



Title: Dreams do come true!

Category: Mental & Social Wellbeing

Club Name: Macksville Ex Services Club

Entrant: Judith Ward

1. **Provide an outline of the program, project or cause that addresses each of the following aspects:**
 - a. **The program/project/cause objectives**
 - b. **The support the club provided, i.e. was it financial, in-kind, staff volunteers or use of club facilities?**
 - c. **A timeline of activities/events**
 - d. **Any developments made since implementation (for example: if the support spans multiple years, how has the program grown? Will the club provide support again? Will the program be enhanced in the future?)**

Our Club prides itself in offering employment and training opportunities within our community. From school based work placement, employment agency training and disability services work experience, if we can accommodate learning within the workplace, we do our best.

This leads us to the wonderful story of Lee Funnell, who is a well known local identity, residing in the area for 55 years. Lee has many interests and hobbies including cooking, sewing, knitting and her beloved footy!

It has been a long time dream of Lee's to have a job and work in mainstream employment, this has been difficult for her due to a disability that in the past has prevented her from gaining employment.

Olivia Noble from Lee's disability provider Bluebird Support Services, approached our CEO, Judith Ward, regarding possible regular work experience for Lee in our Bistro kitchen. Olivia was concerned that Lee was feeling lost and restless since her previous disability based employment ended. She dreamed of working in a real kitchen with people not just like herself. It was decided that Lee would come and do a few hours work volunteer work experience each week.

2. **Provide a brief insight into why this program, project or cause was supported by the club. In your answer, summarise:**
 - a. **How the project, program or cause was first presented to the club. For example, did a member present it to the Board or Executive team, was it part of a ClubGRANTS submission, did it come from a local business or the community based on a need, was a survey conducted to identify areas of community need, etc.**
 - b. **Why it was important to the club to support this community need.**

It was important for us to give Lee this opportunity to work in our Club and feel a sense of belonging and purpose.

Lee has been working in disability based employment since leaving her special education school as a teen. She worked as a seamstress in the Kempsey Shelter Workshop and then at Phoenix Cafe in Bowraville until it closed. Over the years Lee has achieved many training certificates and qualifications in administration and hospitality hoping that one day she would be able to use her skills in mainstream employment and be provided a job for her abilities.

Bluebird Support Services has involved Lee in many different activities and programs, but she missed working and interacting with the public. Lee's independence is also very important, she wanted her own income and be able to support herself and help her much loved elderly father.

Lee loved coming for work experience at the Club, it was the highlight of her week. She would help make coffee, do kitchen prep, assist with Meals on Wheels service and help with the cleaning. The staff enjoyed their shifts with Lee and the patrons delighted in seeing her at the Club. It was soon very obvious to all of us that we needed Lee as much as she needed us and a plan was hatched between ourselves, Bluebird and CHESS Employment to offer Lee part time employment of 15 hours each week. Lee was ecstatic when we told her the news and she felt a great deal of pride that she was a valued member of our team.

One of Lee's most important jobs each week is to make her delicious jam drops, which are a favourite here at the Club. She makes a big batch each week with them selling out very quickly. Lee also wanted to master the skill of pouring a beer and with a bit of practice and a step stool she has been able to achieve this.

Lee is still keen to learn and improve her skills signing up with ETC training services to complete a Cert 3 in Hospitality. All the staff are very engaged and involved in training Lee and helping her in the workplace, she is keen and enthusiastic to learn new skills and techniques. She is a pleasure to have in the workplace and her smile and enthusiasm is contagious.

Lee's independence has also increased since working at the Club, she gets herself to and from work and has recently moved into her own unit which is a major life achievement.

3. Provide an outline of the positive impact the club's contribution had on the community.

Combined with Bluebird Support Services our main goal in providing Lee with employment was to improve the social acceptance of people with a disability and to foster integration into the workforce.

Since Lee has started her employment, other clients of Bluebird have engaged in activities here at the Club. They have weekly Bingo sessions where everyone is encouraged to participate in drawing the numbers and calling them out over the PA.

We also hold regular group cooking and cake decorating classes, where the Bluebird clients are encouraged to make their own pizzas and sweet creations while being supported by members of our team. The benefits are twofold, engaging the Bluebird participants with new skills in a fun environment and giving our staff the opportunity to assist and engage with a wider cross section of the community. Inclusion is essential, it is central to equality and enriches society. By providing opportunities for people with disabilities we hope to ensure they are seen, valued, and appreciated for their talents and accomplishments, just like those without disabilities.

TELL US
YOUR
STORY



4. Add any credits here (optional).

Bluebird Support Services

CHESS Connect

ETC

Verto

Novaskill

Macksville Ex Services Club staff

Judith Ward CEO

Lyndel Sutton Administration Supervisor

5. Supporting material:

4 x images