

# *iAccord*

AUTUMN 2021



ST JOHN OF GOD

Accord

*Hospitality | Compassion | Respect | Justice | Excellence*

We're there for you

# CEO Message

## Lisa Evans

CEO, SJG Accord



### Welcome to the autumn edition of iAccord

It's hard to believe that we have been living with COVID-19 for over a year now. So much has changed, we are all different and SJG Accord is a different service in many ways. In the last 12 months we have adapted and adjusted our services while always staying true to our tag line of, 'we're there for you'. Thank you to everyone for being so cooperative with all the changes and adjustments to our service over the past 12 months.

It's exciting that a vaccine has already been developed and is rolling out across the country. At SJG Accord, we are encouraging our caregivers and clients in all our services to take up the vaccine. We are also preparing our clients who are part of the 1A rollout in our accommodation homes to receive the vaccine.

We still have and will continue to have many screening processes in place across all our service areas to ensure that we prevent the entry of COVID-19 into any of our sites. We must remain vigilant with everything we do and we still work on this every day.

This edition of iAccord again showcases a wonderful collection of client stories and triumphs over the challenging time of the last 12 months. I smile as I read the stories across all our services of how opportunities are maximised and the extra mile is taken by caregivers to ensure our clients have experiences that are rich and meaningful.

In particular the story of Ronnie and Robert who live at our Wallaby Run accommodation home is very dear to me. Both these men have lived together for many years, and shared such a large part of their lives together as housemates and friends. They also happened to live with my Uncle who was also a client of SJG Accord's but passed away 22 years ago. Long before I came to SJG Accord, I knew Ronnie and Robert personally

through my Uncle. When I was reacquainted with these men not long after I started here, I was delighted to see that they were still engaged and contributing to many meaningful activities. Both these men are still making a difference to the world and it brings both of them much joy every day. IGA supermarket could have no better employee than Ronnie Weiss and Robert Cronin passion for car collecting and movies is up there with the best of them. I love how Ronnie and Robert still continue to enjoy their life and I could not be prouder to lead a service that enables this so respectfully.

On the eve of Easter the executive committee and I made a visit to all our accommodation homes to deliver Easter eggs. We were welcomed everywhere, and it was great to see so many of our clients and caregivers face to face again. Again, I heard story after story how they coped and managed last year, it absolutely warmed my heart. The best was made of the challenging and prolonged lockdown and some new patterns have found their way into their lives on going. There are now lots of vegetables being home grown across our sites and I understand video communication continues to be a hit everywhere!

Please enjoy reading this edition and do not hesitate to drop me a line at [Accord.CEO@sjog.org.au](mailto:Accord.CEO@sjog.org.au) if you have any feedback or questions I invite you to contact me.

Until next time.

Take care and stay safe,

Lisa

# Narana Aboriginal Culture Centre Geelong

David Peterson, Disability Support Worker

Steven Myrodellis is an enthusiastic young man who enjoys his SJG Accord Individualised Services, especially getting out and about into the community. As his Support Worker, Steve and I have embarked on many adventures together.

Spending time in the outdoors over the recent weekends is beneficial for Steve. Steve loves the beach and revealing to me his future hopes and dreams. The different holidays he would like to take, especially to Uluru in the Northern Territory. Steve has a deep love for the Indigenous community along with his own Greek heritage. So as part of his individualised support, we went in search of an opportunity to engage with the Aboriginal community and hopefully get to listen to the Didgeridoo.

As part of Steven's early birthday celebration we decided to go to Geelong, and stop at the Narana Aboriginal Culture Centre there. When we got to the café we ordered a large breakfast and a decent cup of coffee.

While we were eating our breakfast Steve heard the didgeridoo playing behind us. He immediately jumped up and walked over to where the artists were playing. Steve introduced himself and sat down between the two musicians, and informed them of his Greek heritage. Over a very short period of time of Steve talking and listening to wonderful didgeridoo sounds, the two men did

something extraordinary. With a mobile phone they softly played the Zorba, which is a Greek instrument in the background. Over the top of the Zorba the two men play their didgeridoos.

It was unexpected and amazing to hear two cultural sounds combined, Steve was in awe, and it was really enjoyable and impressive. Steve and I remained a further 30 minutes in conversation with the two men and Steve thanked them for their hospitality towards us. We then learnt that someone plays the didgeridoo on Saturday mornings at the centre's Café.

After we left the centre we spent the remainder of the day around Queenscliff, the weather was lovely and we enjoyed looking at the boats and strolling on the beach.



# Holly to the rescue

*Aisling McCabe – Marketing and Communications Coordinator*

SCC offers ample opportunities of possibility. Goals and aspirations are realised here as individuals enjoy positive outcomes. Lots of warm smiles greet you through the hustle and bustle in the corridors of the campus.

Steve Williams is the Manager at SCC and along with his team understands the importance of acknowledging milestones demonstrated by our clients and sometimes our caregivers.

We all love a heart-warming story, so when Holly Koenig, Team Leader told me that the team had rescued baby ducklings and client Mustafa overcame his fear of all things animals and touched one of the baby ducklings – well I was intrigued.

It was all in a day's work for Holly and team. Once Holly learned that these vulnerable creatures were on the campus grounds, she got her team together to rescue them as she feared they would get harmed.

Watching from the side the clients showed their support as the team rounded the baby ducklings up, and ushered them to a safe place.

Once they were in a safe container, Holly encouraged Mustafa to check on the ducklings. And to the amazement of everyone he stroked one. He was incredibly chuffed with himself.

Holly then contacted Wildlife Victoria who advised her to take them to the local Brimbank Vet Clinic.

While at the clinic the vet told Holly they had received several calls from concerned people in the community indicating they had seen these baby ducklings but couldn't catch them.

Once they were all checked over, the vet confirmed they were in good health despite their ordeal, and would be placed in a safe new home in the coming days.

## All in a day's work for Holly and the team!



Mustafa (above) and Tim (below) with the ducklings



Goals and aspirations are realised here as individuals enjoy positive outcomes.

# Thriving in lockdown

*Ha Nguyen - Disability Support Worker*

Thriving in lockdown is exactly what Laura Vistan did due to the significant support she received at Sydenham Community Campus (SCC). Presenting with high behaviours of concern when she entered our services over four years ago, Laura has now made significant strides to living a more inclusive life, something everyone is proud of.

While growing up living at home, Laura only received family based support, and did not receive external support options until she came to SCC.

Laura did not participate in social activities and this affected her self-safety awareness and understanding of her own limitations. Lack of community interaction due to her behaviours of concern threw up plenty of challenges for the team leaders when Laura arrived at the campus. A positive behaviour plan was put in place to support Laura with her communications techniques.

Screaming, grabbing hair, arm strikes were among the methods Laura used to get attention. It was at this point it was suggested Laura engage in a self-discovery program to learn new techniques for positive communication. Soon she realised her abilities to swim, dance, and travel on public transport and use simple sign words instead of hitting out.



During COVID 19 and lockdown, Laura received six days of Individualised Support Services through her NDIS funding. During this time, the campus implemented COVID safe practices to keep clients and caregivers safe. Here Laura was introduced how to properly apply hand sanitizer after activities and a proper hand wash after using the bathroom.

As part of her journey she has stopped using her wheelchair at the campus, now giving her so much physical freedom. Awareness of her physical freedom has also reduced her behaviours of concern.

Through all of this Laura has learnt to be patient, using her words or sign words instead of displaying behaviours of concern.

Now Laura happily washes her hands properly by herself without caregivers' physical support and is often seen dancing while washing her hands.

# Garden time with Tim

*Leigh Boles - Disability Support Worker*

Tim Curwood love of all things gardening came to fruition recently as he was rewarded for all his hard work in the Sydenham Community Campus garden. Being able to support Tim and see him flourish through COVID 19 was very rewarding. His family enjoys the produce he brings home from the garden. Tim continues to reach his aspirations and goals.

Regardless of the weather you'll find Tim in the garden, checking out his plants and produce.



Sally Millar Team Leader

Lynda Foy Community Support Worker

We paid a visit to The Wallaby Run (SIL) home to see how everyone was doing over COVID 19.

Robert Cronin and Ronnie Weiss, both friends and residents, were in top form.



# Car collections

During lockdown Robert spent much time with his miniature cars, a passion and hobby he developed as young boy while living at the St John of God Accord Yarra View farm where he lived from 1962 to 1980.

After leaving the farm Robert moved in to his first accommodation home called The Eyrie, and then in 2006 moved to Wallaby Run.

His first car was a 1973 Eldorado Cadillac which he bought with his own money. There is a much sought after collection dotted around Robert's home for people to admire, and he is always keen to show them off if asked too.

Prior to COVID 19, Robert passion for cars didn't stop with miniature cars, he often visited car showrooms, vintage rallies, and car exhibitions in fact anything automotive.

Robert and Drewen Cottren, his IS Support Worker, visit the car model shop in Eastland Shopping Centre now as restrictions have eased. Here Robert can spend time checking out the most recent collection that is on view. He'll browse for hours before he picks one to put on layby.



**Robert as a young man**



Similar to Robert, Ronnie Weiss lived at the St John of God Yarra View Farm from 1967 to 1980. Prior to that he lived at Churinga during the year of 1967.

Due to deinstitutionalisation, Ronnie moved out to a Community Residential Unit in The Eyrie, Lilydale. Other moves came about because of reconfiguration and the availability of better housing. So Robert and Ronnie have been friends for a long time now and living together at Wallaby Run since 2006.



# and happy days

Prior to COVID-19 Ronnie worked at the local IGA in Mount Evelyn. He loved interacting with the customers and staff there, as he attended to the trolleys and baskets. Since restrictions have lifted he has returned to visited IGA, he's hoping once it's safe to do so that he can return to his job.

Obviously lockdown wasn't easy for anyone and as Ronnie wasn't able to work he busied himself in the garden by creating a plot to plant seeds, such as tomatoes, spring onions, parsley. He painted stones and placed them in the garden bed.

He also started a stamp collection and when he wasn't overseeing his stamp collection he was putting jigsaw pieces together on his iPad. He has over 100 puzzles finished.

He continues with daily chores including his share of household cooking, and he loves catching up with his friends and family.

But when Ronnie wants some well spent downtime you'll find him with his beloved cat Lucy watching the cricket.

**Ronnie as a young man and working in IGA**



# Clarendon activities

Magdy Soleman –Team Leader / Ali Tabit Community Support Worker

The Clarendon Crew didn't let COVID 19 take them down. They're a resilient group of clients who sought ways to keep busy when their day programs ceased due to the coronavirus. You'll see through all the photographs that they were incredibly busy. First up the clients and caregivers converted an empty room into a light exercise room called the Clarendon's Gum room. This provided our clients with an outlet when it was cold.

While Patricia, John, Colin and Vito couldn't get to their day service programs, we brought their programs to their home.

We found that the projects they engaged in were very therapeutic.

We set up a number of initiatives so each client could participate in being creative, especially in their own space. Their colouring program provided some quiet time, while been in the garden topping up the soil and setting new plants and herbs were more hands on.

They also really enjoyed the car washing program, but the activity they most loved was Plus Music Therapy with Zara Online twice every week.



**...we brought their programs to their home**

# Online Music Therapy

Zara Thompson, Music Therapist

In 2020, we were excited to receive a grant from Nillumbik Council to host a virtual concert in celebration of International Day for People with Disability and the end of a challenging year for us all. On Thursday 10th December, members from three of our Online Music Therapy Groups shared performances of songs and dances that they had been working on throughout the year.

The concert was a wonderful success – even though we couldn't meet in person to celebrate, we were able to join together on Zoom and watch our wonderful performers. Following the concert, everyone watching online joined in singing some Christmas Carols and dancing together!

Even though services are starting to open again, we are excited to announce that our Online Music Therapy Groups will continue in 2021 – please contact our music therapist Zara on [Zara.Thompson@sjog.org.au](mailto:Zara.Thompson@sjog.org.au)

## ...a virtual concert in celebration of International Day for People with Disability



Screenshot of the virtual event.

Top left to right: Cara Holt; Bridie Fairman; Aaron Gonsalves. Middle: Serena Kahn;

Bottom left to right: Aiden King; Mackenzie Charles; Lisa Zappino

# Positive outcomes

*Joseph Patrick DSS Employment Services Manager*

SJG Accord Disability Employment Services has 13 dedicated DES locations, eight employees working within the sector and we have successfully placed over 250 people with disabilities into work.

We customise each employment program to meet the needs of our clients. This is by coordinating appropriate support and working closely together in achieving our client's short and long-term goals.

One of our client's goal was to find suitable employment and become an independent worker.

## This is Maya's story...

Maya has been with SJG Accord Employment Services since 2015. Struggling to find long-term employment, encountering several obstacles, it was her relentless effort that Maya finally realised her dream.

Over the years, we developed relationships with a wide range of employers in the hope that Maya would find a suitable position. It was through that relationship development where we were introduced to Jodie at Kidding Around Child Care. Jodie had experience working alongside people with disabilities and was open to possibility of offering people with disabilities a trial.

As Maya was looking for cleaning work, Jodie decided to give Maya an opportunity. We organised a trial, set a start date provided the onsite support.

After her trial period, Jodie offered Maya a position as a part-time employee. Maya was thrilled to be finally be in the working world.

We created a task list to assist Maya with her responsibilities in remembering her duties each day. We still work closely with Jodie and Maya after four years, providing the support she needs.

**Maya has gained significant confidence being employed and has achieved her long-term goal of being independent.**



# for our clients

## This is Keira's story...

Kiera Fey-Howe is a vibrant young woman who came to our service for assistance to gain meaningful employment.

After several consultations we ascertained Kiera would like train as Barista. After Kiera completed her training as a Barista she was keen to commence employment in a café setting.

Turf Mate, a very supportive employer in the South of Melbourne had set up a coffee hut called Turf Café. Given Kiera's Barista training they agreed to give Kiera some work experience.

Kiera performed really well at making coffees and dealing with customers that the employer decided to place Kiera as a casual staff member of their organisation.

Kiera is over the moon with securing a casual position at Turf Mate in Cranbourne and is continuing to enjoy her job there.

Well Done Kiera and keep up the good work.



# SLES outcomes for our clients

Courtney Hedges NDIS Employment Services Manager

## Michael Brown

Michael has been accessing School Leaver Employment Supports (SLES) through SJG Accord Employment Services since the beginning of 2020. At the beginning of the year he completed an eight week work experience placement at Coles with four other clients.

Michael demonstrated an excellent work ethic and was a great role model for the other clients. He gave the placement his all and impressed the other staff.

This opportunity motivated Michael to stay engaged with his key worker Louise. With a combination of WebEx and phone based support inspired Michael through COVID 19 restrictions. Despite the challenges of COVID 19, Michael stayed focused to find employment. In November, as businesses started to reopen, an opportunity at a local café restaurant for a kitchen hand arose. Louise worked with Sophie (DES Business Engagement Coordinator) to organise some work experience for Michael.

The owner was so impressed with his work ethic and initiative, they offered him paid employment. With the support of both his SLES funding and Post Placement Support from the DES team, Michael is working eight hours per week independently and is experiencing positive outcomes.



## Tom Hutchings

Similar to Michael, Tom started with SLES at the beginning of 2020. Expressing a keen interest in working outdoors with plants and gardening, Tom participated in a couple of placements, before they were cut short due to COVID 19 restrictions. Instead of getting down, Tom channelled his energy into staying as busy as possible. He attended every group WebEx session that was on offer and kept engaged with his key worker Jo.

In October he was able to start a new work experience at a local nursery, propagating water plants. This placement is around the corner from his home and the employers loved his enthusiasm and positive attitude.

Because of Tom's positive behaviour he was offered and accepted paid employment for one day per week.

Tom has moved to our DES program where Sophie is assisting him in securing more work days, as well as some voluntary opportunities to give back to the community, as Tom likes to keep busy! Fantastic work Tom!



## Dean Terzini

Dean accessed SLES in 2019 and 2020. He tried and tested a few different types of workplaces but the one that suited him the best was his gardening placement at Benton Rise Farm.

Dean did work experience there for almost a year. He started with three hour shifts, then it increased to five and then eight hours. Dean grew significantly in this role but it was not without its challenges.

Dean did require a lot of support and supervision, but he worked hard, took on feedback and never gave up. He was also reported to have never taken a day off! Dean desperately wanted to be become employed at Benton Rise Farm but his support needs did pose as a challenge.

The team were able to assist Dean in requesting finding and keeping a job funding for Supports in Employment at his plan review. This funding has allowed Dean to employ a support worker to attend work with him and support him in continue working towards independence in the workplace.

This enabled Benton Rise Farm to take Dean on as a paid employee. With the guidance of his support worker Sandy, Dean has been able to

complete most of the tasks that is set for him each day and his communication and endurance in socially challenging situations has improved dramatically. He has been able to tackle some more challenging and no doubt more interesting tasks in the extensive garden and farmland.

The skills that Dean is learning here at Benton Rise Farm, are transferrable to other workplaces. Importantly, since having a support worker with him, it is pleasing to note that Dean has become a more engaged member of the Benton Rise Farm team.

Dean's placement is now completely monitored by the DES team who provide post placement support to both Dean and the employer and he is reported to still be thriving.

Dean's story is a fantastic example of how NDIS Employment Supports can improve employment outcomes and compliment supports provided through existing models, such as DES.



## Employment Supports at Greensborough and Frankston

In 2021 SJG Accord will be delivering NDIS Employment supports, including SLES, at Greensborough and are continuing to provide them in Frankston.

School Leaver Employment Supports (SLES) are capacity building supports to assist the transition from school to employment. It is time limited (up to two years) for people up to the age of 22 and block funded. They will work one to one with a support worker to try out different work places through supported work experience placements as well as capacity building activities to develop work readiness. Supports are individualised to each client's goals and support needs.

We are also able to provide Employment Support which is for NDIS participants (of any age) who have employment related goals.

This funding is available for people to explore what employment could look like for them and build on their capacity for employment. Support can include:

- explore what work would mean for them (discovery);
- build essential foundation skills for work;
- work experience
- specialised job customisation;
- supports to transition from an Australian Disability Enterprise (ADE) to open employment;
- develop a career plan; and
- other capacity building supports that are likely to lead to successful engagement with a Disability Employment Service (DES).

If you have any clients who have employment goals or would like to explore the world of work, please don't hesitate to reach out. Together we can help everyone reach their full potential.

**Courtney Hedges**

**NDIS Employment Services  
Manager**

**0417 653 689**

**Courtney.hedges@sjog.org.au**

# Closing of SJG Accord's Eastern Services

Aisling McCabe – Marketing and Communications Coordinator

Late last year SJG Accord ceased operating all group programs associated with our Eastern Services. While it was a decision made with mixed emotions, it transpired our clients were happy to avail of a more leisurely lifestyle afforded to them by COVID 19.

The Eastern Services came into being in the early 80s when DHHS implemented the de-institutionalisation of numerous disabilities institutions across Victoria.

Many people gradually moved out of institutions into group homes and community based programs. Our diverse group of clients began to experience

a new sense of living, a start of a slow insurgence to a more inclusive world. As clients moved from the St John of God Yarra View farm in the 80s, a day program termed Archways was born, called after a much loved client named Archie.

This was the first of day placements and facility based programs offered by SJG Accord in the east, starting at Blacksprings Road in Chirside Park, and was probably revolutionary at the time for people with intellectual disabilities and their journey to choice and control before today's world of the NDIS.

The Archways All Stars singing outside Myer. David Philips (RIP)



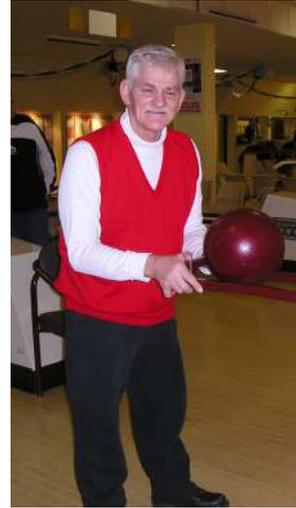
Over the years the programs evolved and new facilities and community reach programs were developed to support the clients. The Archway All Stars singing group was formed and they often performed renditions of 'she'll be coming round the mountain' outside Myers in the city. Each week a group of clients served Meals on Wheels to those in need in the east. These inclusive initiatives and programs were enjoyed by so many individuals.

Archways then became Accord Community Engagement Services (ACES) and from there, Eastern Community Services. Lots of milestones were cultivated, birthdays and other festivities were celebrated both in the community and at the facility. As the years progressed the size of the groups slowly decreased as clients passed away and now many of our clients are over 65 years old.

During COVID 19 our aging clients inadvertently discovered how much they enjoyed being at home and not having to be up early and out to programs. As more time was spent in lockdown our clients wanted more autonomy over their own life choices and being able to stay home if they so choose.

We listened to all our clients and in doing so, responded by closing services to allow our clients to live a life of dignity and respect and to choose their own lifestyle.

Thus far many clients avail of Individualised Services, home based supports and a mixture of community based programs. There's an old saying '**when one doors closes another door opens**'. Who would have thought that COVID 19 would change the course of our client's lives for the better?





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