

SteppingStone



Chantelle's the best person for the job

Chantelle Woolston was over the moon when she was appointed as project co-ordinator for Disability Action Week and International Day of People with Disability in July.

Chantelle has been employed by Best Choice Bookkeeping, a great supporter of the Disability Network, on a six-month contract to fulfil these roles and works from STEPS Employment. This ensures her Employment Consultant is on hand to offer work-place assistance and mentoring.

"I was interviewed in the morning and was told I had the job that afternoon," Chantelle said. "It was very exciting."

Chantelle was kept busy organising events throughout Bundaberg as part of Disability Action Week. She has muscular dystrophy, a disease she has lived with her whole life, but do not think for a minute that has slowed her down.

An avid horse enthusiast, she loves to get out and ride in her buggy and has been appointed the secretary of the Bundaberg Harness Club.

STEPS Employment Consultant Evelyn Thompson said Chantelle was chosen from a large selection as the best person for the job.

"She was employed on her merits," Evelyn said.

"Being able to employ someone with a disability is so empowering for them as well. Employers soon realise that there is so much support available from both local services and government."

For Chantelle to undertake her role, her work station has been set up with special voice recognition software and appropriate computer equipment.

Above: Chantelle Woolston (right) and STEPS Employment Consultant, Evelyn Thompson.





Porterble Cleaning and STEPS: 10 stars



Right now, I feel invigorated and alive. It is an absolute privilege when clients specifically ask for me to be on their job, because they like what I do.



Imagine working surrounded by leafy gardens and elegant palms. Or tackling disgusting A Current-Affair-style cleanups after a terrible tenant leaves?

These are just a couple of the types of contracts undertaken by Bowen's Porterble Cleaning Service, all with an eye-for-detail and applying old-fashioned elbow-grease.

STEPS Bowen has developed a strong working relationship with Porterble Cleaning Service, recently placing three clients in suitable work with this reputable local employer. Porterble Cleaning is a supportive employer, demonstrated by their flexibility in rostering clients according to their capabilities.

Joadi Bartlett of Porterble Cleaning says her greatest reservation as an employer was taking on clients with known disabilities and how her business clients would react.

"I hoped that it would be a positive reaction but until they are in the job and working you never know," said Joadi, who said she's encountered only positive responses.

"I am very happy with the staff that I have received from STEPS. They seem to have a positive approach to their job because they really want to work."

Of the on-the-job support offered by STEPS, Joadi says: "It has been great. It is comforting to know that if we need help, STEPS are there providing support as needed. As a business we also know that

***Above:** STEPS Bowen Branch Manager Greg Cummins with Kathy Nicholls, Joadi Bartlett (Owner Manager of Porterble Cleaning Service) and another STEPS client/Porterble Cleaning employee, Jade Paul.*

we are giving back to the community of Bowen, providing employment opportunities for people who are facing some real challenges."

Kathy is a keen worker with Porterble Cleaning. She moved to Bowen from interstate, looking for a change after a difficult point in her life. On her first appointment with her STEPS Employment Consultant, suffering severe depression, she cried through the whole appointment.

"I was a wreck. There was so much going on in my life," she said. After stabilising her medication with her doctor, sorting through emergency accommodation and establishing some focus, she began with Porterble Cleaning Service, very nervously.

"It had been a long time since I'd been in an interview, or any sort of work, but STEPS was there and made me feel comfortable. When I found out I had the job I was on cloud nine!

"Right now, I feel invigorated and alive. It is an absolute privilege when clients specifically ask for me to be on their job, because they like what I do. I love working in this team... its like being in a family."

Continued page 4.

New office and top performances at Townsville

With a shimmy, and flowing hand movements STEPS in Townsville has danced its way into a “beautiful” new office, five-star performance and innovative new program.

In September, the two STEPS offices of Aitkenvale and Townsville both moved to a combined location on Ross River Road in Aitkenvale. The office is located on a major road, and conveniently located near Centrelink and the major bus route.

STEPS Training and Community Services also have their own space within the office, located on what locals refer to as “the golden mile” where businesses enjoy high visibility from passing traffic.

The office move corresponded with both offices receiving a five-star rating from the Australian Government, indicating the highest level of performance and service. Branch Manager, Joanne Wittmaack decided to celebrate with a little multiculturalism.

“We celebrated by having a team building experience, with an Indian dancing instructor coming to our office to teach us the “Bollywood” style of dancing and to assist us to embrace multiculturalism,” said Joanne.

“We learned that we aren’t as flexible as we thought. But the team embraced the fun side of the activity. Taking your job seriously is not about taking yourself seriously – it’s important to laugh and enjoy yourself along the way.”

Considering and embracing multiculturalism is an important factor in building community, and in September Joanne



Pictured: The combined team at the new Aitkenvale STEPS branch.

spoke on the subject at the International Diversity and Unity Conference in Townsville.

“This gave STEPS the opportunity to speak in a public forum regarding our inclusive practices,” said Joanne, who took quite a few questions from the audience after her address.

A new program for job seekers started at STEPS Aitkenvale demonstrates their commitment to inclusion. The new “job club” includes a work experience placement for job seekers to complete their training.

“This needed a collaborative approach and many thanks to all staff, particularly to Heather who worked tirelessly to bring this all together. It should bring about successful and valuable training for our job seekers,” said Joanne who quoted Aristotle to support the philosophy of the new program:

“Tell me and I will forget. Show me and I will remember. Involve me and I will understand.”

Work is first for Sam

Sam Miles celebrated 12 months since she began working as a clinic assistant in the relaxed, friendly surrounds of a Townsville day spa.

The 25-year-old ensures the busy First Things First day spa’s masseurs have clean freshly dried towels at their fingertips.

It is a far cry from the fish and chips shop where she had worked previously. Since starting at First Things First, Sam has quickly become a valued member of the team.

“My job is to clean and dry towels, which I do in two dryers and two washing machines,” Sam said. “I love this job, it is my dream come true.”



Disability Service Standards

STEPS must provide a service that meets the 12 Disability Service Standards.

Let's learn more about Standards 7 and 8.

Standard 7: Getting something done about a complaint



When you first join STEPS, they should tell you how to make a complaint if you have a problem. If you make a complaint, STEPS will:

- Listen to you
- Be happy to help you
- Help you to explain what the problem is
- Try to fix your problem
- Tell you about other people or places you can talk to about your complaint.

STEPS must keep your complaint private.

Standard 8: Running STEPS well



STEPS should be well organized and managed. STEPS should:

- Be up-to-date with the best ways of working with you
- Use money from the Australian Government in the best way
- Keep making STEPS better
- Have a business plan for running STEPS in the best way
- Show you the business plan if you want to see it.

STEPS should listen to what you and other service users say. They should act on what you say to make STEPS better.



STEPS Participants' Survey

What better way to improve our service to job seekers than to ask those who receive it?

Over 80 participants took part in a recent survey sent via email. Around 40% of those surveyed currently work in a paid job, with 67% being on the STEPS Employment program for less than 12 months.

The survey covered questions about all facets of STEPS' service and along the jobseekers journey – from joining the STEPS program right through to the quality of on-the-job support.

There were lots of encouraging responses, for example, just over 92% agreed they had been treated with respect at all times by STEPS staff.

If you wish to view the entire report from the survey ask at your local STEPS branch, and we look forward to your help with our 2010 survey.

From page 2

There are aspects of the job that are unpleasant, like working with harsh chemicals that require wearing "sperm-suits" – protective cover-alls on the job, sometimes in hot, uncomfortable tropical weather.

Kathy says she focuses on the benefits of being employed. She is excited that she's bought her own car and is now investing in another love – a horse.

"The truth is without STEPS' help and support I wouldn't be where I am now. I feel I have a new life. In my eyes STEPS gets 10 Stars."



Photo courtesy of Townsville Bulletin

First Things First: Sam finds a dream job

From page 3

“All the girls I work with are very nice. I think I will be here for a while.

“I like to play Bon Jovi and I can listen to them when I am at work – I am their biggest fan. I also like Michael Jackson.”

First Things First general manager Megan Flux said Miss Miles had come to them through STEPS Employment, and she didn't know what they would do without her now.

“We went with STEPS because we get so much support from them,” Mrs Flux said. “They have people who will train and learn the job alongside the new employee.

“Sam does her job better

than most and she takes ownership of her work.”

STEPS Employment Support Consultant for Miss Miles is Chrissey Sheriff who is as proud as a parent of her young trainee's achievements.

“Sam came to us nearly two years ago and her family had just come over from Perth,” Mrs Sheriff said. “She is a delightful young lady and we were very fortunate to get her a job at First Things First. She has fitted in there very well and the staff have embraced her.”

“They have supported and encouraged her and she has grown so much since she has been there.”

Technology gives jobseekers a wider view

STEPS' participants on the Sunshine Coast can now take a broader view to job seeking, thanks to new computer equipment installed at resource centres at all four STEPS branches.

All new resources were purchased from funds made available through the Queensland Government's Gambling Fund.

Brand new 20" widescreens are available to participants searching for jobs on the internet or to use other programs as part of their job search, replacing the space-wasting (and sometimes flickering) 17" CRT screens.

Some new technology available at one Sunshine Coast branch is even wider!

A Plasma screen at STEPS Nambour is being used for training, both for staff and jobseekers.

Yvonne Higgs, Nambour's Branch Administrator, said that by connecting with a new laptop, the Plasma is proving a great bonus in training, particularly for jobseekers.

“We can present DVDs and online content to our participants as a group,” Yvonne said.

“We couldn't do this in the past, but we



can now present information on resume preparation and interview skills in a very high-tech way. We have had more interaction from our participants since the Resource Centres have been established.”

Above: STEPS Sales Consultant, Toni Usher (far right) assists two jobseekers on new computer workstations at the Caloundra branch.

Matt's on an artful mission

HE'S a man on a mission. At only 18, Matt Brooks (*pictured right*) has drawn out a five-year plan and has achieved most of his goals already.

Matt's passion is drawing; everything from quirky cartoons to profile sketches, and he has display folders full of characters he created.

Matt started drawing in primary school but by high school he was noted as different and felt isolated from the rest of his classmates.

At one stage, Matt was unable to even hold a thought, let alone draw while he was on his medication.

With support from his family and staff from STEPS Employment, Matt has been able to put this in his past and create a future for himself with his drawing.

"One day I hope to get my comics in the newspapers," he said.

"Cartoon animation is my big dream."

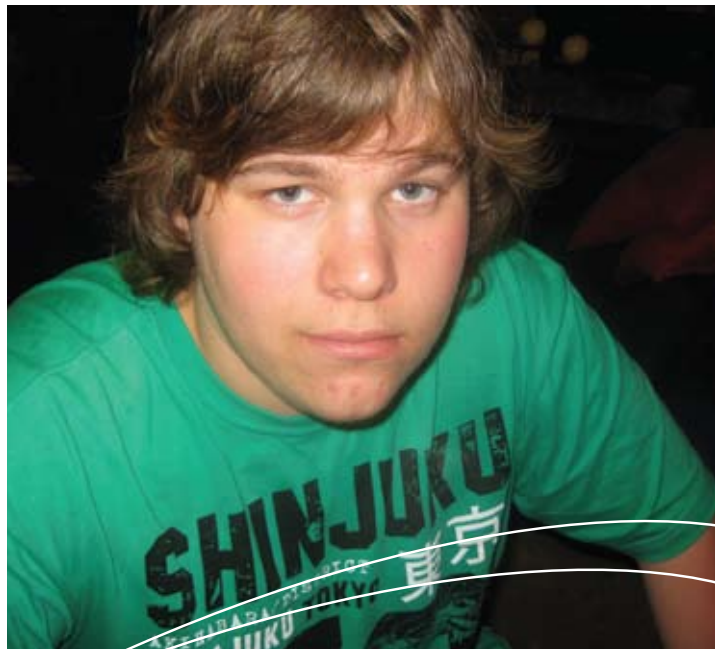
Matt has created Bent and Spike – a banana and pineapple. They feature on a t-shirt he had printed up, and he hopes one day to feature them in comic strips and books.

Matt's five-year plan consists of comics, t-shirts, caps and a clothing range, all created under his brand "Paranoid Disturbia".

Sunshine Coast Youth Partnership Drink Safe coordinator Claire Gardner said it was a common reaction for people to create barriers for things they do not know about, particularly mental health.

"Mental health isn't well recognised or understood in the community, and it often becomes a little bit of a side topic which is easy to avoid," she said.

Matt said he experienced this type of reaction many times, but it did not affect him or his plans for the future.



Commuting to community

Sixteen-year-old Caitlin is well underway to reach her goal of working in the community service industry.

Being born with spina bifida has not prevented Caitlin having a typical teenage life and doing what teenage girls do best, like shopping for clothes at the Plaza, going to parties and having sleepovers with friends.

Recently STEPS helped Caitlin purchase a motorized scooter (*pictured right*) and an ergonomic chair through the Federal Government's Workplace Modification Scheme. This has greatly assisted her in both her studies and work and made an enormous difference to Caitlin's life.

Caitlin is attending Caloundra High School and studying a part-time administration traineeship at Blue Care, The Glebe.

"It's always a pleasure to see Caitlin's smiling face on the days that she works here. Her contribution to our busy team is invaluable," The Glebe hostel supervisor Paula Braby said.

"I love working here and can see myself working in this type of role in the future when I leave school. I am so lucky to have my own scooter now to go to work," Caitlin said.



Being speechless is a bigger loss



Winner of the television show, the Biggest Loser, Andrew Miles, (pictured left) now works as an Employment Consultant at STEPS Hervey Bay. Prior to this, Andrew worked with people with disabilities for over five years.

As part of Disability Action Week Andrew agreed to test what it would be like if he lost the power of speech. Andrew was set two tasks. He was to use the National Relay Service (an interpreter service for people with hearing or speech disabilities) to conduct a business call and to approach another business (face-to-face) with a complex request.

In both situations, Andrew was asked not to advise them of the context of his challenge.

“The reaction of the local shop assistant was extremely confronting,” Andrew said. “Despite choosing a time when there was no one else in the shop, as soon as she realized I couldn’t talk she was immediately frosty and not keen on serving me.

“She was obviously impatient, talking to me as though I couldn’t hear or comprehend what she was saying. The frustration was extreme and highlighted just how difficult life is for people who struggle to communicate.”

Alice jobseekers excelling and reaching goals

New jobseekers in Alice Springs are improving their employment possibilities through attending the federally-funded STEPS Training Literacy and Numeracy program.

Three job seekers, Donald Peterson, Brant Bradley and Liam Beauchamp, were congratulated by STEPS Trainer Duncan Rae for their commitment, successfully attending the course until its conclusion.

Branch Manager, Greg McIntosh congratulated STEPS Employment participant, Philipa Gehring, who has worked at the Alice Springs Hospital for four years. Philipa, who works at the hospital doing shift work housekeeping, has just purchased her own home after diligently saving enough money for a deposit.

Another Alice Springs job seeker Adam Larkin has won the heart of many children at Larapinta Primary School. Adam has been involved with implementing the opening of



the school canteen, which operates two days a week. Adam has attended the canteen workshop to learn about food and food preparation.

All Alice Springs Employment staff recently completed a mental health course run by Mental Health Association of Central Australia. The course has been of great value, and provided a great networking opportunity with other agencies.

Above: STEPS Trainer, Duncan Rae, with jobseeker Liam Beauchamp.

Group to reward inclusive employers

Many business people on the Sunshine Coast are making a difference, knowing that inclusive communities are healthy communities.

In September, STEPS Employment rewarded 16 employers who have shown a commitment to employing people with disabilities through launching STEPS Equity Employer Group.

Those who attended the launch/breakfast at the Buderim Tavern were treated to a morning of inspiration, and of course a free cooked breakfast.

Master of Ceremony and celebrity chef/author, Andy "Phippsy" Phipps,



introduced the speakers, including sporting identity and longstanding member of Australia's Paralympic team Marayke Jonkers.

Three employers were presented with Gold Memberships to the Equity Employer Group: Didgeridoonas, Gilbert Care Services and the Coffee Club Mooloolaba.

STEPS Employment will continue to grow and expand the Equity Employer

Group, with a vision for the group to become a nationally recognised symbol that demonstrates an organisation's commitment to social inclusion.



Above: Rob Gillam from Coffee Club Mooloolaba (right) gained Gold Membership to STEPS Equity Employer Group, with Employment Sales Consultant, Lee Shea.



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Aitkenvale

☎ (07) 4727 2600

Ayr (Outreach Branch)

139B Young Street

☎ (07) 4783 4811

Bowen

Shop 4/36 Powell Street,
Bowen

☎ (07) 4786 9700

Collinsville (Outreach Branch)

Shop 1/45-47 Railway
Road, Collinsville

☎ (07) 4785 5900

Northern Territory

Alice Springs

Shop 9/16 Hartley Street,
Alice Springs

☎ (08) 8950 7600

Darwin

Suite 1, Level 2, 59 Smith
Street, Darwin

☎ (08) 8925 5600

Tennant Creek

Shop 1, 163 Paterson
Street, Tennant Creek

☎ (08) 8962 2231

Sunshine Coast Region

Caloundra

37 Bowman Road,
Caloundra

☎ (07) 5438 5500

Maroochydore

78 Duporth Avenue,
Maroochydore

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Nambour

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Square, Nambour

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Wide Bay Region

Bundaberg

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Bundaberg

☎ (07) 4150 1900

Hervey Bay

Suite 2/17 Torquay Street,
Pialba

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Maryborough (Outreach Branch)

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Maryborough

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