

Disability Services Newsletter

General Manager Update *Wendy Pettifer*

FEB 2021



Happy New Year! December and January are difficult months for producing the newsletter, with many people on leave, so I thought it best to start afresh in February. As always time is rushing past, and before we know it will be Easter! With a couple of months to cover though, we have plenty of news...

CHRISTMAS PARTIES

This year, Christmas for Woodville Alliance wasn't quite the same as other years, and I suspect that was the case for you too. However, in common with many of the things that we have been forced to do because of COVID, some of those changes are worth hanging onto, if everything ever gets back to normal. So this year, clients at GeekAbility and Chester Hill had their Christmas celebration together by going out for a lunch in Liverpool. Earth clients had a spectacular party with games, food and dressing up in the centre. Everyone had a great time and we will look at whether running the two separate events will work for next year as well. We took a lot of photos on the day, some of which are included in this newsletter.

COVID 19 AND VACCINATIONS

After a bumpy end to 2020 and start to 2021, we seem to be back in a less restricted position again. As a result, staff are no longer required to wear masks and we are starting to reintroduce indoor venues for community access activities. We recently had our first visit to bowling after nearly a year, and the clients who went were thrilled. It's been tough finding things for everyone to do during this challenging time, and the staff have done an amazing job at creating fun and engaging activities. Everyone is relieved to be able to add a bit more variety though, and we hope that the COVID situation now stays settled for a while.

Part of how we can contribute to ensuring that we all stay as safe as possible is by continuing to be extra vigilant about not attending centres when feeling unwell. We are continuing to take temperatures, to socially distance wherever that is possible, and to hand wash or sanitise frequently. We are also still having regular hospital grade



cleaning and the Earth centre had a deep clean during the shutdown over Christmas. This included all carpets and upholstery being steam cleaned.

It's great news that the rollout of COVID vaccinations for priority groups is on the verge of starting. As we understand it, people with disability and disability support workers are in the 1a priority group, which will mean they will be some of the first to receive it. There are subgroups within that priority group, and the initial group to get their doses will be people living or working in group homes. If your family member is in that group, you should hear direct from your group home about plans for the rollout. We will keep you informed about the rest of the client group as we get information.

GEEKABILITY MOVE TO LIVERPOOL

You might remember that in February last year, we were excited to be expanding GeekAbility to an additional site in Liverpool. The plan was to run two programs in Fairfield and Liverpool but then....COVID happened. As we only had a few clients to start with at Liverpool, and because the position of the centre in an office building with shared lifts and common spaces meant that it was hard for us to manage risks associated with COVID, we took the difficult decision to temporarily close that site and move everyone back to Fairfield.

However, our lease for the room at Fairfield was expiring at the end of December 2020 and given that we had not been able to expand GeekAbility Liverpool in the way we had intended, it seemed to make sense to move everyone back to Liverpool now that things had settled down! The GeekAbility guys are really enjoying being in the thick of things in the city, and those who travel there independently have adapted brilliantly to their new routes.

MORE BABIES ON THE WAY

We're not sure what is going on, but we've had a lot of happy news about babies on the way in head office over the last few weeks. Yana, who looks after all our work health and safety is expecting, as is Selynn who looks after all the purchasing and invoicing for us. And...Jenna is also expecting another baby! She will leave us at the end of May this year, and Toby will step back into her role until she returns some time after Christmas. We wish all our expectant mums well!

SUPPORTED INDEPENDENT LIVING

Exciting news in the Supported Independent Living space. We've been working hard for some time trying to find a great home on the rental market for our first group of clients. However, it's very competitive out there for large family houses, and it turned out to be much more challenging overall than we had expected. We've therefore taken the decision to purchase houses rather than rent and Michael – our Business Development Manager – and Jenna are regularly viewing suitable homes. Owning rather than renting will provide our clients with much more security of tenancy and more freedom around how they want their home to be – none of those rules about





pictures and blu-tack! We're planning to have our first home up and running by mid year, so watch this space. And if you are interested in accommodation options, please do have a chat with Jenna.

EASTER OPENING

We are aware that many of our clients and their families would actually welcome services on some Public Holidays. Whilst it's unlikely that we'll ever open on days like Christmas and New Year's Day, we thought that this year we would experiment with welcoming clients to activities at the Earth Centre on the Easter public holidays of the 2nd and 5th April. We will need a minimum number of clients to open, so if you are interested in this service, please complete the attached form and return by 19th March at the latest. We might also be able to provide some support to community clients on these days, so please contact us if this is of interest.

NEW FAMILY ORIENTATION AND WELCOME EVENING

Since the beginning of COVID we've welcomed lots of lovely new clients but haven't been able to hold any events to welcome their families into the Woodville Alliance community. However, those of you who are new during this period should now have received an invite to a new family orientation and welcome evening and we'd love you to come along. It's a great opportunity for you to meet other parents and learn about Woodville Alliance. It's taking place on 3rd March from 6pm – 8pm.

MORE CLIENT HOLIDAYS!

After the success of the Dubbo holiday at the end of last year, we thought we should do another trip! We are currently looking at venues and dates and will have information out to you about our plans shortly. Holidays for clients can be paid for through your NDIS plan – ideally through using short term accommodation (respite) funding, but can also be paid for using other funding if it is available. You can even top up with your own money if you want to. If you're interested in holidays and are not sure how to fund them, give us a call and we can talk you through it. We plan for our holidays to be at interesting locations within a couple of hours of Sydney, using accommodation suitable for our clients. Having staff who the clients know well when away from home is obviously a bonus, and we think taking your respite time at the beach or somewhere lovely is preferable to a suburban house for the same price!

Best wishes

Wendy

Email: wpettifer@woodville.org.au





