

Disability Support Services e-newsletter

Special Edition

December 2017

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Welcome to this special edition of the DSS e-newsletter.

Here we highlight how people and organisations demonstrate innovative practice in disability support services.

Community circles

Virginia is using a community circle to help her make friends. It's working, as she says, 'I have had friends at my house for the first time in eight years'.

Virginia explains how she has changed.

'The purpose of my circle is to help me make friends. My community circle is also helping me heaps to experience new things and to try new hobbies. It has given me more confidence.

'I have had four movie nights at my house, joined the Manawatu TimeBank, taken part in TimeBank events and met new people.

I talk to more people when I am doing things like watching my cousin play hockey and going to the club rooms. I enjoy talking to people on the sidelines and the coaches.

'I am planning more events like going to visit a rest home and taking some biscuits and I now go out for coffee with people.

'I want to keep my circle going as it has helped me heaps. I am mixing more and I am not so shy. I am out of my shell now.'

At the beginning of 2017, Options (Tautoko Services) embarked on a project to bring Community Circles to New Zealand. With support from Community Circles UK, we have developed a small number of



Virginia, in red, pictured with her circle of friends.

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Community Circles in Palmerston North and Tararua using the person-centred thinking tools that we have become familiar with in our everyday work.

We are now recruiting volunteer community circle facilitators and members, so we can start offering a community circle to more people.

Virginia was the first person to get her circle up and running with the help of her circle facilitator Andrea. Virginia's circle has been meeting since February 2017.

Circles bring people together to think and plan in a way that organically builds community around people who are isolated, or need support because of their health, disability or circumstances.

Clear communication makes a difference

At ConneXu we have redesigned our forms to give people greater choice and control and to help make sure that the support people receive is designed around each person's own needs.

The committee working on the project is made up of Cory, Helen and Asher who use ConneXu supports, as well as Lois and Grace who work as community facilitators.

The committee's task was to make our forms easier for everyone to use. We also wanted to make sure that people who were non-verbal, or who had difficulty communicating, would be able to give us feedback about the supports they use.

Over the past year, new forms have been used for purchase requests, surveys of supports, feedback from individuals and home agreements. All of the forms now have pictures on them and are designed to be used by the people ConneXu supports, with help from a member of the committee if needed.

Committee members have been visiting people ConneXu supports individually and gaining valuable feedback about how things are going.

The key is that it is the person's own feedback, they are the ones choosing the option from the pictures that reflects how they feel.

'We ask them if you like your staff being with you and, if someone can't talk, they can at least communicate,' Cory explains. 'We want to make sure that people are nice to you and that the food is good.'

The idea is that everyone is heard. As Grace says, 'if someone is non-verbal, they may be able to do thumbs up or down, or point to a picture. If the person is not happy, we give the form to Kate, our Quality Practice Manager, and she can take steps to make things better'.

One new form asks individuals what activities they would like to do. There are lots of photos of different activities such as shopping, visiting gardens, riding in race cars, travel, baking, rock climbing, and horse riding. Many individuals may not know or have thought of what is possible for them, and discussing the form helps to start that thought process.

The trials have gone well so far, and the group looks forward to the next step, which is to take the forms out to more people. The committee is really enjoying the work as they can see that it is making a difference in people's lives.

Supporting musical talent

A unique rock and pop band with six members is going from strength to strength. Band members have disabilities ranging from autism to Down Syndrome.

The band is called the Mutes (from Mars) and was formed seven years ago. It now has a wide repertoire of original songs and covers.

The musos are mentored and tutored by musician Samuel Benge who is contracted to support the six band members by A Supported Life, a niche residential provider in West Auckland. Samuel supports the band through rehearsals, individual teaching, song writing and directing and playing with the group on stage.

The musicians not only aspire to play great rock music but through a combination of musicianship and enthusiasm, they jump community created hurdles. They challenge people's perceptions of disability through music and performance.

The band inspires their peers within A Supported Life and in the many sector organisations and schools they have played in and for. Others can see anything is possible and that extraordinary things can be achieved beyond just 'having a life'.

The catch cry of the lead singer Miranda from the stage is, 'If we can do it – so can you!'

The Mutes have had many amazing adventures and one of the highlights was creating the 'Breaking Down the Barriers' project which had them performing and providing music workshops to students in local high schools.

The band play a wide range of mainstream gigs and sector events and have released two CDs, the latest in 2017 titled 'Martion Fuhtre'.

Visit the Mutes at www.mutes.co.nz



Carols make Halswell community sing

Carols by Treelight

An annual Carols by Treelight gathering is being held again this year in Halswell in Christchurch. The gathering provides an inclusive environment for St John of God Halswell residents and others in the community living with disability.

St John of God Halswell is a 60-room residential care facility which operates on a resident centred model of care known as My Life, and supports people to have engaging and fulfilling lives.

The basic aim of the Carols by Treelight event is to host a fun community gathering in Halswell supported by food vendors from the monthly community market. The design of the event has strong roots in St John of God Halswell's community development approach. This event also supports residents to join in activities they may otherwise be excluded from, and provides a platform where community members and residents can mix in a common space.



Making a difference at Rowan

Married couple Anne Marie and Duncan Pollock now live in their own cottage at Rowan, Taradale, with the level of support that Duncan needs.

As Duncan explains:

‘Living in our cottage makes a huge difference. It not only gives us our personal space, to live our lives together as husband and wife, but also gives me a sense of semi-independence, knowing that I don’t have to worry about support workers in the community.’

Duncan has been a resident at Rowan since 2006 and he and Anne Marie married in 2012. It was important to Anne Marie and Duncan to live as a married couple. With the support of family, Presbyterian Support East Coast and Rowan their cottage became a reality!

For Anne Marie, the cottage gives her a sense of peace, knowing she has somewhere to live.

Anne Marie and Duncan take an interest in the future of Rowan. Duncan is on the strategic development group ensuring input on behalf of flatters to the future of the service.

Anne Marie and Duncan live life to the full, including travelling abroad in 2015 and in March 2017.

As for the future, Duncan says, ‘It’s difficult to say what the future holds for us, just like it is difficult to say what tomorrow will bring. One thing we can say, is we will continue to do the things we enjoy, seeing our friends and family, our church family on Sundays, and our passion for cruising to various parts of the world’.



Half a century of support for John

Two Coromandel brothers, Nathan and Cameron Bate, who work for IDEA Services – have together spent nearly half a century supporting John to remain living in his local community and managing the challenges related to John’s autism, schizophrenia and intellectual disability.

John has been supported for 24 years by Nathan while Cameron has had his role for 22 years. The pair is two thirds of a team that works with John around the clock.

‘Consistency is key – sticking to the routine, and having any relief staff on the same page. It’s reassuring for John to have the routine in place,’ Nathan says.

Central to John’s support and happiness is a highly structured seven-day programme.

‘John has a very precise body clock. He knows when everything is due.’

After so many years together, Nathan says he is well aware of signals to watch for.

‘The important thing is dealing with challenging behaviour consistently. Sometimes there are no triggers, and you have to make decisions in seconds. That comes with experience; often it’s just about reading body language.’

Nathan says 42-year-old John has ‘mellowed with age’ and now counts on his support workers more than ever, following the death of his mother in January.

‘One of the most rewarding things was the relationship we helped John build with his family over time. We got him to the stage where he would happily sit with his mother, make her tea, give her a cuddle and kiss her goodbye.’

Nathan has had two stints in Australia but each time returned home to work with John.

‘Knowing him from a young age, to seeing where he is now, all the hard work has paid off. He has a far better quality of life, tolerates things now [that] he never would have when he was younger.’

Donna Mitchell, who is now IHC’s general manager of service development and strategy, initially brought the brothers into their roles. As Donna says, ‘It’s fantastic to have recently been back to see John, to see how happy he is and how well his life is going. It just goes to show what a difference well-tailored individual support, that has his best interests at heart, has made.’



John and Nathan.

No problem, you're welcome

At Tiaho Trust, one of New Zealand's only disabled-led organisations, we have been plotting and scheming, writing and filming and we've produced a training video called No Problem, You're Welcome.

When I say the title I can imagine saying it accompanied by a quick flick of my head, a wink of my eye and click of my tongue.

It's a training video for businesses to learn how to provide excellent service to disabled customers, clients and patients without inadvertently infuriating them.

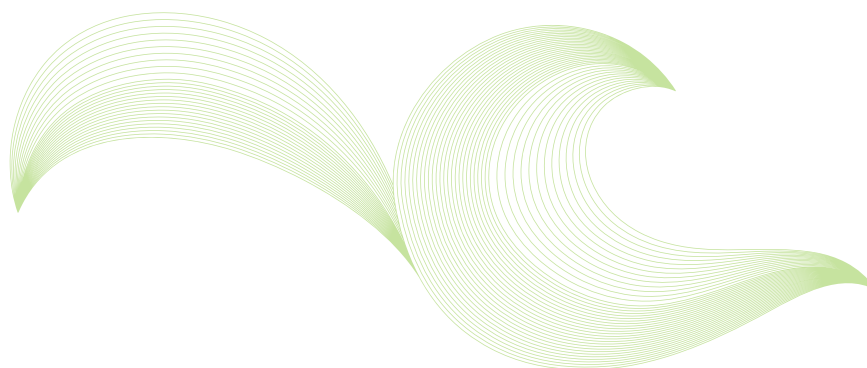
When you're in the business of social change, of readjusting attitudes and changing perceptions, you can get so caught up in the like-mindedness around you that you forget what a mammoth task social change really is.

We have also trained four disabled facilitators who will be contracted to deliver the training to health and disability providers, non-government and local government organisations.

The Whangarei District Council has recently engaged Tiaho Trust to deliver training to embellish their orientation training packages to new employees as well as their customer services team throughout the next 12 months.

Service providers, both commercial and non-commercial, can't be everything to everybody all of the time but after experiencing the 'No Problem, You're Welcome' training they will be able to treat their customers with the respect and dignity they deserve.

For more information go to the Tiaho website: <http://www.tiaho.org.nz/tools/resource/no-problem-youre-welcome-customer-service-disability-awareness-training> and contact Sheryl Kibblewhite: Sheryl@tiaho.org.nz or Jonny Wilkinson: jonny@tiaho.org.nz



Radio Gaga

The Radio Gaga show is a unique platform for people with disabilities to participate in their community, build confidence and learn new skills in communication, presentation, time management, planning, and teamwork.

Mel Jones (producer) and Josh Hastings (presenter) have been the driving force among the team of Radio Gaga presenters since the inception of the show.

‘It’s been a really good experience for me,’ Hastings says.

Every presenter lives with a disability and this is the foundation that makes Radio Gaga supreme. Usually disabled people’s voices are unheard on mainstream radio. Radio Gaga is breaking stereotypes and giving people with disabilities a self-directed environment to be heard.



The Radio Gaga team.

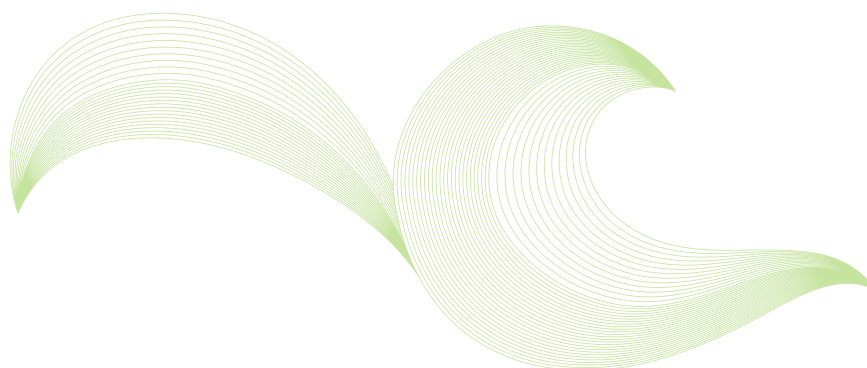
‘I’ve got a lot of confidence out of it and I’ve learned a lot about different disabilities which has made me more understanding of all kinds of people,’ Hastings said.

Renaissance Group founded Radio Gaga in October 2016. The show is dedicated to raising awareness about disability. Show presenters encourage listeners to live a fulfilling life by sharing their experiences as disabled people by showcasing their hobbies, talents and abilities.

Hastings explains, ‘I was scared when I started but now I’m honoured to be a part of making a difference for others. Disabled people are invited to join the radio show to find out for themselves what they can learn and get out of being on the radio’.

Renaissance sponsors Radio Gaga, a programme that is 100 percent produced and presented by people with disabilities.

Radio Gaga is aired every Wednesday at 1 pm on 104.6fm Auckland.



The kindling king

Phil Patel has a passion for kindling, it is something that he is very good at and something he enjoys spending his time doing. Phil lives at the Papatuanuku Independency Trust where he has a great workspace and spends time each day in his own business cutting, sorting and packing kindling.

Phil uses a kindling cracker and is safety conscious so wears his goggles, gloves and boots when working.

There is plenty of wood on supply as Dave, the Papatuanuku Independency Trust property guru, and his team have spent hours tidying up the property, pruning and cutting trees, creating a large pile of wood. Phil is part of this team and he is very proud to show you the ever-growing pile of wood that he has sorted.

The Trust is supporting Phil to start up and build his own kindling business; he already supplies kindling to a few local friends and co-residents. The Lions Club is also keen for Phil to get kindling ready for them to on-sell, Phil's skills in kindling cutting are recognised in his local community.



Phil Patel

Phil takes his money to the bank and is saving for his future; this is something he hasn't done all that much in the past but now takes pride in doing. People who buy his kindling are impressed with the quality and consistency in his work.

Consequently, Phil has a new-found confidence in himself.

