

## GEMAD Business Breakfast update:

Following the success of our Business Breakfast held in the Latrobe Valley, we are both pleased and excited to hold our next Business Breakfast in South Gippsland on the 26th May 2011 at the RACV Resort in Inverloch. Please see the invitation attached for further details.

The Latrobe Valley breakfast provided a great opportunity to network with a range of employers and people with a disability. The main event titled "All you wanted to know about disability but were afraid to ask" featured a panel of 5 people who gave a presentation and answered questions from the floor related to the barriers they experience in their day to day life which included employment. Many topics were covered that can be difficult to raise in an interview or a work environment.

Junior and senior school students from local schools joined us and they too, asked some interesting questions which inspired a range of conversations as breakfast was enjoyed by all. It was a great success with breakfast guests leaving for their working day with a clearer understanding of the challenges faced by many and how they are overcome.

GEMAD is going from strength to strength with many more employers and larger businesses, including our local councils becoming signatories to the GEMAD Charter.

In support of Gippsland Employers Making a Difference, we will be hosting further events across Gippsland, the next being in East Gippsland in September. Your support is appreciated and we look forward to increasing your organisations "Disability Confidence" which ultimately enhances a range of opportunities for people with a disability throughout our region. We look forward to encouraging more businesses to come on board and reap the rewards of being involved in GEMAD.



CEO of Bass Coast Shire Council Allan Bawden with Work Solutions Gippsland Employment Consultant Ingrid Leeuwdrant (left) and the CEO of Work Solutions Gippsland Donna Faulkner for the official signing of the GEMAD Charter.

## Building Disability Inclusive Organisations

GEMAD signatories are welcome to attend a workshop currently being offered to organisations, businesses and community groups. This will increase their capacity to understand access and participation issues relating to people with disabilities.

The Office for Disability and Community Concepts in partnership with the Department of Human Services are running **'Building Disability Inclusive Organisations Workshop'** in Gippsland. This workshop is **free** and will be held in Bairnsdale on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> May from 9.30 – 4 pm

The workshop will provide an opportunity for organisations, businesses, clubs and individuals to come together to increase knowledge about issues affecting people with a disability in their local community and share their expertise on how best to plan, implement and monitor programs and changes that will make significant difference for people with a disability and the businesses and the business of the organisations.

For further information please contact Mary Koutzas at [info@communityconcepts.com.au](mailto:info@communityconcepts.com.au) or by phoning - 0403 470 216.

## SUCCESS STORIES

### VISION IMPAIRED RECEPTIONIST IN YARRAM

Geoff is a Yarram resident who is doing his V.C.E at the local secondary college. Geoff is 17 years of age and has been totally blind since birth, he has never seen the light of day. Geoff is an ambitious young man and despite his disability has a cheery nature and what impresses most people about him is his communication skills. Geoff's disability has certainly not dampened his spirits and he only ever speaks positively. Geoff presents well and speaks politely and clearly.

His Employment Consultant from Work Solutions Gippsland recognised that Geoff would suit a 'Front of house' position, such as a receptionist.

With this thought in mind the Yarram Country Club Management was approached with a suggestion that it may be beneficial for the club to show its support for the disability community in Yarram by providing Geoff his first paid position and also bolstering his self-esteem and independence.

The job placement was a resounding success and club patrons warmed to Geoff's friendly manner and welcoming words. He quickly learned the club's telephone system and made new acquaintances and friends both among the patrons and staff.

The Yarram Country Club are signatories to the GEMAD Charter and their support and cooperation was well recognised by the Yarram Community at large. Everyone who knew of this job placement claimed it was a great step forward for those with a vision impairment and for the Yarram Country Club. Geoff is already making plans for the future, he has a supportive father and network of friends and everyone who knows Geoff is certain that he will go where he ultimately wishes to go in life and in his career.

### BUSINESS OWNERS LIAISE & EMPLOY PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

Business owner, Annette Draper of Valley Trophy Centre in Morwell has never hired staff before. There was much discussion with Annette about employing someone with a disability and the skills and abilities of available jobseekers, Annette soon became very interested, and more so when she realised that her good friend also a business owner, Claudia from Claudia's Café, hires highly committed staff members who have disabilities and are contributing successfully to her business, Annette has spoken with Claudia at length.

Approximately 2 weeks later Annette decided she wanted to go ahead and hire an employee with disability. Annette was informed of the abilities and skills of a particular applicant, Annette was more than accommodating and open to any modification and support that maybe required. Although Annette was nervous about hiring, as it was the first time she had ever done so, she met with the applicant and was happy to give her a go.

Annette employed the applicant in February 2011, the employee is still working for Valley Trophy Centre. Both employer and employee are happy with the team they have created.

Annette advises that her new employee works at a faster pace than expected and she is always having to tell her to slow down. The employee says she is slowing down and she just really enjoys her job!

### FROM KITCHEN HAND TO TRAINEE CHEF IN SIX MONTHS!

At Domain Aged Care Lakes Entrance, Facility Manager, Marianne McVeigh Says:

Approximately 6 months ago Vicki was employed at Domain Aged Care, as a Kitchen hand. Vicki's primary duties revolved around cleaning dishes, making residents cuppa's and assisting with the plating up of meals. Vicki did this with shyness and total lack of confidence that was almost too painful to watch.

With a very supportive employer and team around her Vicki started to come out of her shell bit by bit and everyone saw the steady progress she was making. As her confidence grew Vicki voluntarily started taking on additional tasks around the kitchen.

So much had her confidence grown that there came the day when she was asked to step up and do the cooking for all the residents as the Chef had called in sick. Vicki took charge and came through with flying colours, she had cooked the food, allocated tasks to other kitchen staff and generally speaking was in control just like a regular Gordon Ramsay, (without the swearing) Vicki is now employed as a full time cook and organises the kitchen, menu's, staff and places orders with suppliers.

Facility Manager, Marianne commented further that "if we had another 10 Vicki's we would take them right now" and it just so happened that another person was available.

Work Solutions Gippsland, in its mission "To identify the ability in every client and match each client to an appropriate employer" made the perfect match which opened the door for another jobseeker.

We now see Jim, a young impressive man who was looking for a career as a Cook or Chef is now dutifully employed as a kitchen hand, as Jim said "This is just the break I needed".

After a trial period, it is hoped that Jim will be offered a Traineeship at Domain Aged Care.

CEO of South Gippsland Shire Council Tim Tamlin is presented with the framed copy of their signed GEMAD Charter by Work Solutions Gippsland's Employment Consultant from Leongatha, Trina Clarke

