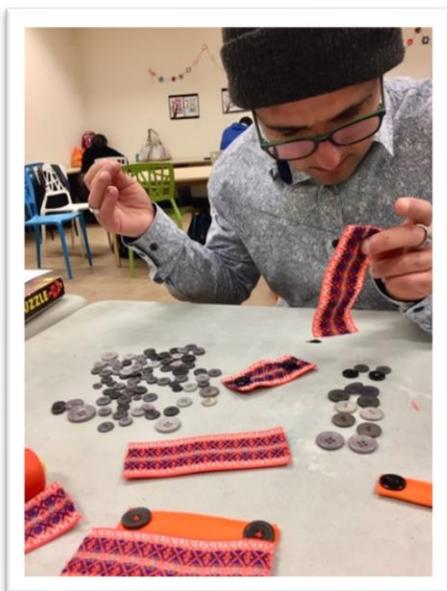


Disability Services Newsletter

General Manager Update *Wendy Pettifer*

AUGUST 2020



Here we are in the final days of winter finally! It feels like it has been a long and rather strange season, and the recent sunshine and signs of spring are certainly welcome. I heard someone mention the other day that there are apparently only 17 Fridays now until Christmas, and I'm sure we are all hoping that things will be a bit more back to normal by then.

MASKS PROJECT

We are continuing to monitor the COVID situation very carefully, and do whatever we can to ensure that everyone is being kept as safe as possible. Staff and clients alike have adapted very well to all the new ways of working and this month we were happy to be able to gift cloth masks to all our staff. The masks were made for us by a social enterprise called The Social Outfit, and they have also agreed to teach some of our clients, staff and local community members how to make them. This project will be starting soon, and we will be hoping to sell them locally. Our Chester Hill

clients and staff have also been making ear saver straps for face masks as well, and we are really pleased to be able to contribute to the community effort to support one another around COVID.

LEADERSHIP AND OUR MENTORS

Our mentors do a great job in supporting our Disability Support Workers in their roles and supporting myself and Toby in our management responsibilities. Each mentor has a group of staff reporting to them, and a group of clients for whom they are the key worker. You should all have a laminated communications card which tells you who your mentor is, but if you haven't got one (or have lost it) please let Toby know so he can send one out to you.

We have recently decided that in order to improve communications within our centres and as part of our ongoing commitment to continuous improvement, each of our mentors will also have a specific area of leadership. We have aligned these leadership areas with what we know to be the particular areas of expertise and experience in our mentors and I am sure that both clients and staff will benefit from this change. The areas of leadership and their mentors are listed below:





Personal Care and Medication – Elizabeth

Behaviour Support and Work Health and Safety – Luke

Activities (centres and community) – Monty

Staff rostering and transport – Sandeep

Chester Hill services – Ma

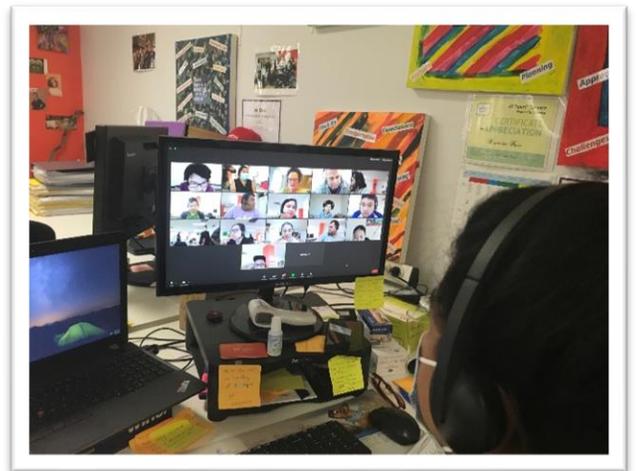
You should continue to contact your own mentor with any issues, but this change will really help us with the smooth running of our services.

ACTIVITIES

Under Monty's leadership we are really working on ensuring that everyone has interesting and enriching activities to take part in every day. This month clients have continued to take part in dance lessons and exercise classes as we are keen to keep everyone moving! During

COVID our dance teacher, Anna, has been recording her dance lessons and sending them in every week, and our exercise classes are conducted over Zoom with our gym instructor. It's amazing how quickly we've all adapted to these new ways of doing things!

In the centres, clients have also enjoyed making soaps which we are hoping might turn into a little bit of an enterprise to support our services. In choir we are starting to practice some Christmas songs in the hope that we might be able to have some sort of Christmas celebration – fingers crossed. We are still getting together with many of our clients who are at home by using Zoom. This has been a great way of keeping in contact both with clients and with staff – as Treena, our Lead Educator in GeekAbility has also been zooming in occasionally from Denmark, where she has been visiting her mother.



As spring is on its way, we've also been tidying up the deck and the garden ready for spending more time outside. Some of the clients have lent a hand with this, and we're very grateful for the help!

Out in the community, we have continued to visit our local parks and the better weather has meant some nice picnics and bbqs. We are very fortunate to live in an area that has so many beautiful parks, lakes and rivers within easy reach, especially while we are not using any indoor venues due to COVID. Chester Hill clients have also been to play mini golf in the sunshine, with a great time had by all.



NEW CLIENTS AND STAFF

Over the last month we have had a lot of interest from prospective new clients, with 12 families visiting in all. Most families visit after hours in order to reduce the infection risk, but all families visiting are required to take a temperature check, sign a declaration, wear a mask, hand sanitise and to maintain social distancing practices. It's a strange but necessary way to show people around. We've welcomed our first Transition from School client, Tanner, who is currently spending one day per week with us. Like all our clients transitioning from school, he will gradually increase his attendance over the coming months so that he is able to settle into his new surroundings well. Tanner is attending GeekAbility and already making some new friends.

We received 154 applications for casual Disability Support Worker roles in August. We've been going through them very carefully and have started interview processes. We are still keen to expand our pool of casual workers, and we are very happy to have welcomed Sally to our team this month. Hopefully we will have more new staff to report on in September.

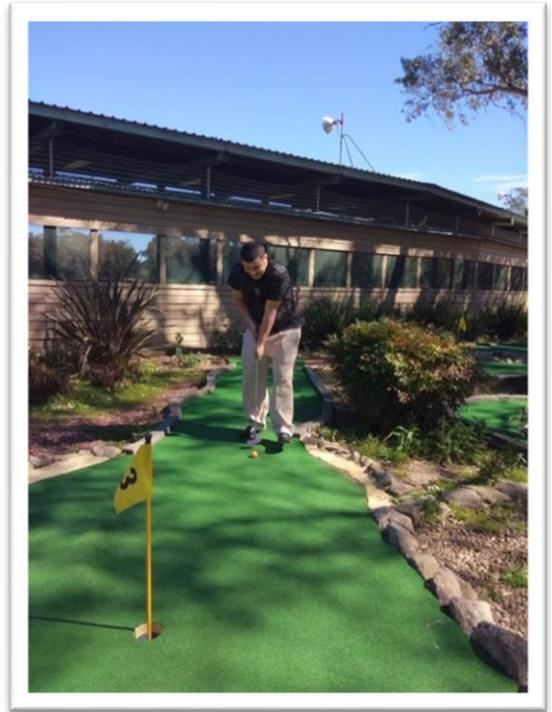
NDIS UPDATE

Did you know that until the end of September, under the current NDIS COVID arrangements, you are able to use core funding to purchase Assistive Technology costing under \$600? To apply, you need a letter of support from an allied health professional and an invoice for the item purchased. The amount available is enough to purchase an iPad and we know many of our clients would benefit from this. Additionally, you can currently use core funding to purchase Support Coordination – which means that if you are interested in an iPad and have funds available, we can get one of our Support Coordinators to give you a hand. Let us know if you are interested, and we will put you in touch with Nargis or Elizabeth – but hurry! The end of September is not far off!

SUPPORTED INDEPENDENT LIVING

We've reached an exciting stage of this project – we have started viewing potential properties! At the moment, these viewings are very preliminary, but they are helping us to understand what is available and what would and wouldn't work for us. We are also making relationships with real estate agents and property managers, and making connections with community housing providers, which should help us to find what we need.

This week I have also sent out a letter to all families who have expressed a firm interest in Supported Independent Living with Woodville. The letter explains what the process will be, and also contains an information pack from the NDIS. At the moment we





are working with a number of potential families with no obligation for anyone to move in with us at this stage – however, there is a lot of background work to do which is better done early rather than later.

ROYAL COMMISSION

I want to remind everyone that the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability continues to take submissions and to welcome people with disability, their families and supporters to share their stories. This is an important inquiry for the disability sector and it's essential that your voices are heard. It is an unfortunate fact that people with disability are more likely than people who do not

have a disability to have experienced violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, and the inquiry aims to understand better the extent of these problems, the contexts in which abuse is likely to occur and the impacts on people with disability and others.

There are number of ways you can contribute. You can ask for a private session, or provide a submission – which can be in writing, over the phone, in a video or an audio recording. The Royal Commission will provide interpreters and translators if you need them, and they will also put you in touch with counselling services to support you through any difficult feelings you might be experiencing as a result of contributing to the inquiry.

COVID REMINDER

It seems we can't now write a newsletter without a reminder about COVID! However, I do want to reassure you that we are still as committed to all our infection control measures as ever, and we are determined to keep clients and staff as safe as possible. We are fortunate that at Woodville Alliance, we have our lovely Work Health and Safety Coordinator constantly on the case of keeping up with any new venues with positive COVID cases and any new guidance. Yana sends a notice out daily with all the new information in it to make sure we don't miss a thing, and we are very grateful for her support. She also ensures we have adequate supplies of things like masks, gloves and hand sanitizer. If you are not lucky enough to have a Yana, you can check the NSW Health website to make sure you are up to date. The information is updated daily and can be found here [NSW HEALTH](#).

Best wishes and stay safe!

Wendy

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