch and views over the parade ring and finish line. And for the 2016 event, a champagne bar in the grassed area was a welcome addition.

Regardless of where racegoers chose to spend the day, the team from *Jirsch Sutherland* encouraged them to take time to visit their information table about the *Aspect Hunter School* and contribute a few dollars of their winnings to their fundraiser for the organisation.

Jirsch Sutherland Partner **Stewart Free** has firsthand experience of the excellent work being done at the school, as his four-year-old foster son is a pupil there.

"It's an amazing organisation," says Stewart. "We are proud and privileged to be associated with the vital work they do."

Aspect Hunter School caters for more than 100 students who are on the autism spectrum across the Hunter, Central Coast and Far North Coast regions of NSW. It also has a range of satellite classes located in Cardiff, Belmont, Waratah West, Tarro, Abermain and Port Macquarie.

The school enrols children aged from three years and 10 months and from across the areas of Hunter Valley, Newcastle and Lake Macquarie. It operates from the Maitland suburb of Thornton and has satellite classes in both NSW Department of Education and Training schools and Catholic schools.

Its services include early intervention, school-based programs, satellite support classes, training, educational outreach and enrolment. These include: early intervention, school based programs, satellite support classes, training, outreach and intake.

The 2016 event raised $21,500 for the school and the funds will be used to purchase educational aids in the Hunter to support the children attending the school. Overall, almost $100,000 has been raised to purchase tools including Smart Boards, which assist the children's learning in the classrooms, iPads, which are regularly used by the children, and many other educational supports.

"Without the support of our sponsors like *Jirsch Sutherland*, we would not be able to make the day such a success," said Shane Finlay, Director & Financial Planner with *Steel City Financial Planners*.