

Disability Services Newsletter

General Manager Update *Wendy Pettifer*

DECEMBER 2019



December is an exciting month – it's summer, it's Christmas, it's school holidays, it's food, drink and making merry! What's not to like?! We're working hard to make sure this month is fun for everyone.

OUT OF AFRICA

Our theme for activities in November was 'Africa!' and what a month we had. Clients and staff cooked African food (so much food!), they danced to African music, and played drums. Some groups explored African countries at the library, and others made African masks and flags which were displayed in the centres. Clients also made cup cakes with African national colours for icing, and some staff wore traditional African clothing (including me!). We unfortunately had to cancel the picnic day due to the hot weather and fire warnings, and so far we haven't felt we could hold it due to the very smoky atmosphere. However, we plan to try again sometime in the New Year. Overall it was a fantastic month - our clients really seemed to enjoy themselves, and it was great to give our African staff the opportunity to teach us all something about their country (and I certainly enjoyed sampling the food!).



NOVEMBER ACTIVITIES

Apart from all the African themed activities, we also got out and about in our community. We took a group of clients to School's Spectacular at Olympic Park, and clients and families joined us for an evening at Bankstown Sports Club celebrating the International Day of People with Disability. Leisure Link clients went on a vintage electric train ride with Santa, we took a group out for the day to the Blue Mountains and a group went to see Sculptures by the Sea. We've also done a lot of cooking with the clients, often providing a home cooked lunch which the clients have helped to prepare.

Additionally, a group of 8 male clients completed a 4 week course provided by the Intellectual Disability Rights Service (IDRS) on 'Rights and Relationships'. They learnt about appropriate public and private behavior, sex and

technology, consent and other topics which relate to having safe, respectful and appropriate relationships with others. We will be running the same course again next year for a group of our female clients.

We're always on the look-out for things to do, so if you see something you think our clients might enjoy, please let us know! And if you have a special talent which you might like to share on a voluntary basis, get in touch – we're really keen to have a broad range of activities available. We are increasingly supporting people on a 1:1 basis at the weekends as well, which gives them the opportunity to choose to do exactly what they would like, so please get in touch if you think you have funding you could use for this.

November is also AGM month and it was lovely to see clients and families at the celebration event. We honoured long standing staff, and staff who have completed tertiary education courses, and we presented our dance music video clip 'Choir'. You should have received a link for this by text, but if you haven't you can find it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUi2yjpGELs&feature=youtu.be>

CHRISTMAS ACTIVITIES

This month, many of our activities will be Christmas themed, but with a bit of a Hawaiian flavor! We've got lots of things planned and the GeekAbility clients have put together activity packs for Earth and ICBO and amongst other things we'll be running Christmas bingo, making hula skirts and decorating cupcakes – which is turning out to be a very popular activity. We will of course also be having our Christmas Party. This will be on 18th December at Gasparo's and you should have received a flyer with information about this. Please do let us know if you haven't – we don't want anyone to miss out! We do not charge clients for this event, but family members are welcome at a cost of \$35 per head.



TRANSPORT FEES

We are making some important changes to the way we pay for transport, and you should have received a letter about this – if you have not, please do let us know. We've received quite a few phone calls about it, but please be reassured that the change will not be implemented until after your next review unless you ask us to. We've had a number of families request that we make the change straightaway, but otherwise you will continue with your current arrangements until you have a new plan. We will provide you with a quote for all your services to take to your review meeting, and that will include the transport fee.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Supported Independent Living Consultation Evening – we had a great turn out of interested parents, carers and clients to this evening where we tried to de-mystify all the information about how people with disability can be supported to live independently under the NDIS. It's clear that many families are thinking about this important transition, and we're here to support you on that journey. You told us about your preferences, fears and hopes in relation to independent living, and we are excited to move to the next stage – looking for a suitable property and matching clients to live there. If you are interested in Supported Independent Living and were not able to attend, Michael Doran, our Business Development Manager, will be happy to chat to you, so give him a call on 0490 049 242.

Parenting a Young Adult with an Intellectual Disability – we've had a lot of people express an interest in this information evening, but also tell us that this time of year is tricky with busy diaries. We know what they mean! We've therefore decided to postpone until the early part of next year, so please watch this space.

We're keen to support you in your role as carers, so please let us know if there is anything in particular that we could include in an information evening.

NEW SERVICES

Holiday Program for High School Students

For the first time, this summer we will be providing a holiday program for clients aged 16 – 18 years. The program will be a mix of fun, social activities like bowling, movies, trips out, and things like arts and crafts, garden learning and dancing. Our current service delivery is aimed at over 18s so this is an exciting expansion for us. We know there is a need for this type of service in our community so if you know of anyone who would be interested, please do encourage them to contact Toby on 0490 048284.

NightOwls – evening activities for people aged 18 - 30



We are keen to expand our service delivery to meet more of our client's needs, so we've been working on some new services. It's important that we try to provide opportunities for people with disability to live lives and participate in activities that are age appropriate. Day services tend to cater for a broad age range of clients from young to old, so from early February we will start to run an evening service for our younger clients to get them out and about having fun and making new friends. The service will usually run from 5pm – 10pm (depending on the activity), and will include things like going to gigs, and going out for meals and the movies, and other activities clients tell us they would like to get involved with. If you're interested in this new service or you know of anyone who might be, please contact Toby on 0490 048284.

SERVICES OVER CHRISTMAS

We've sent a flyer home letting you know that we will be open and providing services in the period between 23rd December and 3rd January with the exception of the public holidays. If you would like support during this time, make sure you return the form to us, so that we can book you in and ensure that we are staffed appropriately. We'll be doing a specialized small group program over those two weeks which we will develop once we know who will be attending.



LEISURE LINK 2020

We've set the dates for Saturday Leisure Link 1 for the first part of next year and we have some great activities organized. They include things like a trip to see Shrek – The Musical, Sailability, and a mystery bus tour so look out for the flyer and get in touch if you'd like to attend. If you need more information, give Mike a call on 0428 961393

FIRE EVACUATIONS

Understandably, with the highly unusual fire season we are having this year, some families have been concerned about their loved one at the centre on days when it has been very smoky and where there has been a catastrophic fire warning. Although we are not able to have much influence on the fire situation generally we have been making sure that we are keeping abreast of warnings and restricting some activities where it seems sensible to do so. Quite by chance we have also experienced 2 unexpected evacuations due to system faults – one whilst we had a full centre at Earth, and once after clients had left. I'm pleased to be able to report that we were able to evacuate the centre quickly and effectively, and that staff and clients all did what was asked or expected of them. Many of the clients were excited to see the fire engines, and it was a good opportunity to test whether the processes we have in place to ensure everyone is safe in the event of a fire really work.



WISHING EVERYONE HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

As this will be the last newsletter for 2019, I'd just like to take this opportunity wish everyone well for the holiday season and the New Year. I've been so grateful for the welcome I have received at Woodville Alliance over the last 6 months and I've enjoyed getting to know our wonderful clients, staff and families enormously. I'm excited about what can be achieved over the next year. I also want to acknowledge the fantastic job my team has done in adapting to a lot of changes which I hope will eventually be positive for everyone. But most of all, I want to thank **you** all – for entrusting your loved ones to us every day and working with us to ensure that they get the best chance they can to live a rich, happy and safe life.

See you next year!

Wendy

Wendy Pettifer

General Manager, Disability

Email: wpettifer@woodville.org.au

Phone: 02 9722 5200

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www.woodville.org.au

