

# Disability Services Newsletter

General Manager Update *Wendy Pettifer*

SEPTEMBER 2020



**This recent hot weather has definitely confirmed that winter is over, and although there is still a need for caution, with the reduction in COVID cases in New South Wales we are starting to look ahead and plan for a 'new normal'. We are hoping for more good weather, no fires and to continue to successfully manage a global pandemic. Is that too much? Let's all just keep our fingers crossed!**

## RUOK DAY

Did you know that as many as 40% of people in NSW with an intellectual disability also live with mental illness? Unfortunately, problems like depression are often missed in people with intellectual disabilities, even though it is more prevalent than in the general population. It's therefore important that we try to create relationships with our clients where they feel they are able to talk about how they are feeling, and where they might be able to get support if they are feeling down.

September is the month for RUOK Day, and clients were encouraged in activities that supported and inspired them to meaningfully connect with one another, be a good friend and a great listener.

## NEW STAFF AND CLIENTS

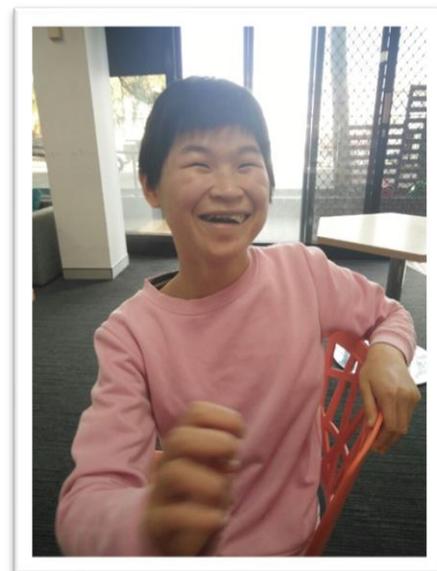
We've had a busy month going through resume's, phone screening, interviewing and trialing new staff. During September we had Ikenna join us and in October we expect to start another 5 staff. We are also recruiting for some fulltime permanent Driver/Disability Support Worker posts to take over transport runs – which we hope will make this part of our service more dependable and consistent. All our new staff receive a thorough



induction, which includes buddy shifts, and are not able to work with complex clients until they have received an induction specific to that person and their needs. It's important to ensure that our new staff are supported to really understand our clients, so we take this very seriously.

The reason for all this activity around staffing is that we seem to have a constant stream of new clients – which is wonderful! During September we have welcomed Stuart (who is on our Transition From School program), Wendy, David and Georgina.

With all our new clients, we introduce them to our services slowly – first with trial days and then once attending regularly they have higher than usual levels of support until we know them better, they are used to us and have made some friends. As with anywhere, new people can change the dynamic of a group, so we are always mindful of this.



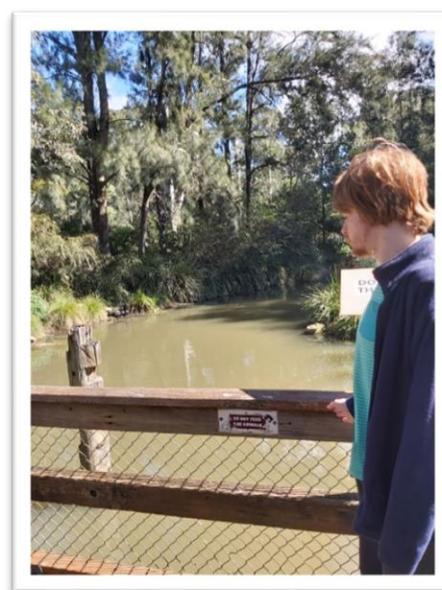
## ACTIVITIES

Every day, the team works hard to ensure that there is an interesting and engaging range of activities for everyone. In the centres this month, there has been plenty of cooking and baking, and Toby and I were lucky enough to each take home a bag of really fantastic scones for our families to sample. We also celebrated birthdays, made loom bracelets, and groups have continued to revamp our garden and deck ready for the summer. Supporting clients to become independent by involving them in daily living activities is also important, so there are opportunities to help with things like loading the washing machine, washing up, vacuuming and other useful tasks. Keeping is active is also important for all of us, so there are regular exercise classes – plus some of our clients really love the stationary bikes. A few groups each day go out into the community to parks and other outdoor venues, which this month have included golf, Eastern Creek and to

Bankstown Airport to watch the helicopters (which is Lee's favourite thing!).

We are now gearing up in the centre for October activities – the central part of which will be the Halloween Party. This was a great success last year, and the clients and staff are already excited and creating spooky decorations. We are also planning to have a few groups go to the beach when the weather is right (not too hot, not too cold!).

As you are aware, we now have an activity approvals system for any activities taking place outside of the centres. The mentors who give these approvals have been given guidance about the geographical area in which these activities can usually take place – an area bounded by the M4 to the North, the A6 to the East, the M5 to the South and the M7 to the West. The reason for this is to manage the risk of a staff or client incident whilst far from the centre, and to ensure that activities do not





involve unnecessarily long periods on transport. We are fortunate that we have so many parks and other amenities in our area, and we need to ensure that when clients and staff are far from other support we have plans and people in place to help them if something goes wrong. This doesn't mean clients will never venture out of this area – just that it will be more planned. So, for example, a trip to the beach wouldn't just be one van of clients and staff, but a few vans, with plenty of staff and a back up mentor in a car. This way we can be sure that whatever happens, we will be ready.

### **EVENING PROGRAMS ARE BACK (well – mainly!)**

It's been a funny old few months, but as things are starting to settle down now, we have decided to restart our evening programs. Health and Wellbeing will restart on 22<sup>nd</sup> October and dance will be back on Wednesday evenings, starting from 4<sup>th</sup> November. Of course, we will still need to be vigilant about protecting staff and clients from the possibility of COVID infection, so staff will continue to wear masks and we will temperature test, hand sanitise and socially distance wherever possible. So no partner dancing for a while yet!

We will be sending letters out to everyone during the next week about the evening program, but if you want to talk to someone about it, please give Toby a call on 0490 048 284.

We don't yet feel confident to restart NightOwls, and currently we are still not allowing any visits to indoor venues with clients. However, we are continuing to evaluate any potential risks and are hopeful that this will be able to change in due course.

### **CHRISTMAS AND END OF YEAR CELEBRATIONS**

It might only be October, but here at Woodville we are thinking about the end of the year and everything that goes with it already – and not only because we want to get 2020 over and done with! Every year, Woodville has a 2-week shutdown over the Christmas and New Year period, but increasingly we are continuing to provide services to clients who would like them on some of these days.

This year, the shutdown will begin at close of business on 18<sup>th</sup> December and we will fully re-open on 4<sup>th</sup> January. However, we are planning to provide services on the following days:

19<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> Dec.

All clients attending services on those days will be at Earth unless we have very high demand. We will be sending out a letter and form shortly to help you book in, but in the meantime if you have any queries please do get in touch.



Of course, the end of year traditionally means parties, and although this year things will be different to usual, we are working hard to make sure everyone still has fun. End of year parties will be held in the week commencing 14<sup>th</sup> December, and of course, due to the continuing restrictions, they will not be able to be at a local venue. In order to ensure that everyone has the best time ever whilst still being able to social distance, clients at Chester Hill and GeekAbility will have their own outdoor celebration, and Earth clients will party separately at the centre. We are fortunate that we have such great facilities and we are planning lots of fun for the day. Unfortunately we are not going to be able to invite parents this year but we will make sure lots of photos are taken to send home.

## CONSENT FORMS

We have recently reviewed our consent form to make it easier to understand and to ensure it is up to date. You should have received a copy of this form with your newsletter – please complete, sign and return to Woodville.

## COMMUNITY MASKS PROJECT

You may recall that last month I told you about our joint project with The Social Outfit to make cloth masks. Well – we’ve now got a room at Chester Hill, sewing machines and trainers, but we need more sewers alongside our clients. If you are interested in being involved, please read the flyer sent out with this email, and get in touch! It’s a good opportunity to learn how to make masks, do something good for our community and have fun. Of course, all COVID safe precautions will be taken.



## COVID REMINDER

Our staff are working hard to keep our clients and themselves safe at Woodville. You can help by making sure you check the information about new hotspots every day at the NSW Health website and ensuring that no one attends our centres who is unwell or has been in contact with someone who is unwell.

Best wishes and stay safe!

*Wendy*

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