People and Communities

Family, friends, community—a good life
Newslines

Welcome to the third edition of ‘People and Communities’ magazine, and more inspirational stories about people’s challenges, successes and the lessons they learn along the way.

Many of these stories celebrate the importance of community spirit. We learn about a Perth mother whose contribution to the disability sector spans nearly five decades.

In another story, an Albany café owner explains how her strong sense of social justice, and her belief that all people should be supported to reach their potential, has resulted in increased employment opportunities for young people in the area.

The importance of planning for the future—the move from primary to secondary school and leaving the family home to live independently—is highlighted in some stories from the Perth region.

And in another story, a young Donnybrook woman has a plan that includes her goals to take part in the 2015 Special Olympics.

Read about the benefits which across-government collaboration have brought to an eight-year-old Wyndham boy’s daily schooling experience.

We also share the story of a man living in Torbay, a small semi-rural community located halfway between Denmark and Albany, who mentors a young man who shares his interest in working with machinery.

We hope you enjoy reading these stories and we look forward to your feedback on this edition of ‘People and Communities’.

Chris Yates
Acting Executive Director
Local Area Coordination

Mettle detector: mentoring and training have positive outcomes

George Renwick is a very determined person who is not prepared to let health issues stand in the way of his love of working with machinery.

Seven years ago, George and his family moved to Torbay, a small semi-rural community located halfway between Denmark and Albany.

Involved in the metal trades industry all his working life, the 58-year-old ran a heavy equipment plant hire business in the town. But five years ago, George was diagnosed with cerebellar ataxia, a condition that affects speech, balance, walking and muscle coordination.

The Renwick family’s LAC Helen Soerink said while George now needed support to do most things, their planning centred on how he could keep working in his home workshop for as long as possible.

George was interested in a reciprocal arrangement where he could share his metal trades experience with someone interested in the area while receiving the support he needed to continue working at home.

At George’s suggestion, Helen contacted the Great Southern Institute of Technology and liaised with TAFE metal trades lecturer David Christophers.

"Once David met George and visited the workshop, he happily agreed to proceed with the teaching and mentoring arrangement,” Helen said.

A young pre-apprentice, Jamie Kelly, accepted the opportunity to do the practical component of his course with George.

Jamie’s work was scheduled in blocks of one day a week from March to December 2011.

"I think David put a lot of effort into finding the right pre-apprentice to fit with my personal situation. "Without that effort, I don’t think the arrangement would have worked."

George mentored Jamie in boilermaking, welding, using different types of equipment and also taught him the importance of work safety.

"It was a perfect match,” George said.

"Once he was capable and proficient, Jamie was able to handle parts of the work I could no longer manage."

For Jamie, the opportunity to work with someone as experienced as George was invaluable.

George was impressed by Jamie’s enthusiasm and keen desire to learn as much as possible.

"Through one of my industry contacts in Perth, I was able to secure a boilermaking apprenticeship for Jamie," he said.

"I was absolutely delighted when Jamie started his apprenticeship earlier this year. "We still keep in touch and I’m hoping I will be able to secure further TAFE teaching and mentoring opportunities."

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**Setting goals key to achieving dreams**

Using a strengths-based, goal-oriented approach for planning a good life has worked well for 21-year-old Nicolina Dreaver.

Nicolina lives on a Donnybrook property where her family grows fruit and trains horses.

One of twins, Nicolina’s start in life was marked by severe infantile seizures and an early diagnosis of vision impairment.

By age eight, her vision issues were identified as being developmental in origin.

This meant Nicolina’s vision improved over the years and is now well-managed.

But the early seizures caused frontal lobe brain scarring which has resulted in lifelong challenges.

Nicolina’s mother Marilyn is a complex needs teacher and a strong advocate of education that focuses on people’s strengths and abilities to achieve positive outcomes.

“My advice to parents is never give up on the best options for their child,” Marilyn said.

“It sometimes takes courage to speak up and advocate on behalf of them. However, being well-informed and knowledgeable about services and support are essential in making things happen.

“Schooling was difficult for Nicolina but with support and mentoring she completed high school and went on to TAFE study, completing Certificate III in Education Support in April last year.”

Marilyn said it took 18 months of hard work for Nicolina to complete the course.

“This qualification means she can work as a teacher’s assistant,” she said.

“However, Nicolina has decided to pursue her passion for training horses.

“Setting goals, priorities and working to achieve them have been important in our planning process.

"When you have plans for what you want to do in life, it provides clarity and a vision for the future."

Building on the success of achieving her educational goal, Nicolina and her family sought other challenges including securing a place in equestrian events at the 2011 Special Olympics.

The Dreaver family’s LAC Faye Pedalina assisted by identifying funding opportunities that helped meet the costs of preparing for the equestrian events.

In 2010, as a way to help achieve her Special Olympics goal, Nicolina joined the Riding Develops Ability (RDA) club in Collie.

“Joining the club and participating with people from all walks of life was a tremendous confidence boost for Nicolina,” Marilyn said.

“In October 2011, Nicolina won one gold and one bronze medal at the Special Olympics in Perth. This was a fantastic achievement.”

Nicolina has continued her involvement with RDA where she now works as a volunteer and is currently training to become a coach.

“There are several levels of coaching and my training will allow me to work with small groups of people—including young children, teenagers and young adults,” Nicolina said.

“Part of my planning also includes participating in the 2015 Special Olympics and I’m already involved in Western Australia’s selection process.

"I feel really positive about achieving my goals and dreams."

Nicolina Dreaver riding Forget Not Sophie.
Clay dogs bark up the right tree

A love of ceramics looks like turning into a viable business opportunity for 36-year-old Warnbro resident Rebecca Johnston.

When she started classes at the Rockingham Community Art Room in 2007, Rebecca thought she could only draw stick people—but then her father showed her how to draw a dog.

“That's when I started producing clay dogs based on Pippa, a dog I used to own,” Rebecca said.

With the art group's support, she experimented with design, materials and glazing until she developed her ideal clay dog which she now displays at various metropolitan art exhibitions.

The Victoria Park Centre for the Arts has some of Rebecca's clay dogs for sale in its gift shop. She also hopes to find a suitable Fremantle outlet and set up a stall during market days at either Balingup or Nannup.

Since beginning production in November 2010, Rebecca does her best to meet people buying her clay dogs, joking she wants to “make sure they all go to good homes”.

At the suggestion of one of the community art room artists, Rebecca is now exploring the possibility of producing much larger dogs as public art.

Rebecca's public art dogs could provide pet owners with a place to securely attach dog leads—through rings in their necks, forming a collar.

To determine production costs, she is working with her fellow artists on a prototype park dog. Rebecca is also keen to ensure the quirky appeal of her dogs is captured in larger versions.

The community art room coordinator has arranged for a land developer to donate $1,000 towards the project. If it goes well, the developer will consider installing one of the clay dogs on-site.

“I'm hoping with one of the larger dogs on display, I might receive orders from other developers and local councils,” Rebecca said.

"Later this year I am planning to produce dog key rings, jewellery such as brooches and Christmas dogs in red and green colours.

"With the assistance of the Rockingham Community Art Room facilitator, we are hoping to develop a website promoting my quirky dogs to the wider community."

With Rebecca's future looking bright, her plans also include joining the Rockingham Regional Arts Group to expand her connections within the local art community.

Community-based TAFE training raises students’ expectations

Six young adults with disability living in the Karratha area successfully completed a short, specially-designed TAFE program last year.

Arranged in part through planning in relation to training, development and extended learning goals, the program included three modules from the Certificate 1 TAFE computing course.

“For many of the participants it was their first TAFE course,” LAC Ally Krueger said.

“The students learnt about the internet, using email and preparing Word documents. However, all participants—and their parents—reported fantastic outcomes that extended well beyond the subject material covered in the program.

"Outcomes included increased self-esteem, empowerment, a genuine sense of achievement and optimism for future learning opportunities."

Ally said that all participants had experienced limited access to further education opportunities locally.

Although the course was not organised with employment opportunities in mind, all of the young people now expressed an interest in exploring options and gaining skills that would help them in the workforce.

To celebrate the success of the TAFE program, the Karratha LAC team arranged a celebration dinner for the students at a local restaurant.

“It was a terrific evening with so many reasons to celebrate,” Ally said.

"I'm hopeful that given the success of this program, further community-based TAFE learning opportunities for students with disability will be available this year,” Ally added.

Big Plan supports youth with disability

This plan assists school leavers or young adults with disability to map out their future.

The process is similar to person-centred planning, in that family and friends participate and provide support to plan activities and contribute to discussions.

The Big Plan is an opportunity for individuals, regardless of their ability, to plan for the future.

For more information: contact your LAC.

Community and Family Living Plans

These Commission initiatives aim to provide planning and support options for individuals and families with disability.

Community Living includes a broader range of alternative community living arrangements for adults.

Family Living—an allied initiative—aims to enhance and build family well-being and assist family members with disability to lead a good life while living at home.

For more information: contact your LAC.
Two years ago, Michael Ralston moved into his own home in Gosnells—and now couldn’t be happier.

“I love having my own space and being independent,” he said.

“I work four days a week and I find living close to public transport is great because I catch the train and then cycle the rest of the way to work.”

Michael said with a support network of family and friends around him, he feels safe and secure in his own home.

“We were quite happy having Michael living at home and there was no big push for independent living,” his mother, Ann Ralston said.

But she was aware of the need to start planning for his future.

In 2007, Michael, his family and their LAC started the process.

“We looked at so many properties before we found the right one,” Ann said.

“Michael’s unit had to be in our local area, close to shops and it had to be somewhere where he felt at home and secure.”

Ann said it took a year to find the right home for 39-year-old Michael. A housing agency bought the property and rented it to Michael, in accordance with the public housing rental process.

“It’s wonderful for the family to see Michael happily settled in his own home,” Ann said. “By using person-centred planning tools, Michael has been able to make informed choices and plan for his future.”

Michael has about 24 support network members who care about him and take an interest in his well-being. There is also a smaller working group of six people (including Michael and a facilitator) who meet every six weeks to discuss what’s happening and what needs to be done as part of the planning process. The working group also sends out a newsletter to all support network members.

Ann said the process was working well and regular meetings remind Michael he has a support network.

“Michael has also been very careful about personal safety issues—another important consideration in the planning process,” she said.

“From living at home with the family, Michael developed the general housekeeping skills he needs, such as cleaning, washing, and ironing, to manage in his own home.”

When it comes to shopping and meal preparation, Michael receives some agency support one day a week. As a result of the planning process, Ann believes Michael is coping amazingly well since moving to his own home.

“We miss him terribly but he has gained greater self-confidence and is developing the skills he needs to maintain independent living,” she said.

“A while back the roof at his home was leaking so he called the housing agency and organised the maintenance work.

“As parents, we wanted to make sure Michael was happy living independently and that he was comfortable in his own home.

“We also wanted to make sure he had people look out for him when we are no longer around.”

The best advice for parents dealing with similar situations, according to Ann, is to make things happen for their son or daughter.

“You can’t wait for other people to ask you if you need assistance,” she said.

“You have to be prepared to take the first steps.

“Seek out people who might be able to help, get as much information as you can and start planning early.”

When asked what he liked most about living independently, Michael said it was being able to do what he wanted, when he wanted.

“Moving into my own home provided me with a different lifestyle,” he said. “It’s been a good move.”
Making the grade in Wyndham

Imagine the challenges faced by an eight-year-old with autism and an intellectual disability, living in one of Western Australia’s most remote communities. Josiah Bambra lives in Wyndham, the State’s most northern town, with a population of about 800.

However, help is at hand for Josiah and his day-to-day schooling experience, thanks to the Local Area Coordination program. LAC Deb Craigie assists Josiah’s parents Priscilla and Joseph and their extended family, helping to ensure Josiah attends school on a regular basis.

Deb said the importance of Josiah’s school attendance went beyond learning in a classroom environment. He is encouraged to play with other children, participate in the school routine and learn social skills.

In addition to Deb’s assistance, visiting community and health professionals provide services including advocacy and additional family support that help improve the school experience for Josiah and other students with disability. Deb noted that service providers generally travel from Kununurra—a one-hour drive each way.

“But it’s not uncommon for some service providers to travel from Darwin, Broome and Perth,” Deb said.

“By providing these services, we try to ensure students with disability have every opportunity to learn and become part of an inclusive, vibrant school community.

“Teaching staff are very supportive and school psychologists also offer advice and strategies to address any concerns families may have about their children.”

Deb said solutions to more practical issues, such as transport to and from school, can be resolved through a team approach.

“We believe this approach has lifelong benefits to students and their families,” she said.

Grants program helps Geraldton community make a splash

The grants are provided as part of the State Government’s Count Me In: Disability Future Directions strategy.

For many years, the centre catered for swimmers with disability but the existing equipment was in need of replacement. There had also been difficulties with wheelchairs and hoists being unavailable at times due to maintenance issues.

Funding allowed the centre to buy two new wheelchairs (one wet, one dry), a change table and a mobile pool hoist.

All equipment and products were purchased locally and delivered in December last year.

Recognition for a lifetime of contribution

Orelia resident Vicki de Haas has been awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia after her contribution to the State’s disability sector over almost half a century.

The 84-year-old credits the honour to her son Gerard—the youngest of her five children—because it was his arrival that inspired her to make a difference for people with disability.

“In the early 1960s, when Gerard was growing up, there were limited services for young people with intellectual disability and their families,” Vicki said.

“It became clear to me I had to be proactive in trying to open up opportunities for Gerard.

“I was keen to raise community awareness and actively began lobbying local, state and federal government agencies along the way.

“I wanted to help ensure young people who live with intellectual disability have prospects for a brighter future and opportunities for productive and enjoyable lives in their local communities.

"There have been many positive changes for people with disability over the past decades," Vicki said.

“However, I think everyone would agree, overall, there is more that can be done.

“Volunteering and helping others is one way people can make a positive difference in their local community.

“When people volunteer their time, they are making a connection with their community and everyone benefits.”

My Way offers choice to have it your way

Disability Services Minister Helen Morton has confirmed the State Government’s commitment to putting choice and control where it belongs—in the hands of people with disability, families and carers— with the July announcement of four My Way project locations.

My Way, which will be implemented in close partnership with the non-government sector, aims to improve the choice, flexibility and control that people with disability have over their supports and services.

The project will be implemented in Perth’s Hills and Cockburn/Kwinana LAC service areas and also in the Goldfields and the Lower South West.

People living in these locations, who are eligible for Commission-funded and provided services, can choose to take part in the three-year project. Community information sessions and individual meetings have been held since July.

My Way Executive Director Robyn Massey said the project would inform how disability supports and services will be provided in the future.

“My Way will support individuals, families and carers to take control, to the extent that they desire, in designing and managing the supports and services they need to live a good life in their local community,” Ms Massey said.

For more information visit www.disability.wa.gov.au > Disability reform > My Way or email myway@dsc.wa.gov.au.
Playing the piano has had a major impact on 14-year-old Sam Tan’s quality of life. Living in Winthrop with his parents and younger brother, he was diagnosed with autism and intellectual disability at age four.

Sam’s mother Michelle started teaching him piano as a five-year-old which led to improvements in his education through mainstream government primary school classes.

Initially, the early primary years were difficult in terms of Sam adjusting to new environments and teachers.

But from Year 4 onwards, things became easier because teachers could see improvements in Sam’s ability to take part in mainstream education.

"Having fellow students and teachers acknowledge Sam’s musical and artistic abilities helped him feel more confident within himself, accepted by the school community and more able to participate in other activities with his peers," Michelle said.

"When Sam reached grade two in the Australian Music Education Board syllabus, he decided to learn musical themes from the movies and TV series he watched. "He also loves Christmas carols and has learnt about 20 so far."

Sam played the piano at class assemblies, end-of-year concerts and local church events.

"Sam’s musical abilities have had a positive influence on other areas, including motor skills," Michelle said.

"In particular, his swimming skills have improved and he seems better equipped to understand the speed and rhythm of each stroke."

When asked about transition planning for secondary school, Michelle said the process had been extremely useful.

"We visited a number of schools and talked to staff about Sam and his needs," she said.

"Like all parents, we wanted a school environment that would help our son deal with life’s challenges and provide courses to maximise his future employment opportunities."

As part of the transition process, Sam attended therapy sessions to improve his ability to read school maps, making him better equipped to navigate school buildings and move from classroom to classroom.

He also received support to help him socialise, cope with bullying that might occur and handle money and buy lunch at the school cafeteria.

"Sam loved Year 8," Michelle said. "He had a teacher’s aide in some classes and studied independently in others."

"Every day, Sam looked forward to going to school. Guided by Sam’s Year 8 experience, Michelle said some aspects of his Year 9 schooling would be handled differently.

Changes have included more opportunities for Sam to attend mainstream classes in his favourite subjects—photography and cooking—and ensuring he participated in the school camp.

Parents in similar situations should give children the opportunity to experience music, preferably at a young age, according to Michelle, whether it’s learning an instrument or singing in the school choir.

"While Sam’s vocabulary and speech is limited, singing helps stimulate his learning," she said. "He can memorise a whole song if he really likes it."

"Sam practices the piano nearly every day. He loves the routine that encourages him to improve his playing."

In turn, Sam’s playing boosts his self-esteem, pride in his achievements and sense of belonging in the community.

"Every child and their situation is different," Michelle said. "But I feel it’s important to maximise your child’s exposure to a range of learning opportunities and social activities from a young age."

"We travel a lot but when Sam was younger, travelling was difficult for him."

"Over time, Sam became less afraid of new experiences and more confident dealing with noise and the hustle and bustle of new places and new people."
Art with heart inspires creative community spirit in Margaret River

A six-week art project set up by parents of young adults with disability in Margaret River has been such a success it is still running three years later.

Artzability was originally developed after discussions with families about their planning goals and how they could be achieved, according to LAC Valerie Mansfield.

“Families wanted to use art as another way for their sons and daughters to connect with their local community, learn new skills and develop social friendships,” she said.

Margaret River parents Gail Warren and Trina Duggan were the driving forces behind the program.

“It provides young adults and their support workers with opportunities to socialise, meet local artists, chat with volunteers and experience the joy and sense of accomplishment that comes with developing your artistic abilities,” Gail said.

“There is no right or wrong way when it comes to expressing yourself creatively.”

Local arts worker Margot Edwards facilitates the activities.

She said the ongoing challenge was to provide a balanced, weekly arts program that created an environment where participants could come together as a cohesive social group.

“Our aim is to provide projects based on the group’s ideas and abilities, as well as fostering strong social connections and friendships that extend beyond our art sessions,” Margot said.

“Having a network of friends is important for everyone, especially young people.”

In early 2011, the Augusta-Margaret River Shire asked Artzability to produce work for the Banners in the Terrace Competition, one of the State’s biggest community arts projects.

Each year, the competition brings St Georges and Adelaide terraces to life with works painted by community groups, art groups, school children and professional and non-professional artists. Each local government can enter one banner.

“Developing the concept involved a lot of group discussion and planning with our banner artist Dea Haddow,” Margot said.

“Everyone contributed their ideas and once the artwork had been decided, each participant painted a section of the banner.

“As a group, we were all excited when our Margaret River banner was displayed in Perth in October last year.”

Artzability has several activities planned for 2012 including graffiti art and repeat performances of its play Alice in Southwesterland for pre-primary school students and childcare centres in Margaret River.

“The play is about Alice, who is non-verbal,” Margot said. “She gets lost in Southwesterland, makes her way to the tourist bureau and eventually meets up with the Mad Hatter, the March Hare and other characters.

“Activities such as these provide opportunities for our Artzability group members to socialise, have fun working together and contribute to the local community.

“While Artzability started as a parent-driven program, it’s very much participant-driven now.”

Future planning

Person-centred planning is an individualised approach to planning which takes into account a person’s unique circumstances and ideas for the future.

The planning involves building on natural support systems within the family and community by gathering together people who are keen to have an on-going involvement in helping a person with disability plan for the future.

For more information: contact your LAC.
Taekwondo kick-starts teen’s achievements

Martial arts have played a key role in helping 14-year-old Braeden Sprigg who has high functioning autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Diagnosed at age five, the combination meant that, along with extremely high energy levels, Braeden had behavioural issues and difficulties interacting with other children in social situations.

“Braeden was a handful and, on the advice of his paediatrician, it was suggested joining a martial arts club might provide a structured environment where he could channel his energies,” his mother Merlene said.

In 2006, Braeden joined the local Narrogin taekwondo club, training once a week. From the outset, he enjoyed the routine of learning specific sets and patterns associated with the series of belts studied—starting with the white belt and culminating in the black belt.

While benefiting from the physical aspects of training, Braeden also began to enjoy being part of the taekwondo community.

“With each taekwondo grading, Braeden was promoted to the next belt level,” Merlene said.

“While the grading process is physically and mentally demanding, it really helped build Braeden’s social confidence and self-esteem as he had to demonstrate his taekwondo skills in front of examiners, instructors and fellow students.”

Competing and succeeding in social situations was an achievement for Braeden while taekwondo taught him the importance of being able to focus on activities.

“Braeden’s school teachers have commented on how well he has learnt to self-regulate,” Merlene said.

“Along with reduced behavioural issues, Braeden now accepts you have to practise to improve in school subjects, too.”

Once Braeden reached blue belt level, he began attending classes twice a week—and Merlene started learning taekwondo so she could help him practise at home.

Building on his grading successes, Braeden began entering tournaments, competing in activities that demonstrated his ability to master complex patterns and sparring exercises.

His ability to focus on taekwondo, in a range of different environments, and in front of strangers provided an additional confidence boost.

“Receiving his black belt in May last year was a tremendous accomplishment,” Merlene said.

“As Braeden is now 14, he is eligible to become an assistant coach.

“I currently hold a coaching position, so Braeden and I are able to take classes under the direction of our head instructor.

“Providing coaching has helped develop Braeden’s sense of responsibility, as well as earning him respect among his peers.

“Without a doubt, taekwondo has been instrumental in Braeden’s many achievements and continues to pay dividends in all aspects of his life.”

Norseman to Esperance cycling event benefits local community

The Clontarf Foundation’s South East Coast Football Academy (SEFA) raised $10,000 for local organisations after a fundraising bike ride in November last year.

Three people using the Commission’s Local Area Coordination program were among community members who benefited from the fundraising activities.

Jaimen Hudson and Glenn Neville received donations that will help them participate in Walk On, an intensive exercise program developed in partnership with Spinal Cord Injuries Australia and Edith Cowan University’s Joondalup campus.

Clontarf has also invited Jaimen and Glenn to talk to students about the importance of spinal cord safety and staying safe when participating in recreational activities.

Deborah McKean was given a $1,000 donation to buy an iPad and communication program for her 16-year-old daughter Emma, who has autism and is non-verbal.

Esperance LAC Shaun Beros attended the SEFA awards night, describing the evening’s highlight as the presentation of certificates representing money raised by Aboriginal students involved in the fundraising event.

Perth to Broome great bike hike

The Fairholme Disability Support Group is ready to take a bike hike—all for a good cause.

From 19 August to 15 September, 12 riders will travel almost 2,500km from Perth to Broome supporting projects for people with disability in the local communities they visit.

“Family, friends, community—a good life


People can also specify which community, project or rider to support.
Evocative portrait invites reflection

Eighteen-year-old Ballajura resident Jarrod de Wind has been immortalised in a painting called Do you see what I see?

A finalist in the City of Perth’s Black Swan Prize for Portraiture, artist Jacqui Blight also submitted it for the 2011 Archibald Prize, one of Australia’s oldest and best-known visual arts awards.

The painting was shown in Melbourne at the Hidden Faces of the Archibald, an exhibition highlighting selected works by Victorian artists who entered the competition but were not chosen for the official prize.

Jarrod’s parents Priscilla and Gerry provided the following reflections on their son’s portrait.

“Do you see what I see? is such a meaningful and powerful title for Jarrod’s portrait,” they wrote.

“As his parents, this rhetorical question resonates within us. We are deeply touched by Jacquie’s portrait of Jarrod and even more so that his gaze beckoned the same question of her.

“Jarrod is the epitome of innocence and the embodiment of our family values and faith.

“He attends Mass every Sunday and most often alongside all his siblings. It is truly an amazing sight to see his awe-inspiring gaze as he receives Holy Communion.

“This year Jarrod will turn 19. He is unable to speak or walk unaided. It would be any parent’s perfectly natural reaction to ask why and to do everything possible to find that miracle cure.

“As time unfolded we began to accept that this was how things were meant to be. Jarrod’s calm and peaceful demeanor runs deep to his very core.

“We feel blessed to have such a pure and innocent soul placed among us. He brings out the best in all of us. Whenever we are together as a family, he is in high spirits, interacting and enjoying the fun and laughter.

“Jarrod is everybody’s best friend. We know we can share our secrets with him and he will never betray our trust.

“Although he has no outstanding academic or sporting achievements, Jarrod is a great teacher of life’s lessons in acceptance, compassion, patience, resilience, selflessness, and unconditional love.”

Bunbury community support makes a world of difference

Six-year-old Kasey Goddard is getting out and about more easily these days, thanks to the generosity of her local community.

Unable to sit unaided because of very low muscle tone, Kasey has multiple disabilities and needs assistance in all aspects of her care meaning positional and wheelchair support is necessary.

“To get Kasey to school each day, I had to lift Kasey out of her wheelchair and into the car seat,” mother Toni Price said.

“As Kasey began to outgrow her car seat, matched with a new wheelchair that was not collapsible, we needed a wheelchair-accessible vehicle.”

In March 2010, Toni and partner Cliff Goddard, along with the family’s LAC Kylie Pettit, started discussing the best way of obtaining a modified vehicle.

Toni and Kylie began exploring funding options from Lotterywest and the Independent Living Centre (ILC), looked at the Technology Assisting Disability WA website for accessible vehicle sales and spoke to community agencies such as Rotary.

“Through the Rotary connection, the media picked up on our quest for a modified vehicle for Kasey’s family,” Kylie said.

“A story was published in the local Bunbury paper and, from that point on, the momentum kept building.

“I was contacted by many local community members wishing to make donations and a magazine offered to print Kasey’s story and provide a $1,000 donation.”

In July 2010, Toni was contacted by a local resident with fundraising experience who wanted to assist by organising a monster garage sale.

“With her assistance, we began collecting community donations to be sold at a garage sale at St Mary’s Hall,” Toni said.

“We were absolutely overwhelmed by the donations we received—our house was overflowing with donations.

“The local Lions club also held a sausage sizzle over the weekend with profits going to Kasey.

“We raised more than $10,000 from the garage sale. Unsold goods were sold at smaller, weekend garage sales held over subsequent weekends.

“By December 2010, the family had raised more than $20,000 with a further $7,500 coming from an ILC grant. By January 2011, two large private donations took the total figure to almost $50,000.

“The vehicle, a new VW Caddy Maxi with modifications, was delivered in May 2011.

“As well as meeting Kasey’s needs well into adulthood, the modified vehicle has greatly improved her quality of life. It’s just so much easier for the family to get out and about together.”
Albany café demonstrates fair go for people of all abilities

A commitment to training and employing people with disability saw the Vancouver Café named joint winner of the 2011 Dr Louisa Alessandri Award for Excellence at the Commission’s annual Count Me In Awards in December.

Sharing the honour with the City of Melville, the award is given to the most outstanding winner from all categories. The Albany café also won the Barry MacKinnon Award for Employment for an inclusive employment project.

Café owner Alison Teede said she has always had a strong sense of social justice and a belief people should be treated equally and provided with support to reach their potential.

With a background in teaching, Alison has also taught speech and literacy for Activ in Albany, later becoming its employment and welfare officer.

“I have always had an interest in disability matters,” Alison said. “When I started work as an LAC in 1996, I felt I had come home. I loved being an LAC.

“In 2008, I left the Commission and began to explore other options and in June 2009 I bought the Vancouver Café.

“While I had absolutely no experience in running a business, I have always also loved cooking and meeting people.”

Alison said running a café now employing about 20 people had been challenging.

Shortly after opening the business, the Great Southern Institute of Technology, Great Southern Grammar and Albany Secondary Education Support Centre approached her to provide training and work experience opportunities for students with disability.

“Drawing upon my personal philosophy and LAC background, I was able to provide students with a welcoming, nurturing environment that also challenged them to raise their workplace expectations,” Alison said.

“I have found people are likely to underestimate the abilities of people with disability.

“They tend to walk on eggshells and make allowances when really they should be treated much the same as other employees.

“In my café, all staff are encouraged to expand their horizons and take on more demanding work roles including front-of-house responsibilities—probably one of the most difficult management areas.”

Alison strongly believes when staff are supported they are able to achieve more.

“Through my own experience, I have found if you raise your expectations, your staff will work hard to achieve them,” she said.

The sense of fulfilment and benefits that come from providing valued and meaningful opportunities for people with disability have been many and varied.

Two young people who originally started as work experience students have taken up traineeships in the café.

Amy Griffiths’ and Tyson Lane’s stories are on page 22.

Alison also recalled the story of a family recently visiting the café—their daughter had the same disability as the young woman managing the front-of-house position.

“On leaving, the mother thanked me for giving the young woman an opportunity to prove herself in the workplace,” she said.

“She also said her daughter’s own expectations had now been raised as a result of visiting the café.”

Alison said she felt privileged to receive an award that increased people’s awareness of the need for inclusive communities, helping to develop friendships and a fair go for everyone.

“Receiving the award was also an important way to formally acknowledge the work of my dedicated café staff,” Alison said.

“I hope it encourages other employers to provide greater workplace opportunities for people with disability.

“It’s important all people feel valued and part of their local community and have the opportunity to expand their social networks.”
Café work experience brews up traineeships

Twenty-three-year-old Tyson Lane is enjoying the opportunities working in a bustling Albany café is providing for him.

"I met café owner Alison Teede when I started my TAFE hospitality course," he said.

"From that meeting, I went on to become part of the first group of work experience students at her Vancouver Café."

Alison provided workplace experience opportunities for students by opening her café every Tuesday night over a three-week period. On these nights, the café was staffed by students with disability.

Not long after Tyson completed his work experience, he began a TAFE traineeship.

"From the beginning, I was impressed by Tyson's outstanding personal qualities and his abilities," Alison said.

"He's a delightful young man and I couldn't believe Tyson had never had any previous working opportunities."

"There are always minor hiccups in a traineeship but Tyson really impressed me with his commitment to overcoming obstacles and fulfilling his potential."

Tyson has recently finished his traineeship, working his way up from basic food preparation duties to dealing with front-of-house responsibilities.

"I really enjoy working at the café and I'm carrying out duties I never thought I would be able to manage," Tyson said.

"Alison is also encouraging me to broaden my horizons by taking on additional employment in the hospitality industry."

"I feel really positive about what the future holds for me."

It wasn't until 17-year-old Amy Griffiths took part in a work experience program at Albany's Vancouver Café that she decided what to do after leaving high school.

"I just loved working at the café," Amy said.

"I liked the atmosphere and I enjoyed working with the staff."

When her work experience finished, café owner Alison Teede, offered her paid employment—which she happily accepted.

In December last year, Amy began her traineeship, working part-time at the café while receiving on-the-job assessment by TAFE staff.

Alison described Amy as an amazing young woman who is developing workplace skills through her traineeship and café responsibilities.

"Amy was already very good at making cakes and muffins, needing very little assistance in this food preparation area," she said.

"It's an area Amy is very interested in and she helps me with some of my catering jobs."

"She's an absolute gem—with her mainly bright, bubbly personality and positive attitude to work, Amy is a valued member of our café team."

Through her TAFE training and café experience, Amy has learnt the importance of social and communication skills, which will help her after completing her traineeship.

"With my traineeship, I feel as if I am really achieving something in my life," Amy said.

Collie walking group takes up the Bibbulmun Track challenge

Keen bushwalkers from Anglicare’s Bridges program in Collie are putting their best foot forward, taking on the challenge of the Bibbulmun Track.

Providing support services to people with disability to help them achieve their personal goals, aspirations and potential, the Bridges program has been operating for nearly eight years.

It also helps people gain skills for independent living, such as budgeting, using an ATM, shopping and cooking.

People using the program are also encouraged to get out in the community and consider voluntary work in areas that interest them.

"Through our individual planning sessions with young men, a shared personal goal was to participate in more challenging, blokey recreational activities such as bushwalking and camping," senior support worker Sheryl Smith said.

The program recruited support workers who were keen bushwalkers and the walking group evolved over the past year to maintain a core group of 15—mainly young men aged between 19 and 24.

Members of the local community are also encouraged to join the walking group.

"Together we started planning to walk the Bibbulmun Track in manageable stages," Sheryl said.

"We undertook smaller walks designed to increase people's fitness levels and built their knowledge on the bush, camping and survival skills."

"These activities were also designed to foster social cohesion within the group."

"The group also formed a social club, undertaking fundraising activities that would help cover expenses associated with future bushwalks."

About 125km of the track has already been walked with the Department of Environment and Conservation allowing support vehicles into some areas, also providing access to huts outside scheduled times.

During the summer months, group members keep fit through walks near Collie's Wellington Dam and along Bunbury beaches.

"In January our group covered a further 19km of the track—starting out from Albany and heading towards Denmark," Sheryl said.

"While the extreme heat prevented us covering greater distances, the group had a fantastic time."

The Bridges program supports people living in the Great Southern and South West areas of the State, including Bunbury, Collie, Katanning and Narrogin.

For more information: please phone 9845 6666 or visit www.anglicarewa.org.au > Community Services > Community Services (including Crisis Support) > Bridges.

Independent Living Centre of Western Australia

The Independent Living Centre of Western Australia (ILCWA) is a not-for-profit organisation located in Perth. With teams of experienced health professionals, staff provide people with disability mobility and accessibility services to meet their needs and maximise quality of life. ILCWA also provides country services and has a schedule of visits to regional areas.

For more information: phone 9381 0600, 1300 885 886 (for assistive equipment and technology services), 1800 052 222 (for respite and Carelink services), email general@ilc.com.au or country@ilc.com.au or visit www.ilc.com.au .

Family, friends, community—a good life
Commission updates

Activ library’s new chapter in Wembley

Looking for the Commission’s library? Activ library recently moved to bigger, brighter premises at 327 Cambridge Street, Wembley.

Ample free parking is available and shops and cafés are within easy walking distance.

A valuable community information resource, the library provides material on intellectual disability, autism, developmental delay and learning difficulties.

For people using the Local Area Coordination program in regional and remote areas of the State, LACs can borrow resources on their behalf.

For more information: ask your LAC, phone 9387 0458, email library@activ.asn.au or visit www.activ.asn.au/parentportal or www.activ.asn.au/library .

Air travel tips for people with disability

Ask your LAC for a copy of this Commission publication.

Building accessible homes bolstered

Under a new Commission strategy, the housing industry is being encouraged to design and build homes with better access for people with disability.

Known as Liveable Homes, the aim is to increase awareness, educate and influence change among housing designers, builders and architects.

The resource package was also developed for people designing new homes or renovating existing homes.

The initiative has the goal of increasing the number of new homes built to an accessible standard—a priority area in the State Government’s Count Me In strategy.

For more information: phone 9426 9311, email liveablehomes@dsc.wa.gov.au or visit www.liveablehomes.net.au .

Grand plan: improving access and inclusion

Did you know Disability Access and Inclusion Plans (DAIPs) are a requirement under the Disability Services Act 1993 (amended 2004)?

Under the Act, state and local government agencies develop and implement plans to improve access and inclusion in the community for people with disability, families and carers.

DAIPs provide a planned and systematic way to progressively improve access and inclusion by looking at six outcome areas: information, services and events, facilities and buildings, staff awareness, grievance processes and consultations.

For more information: contact your LAC, phone 9426 9623, freecall 1800 998 214, TTY 9426 9315, contact the National Relay Service on 13 36 77, email dsc@dsc.wa.gov.au or visit www.disability.wa.gov.au > Publications and links > Disability Access and Inclusion Plan resources.