

Support is as good as gold

UNLEY

Celeste Villani

SCRIBBLES on a serviette 10 years ago were the start of improving the lives of hundreds of children with Asperger syndrome.

Angie Pangallo and a group of friends were at a cafe in 2007, discussing a lack of social interaction programs for their children who had the condition.

They jotted down some ideas on the napkin – with a focus on inclusion, training programs, as well as ways to empower and support students. From that initial meeting, the Gold Foundation was born.

The foundation this month moved from Belair to classrooms at the former Kirinari Community School on Trim-

mer Tce, Unley. “I pulled out the napkin from under my cup of hot chocolate, got a pen and asked the mothers what their dreams would be if we could continue this group and expand it,” says Mrs Pangallo of the 2007 meeting.

Children with Asperger syndrome ... were missing opportunities, and they needed them.

Angie Pangallo

“The day after, I went and registered the Gold Foundation (and we developed a pilot program). Children with Asperger syndrome aren’t seen as having high needs ... they were missing opportunities, and they needed them.”

The organisation focuses on social interaction programs to help children with Asperger syndrome – and their families – cope with everyday situations.

The new Unley centre will allow the foundation to expand its programs and cater for more children.

It runs social skill programs for children aged 8-14 old, educational seminars for parents, carers and families who have children with Asperger syndrome and a youth group.

Mrs Pangallo’s son, Connor Pangallo, was one of the Gold Foundation’s first students.

He went from a lonely, introverted boy to someone who was able to develop friendships and enough confidence to secure his first job as a charity collector.

“Life is a lot easier for me because, when I started at the



Jenn and Lachlan Shepherd and Angie and Connor Pangallo at the Gold Foundation’s new home in Unley. PICTURE: AAP/MORGAN SETTE

foundation, I think I was falling through the cracks,” Connor, 17, of Lynton, says.

“Now it is a lot easier for me to socialise and interact with people, which is one of the things that allowed me to suc-

ceed in school and, more-recently, find employment.”

The foundation said it would not be affected if a school for gifted children – the Dara School – also moved to the Kirinari site.