

Great staff make Christmas café all the sweeter

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Contents

- Great staff make Christmas café all the sweeter
- CEO update
- Giving is good for you
- Connect this holiday
- Festive savings
- Testimonials
- All signs point to go for Donny's employment journey
- "This job gives me a purpose in life" - Adam
- EPIC Events
- Global Dates
- AccessAbility Day
- Tips from EPIC



Matt (second from right) introduces EPIC CEO Bill Gamack to the team at Christmas Hills Raspberry Farm

There's nothing as sweet as landing a great new job, especially when it involves coating raspberries in chocolate every day. Devonport local Matt started his career at the Christmas Hills Raspberry Farm Café outside Devonport earlier this year.

"I love everything about my job! My colleagues are great and make me feel very welcome," says Matt.

"As well as coating raspberries with chocolate, I serve food and drinks to the customers. It feels great to have this job."

Matt's Fragile X syndrome means he is often hesitant to speak until comfortable in a new environment. But café manager Lindi says within a matter of weeks, Matt was starting to open up.

"We were so pleased Matt began to feel more relaxed, and started speaking to the team. His first words almost brought us to tears," says Lindi.

"It is a joy to see Matt joining in with staff, laughing, and even singing with Peta while chocolate-coating raspberries."

Christmas Hills Raspberry Farm Café connected with EPIC after they were recommended by a close friend.

"It's been great having Matt on-board; he is part of our Raspberry Farm family. We love him and he's so great for staff morale," says Lindi.

"Working with Matt has made the team happier, and we are now a more inclusive business."

Matt is proud of how far he's come, saying his job has given his life a sense of purpose and value.

"My job makes me feel good about myself, as I am now part of a team and a community," says Matt.

"I am always very proud to tell others about my work."



To connect with your local EPIC Service Centre call 13 EPIC (13 3742) or email us on hello@epicassist.org epicassist.org

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CEO update by Bill Gamack

Here we are almost at the end of another calendar year!

2018 has been a year of change and growth for EPIC. Expanding EPIC's footprint and opening new service centres has given us many opportunities to find new and better ways to do things so that we can continue to improve the lives of the people we assist.

I have been inspired over recent weeks by the returned service men and women who have been competing in the Invictus Games. It has been an amazing display of what is possible. At the closing ceremony Prince Harry spoke about the importance of mental health. He said that the athletes had proven that it's okay to talk about how we feel and that the competitors had shown the world it was OK not to be OK. Sometimes asking for help was the best thing that they could do.

As we approach the Christmas period, I would call on everyone to be mindful that for some this time of year does not represent a 'merry' or 'happy' time - far from it! As you plan your Christmas and holiday schedule, spare a thought for these members of our community. Perhaps the greatest gift you could give someone this year is to reach out and just ask "R U OK?" and then listen!



Giving is good for you

Giving is often better than receiving - and science is starting to show us just how good giving can be.

There is a growing body of scientific evidence promoting the health benefits of helping others. Giving can be a great way to boost wellbeing, whether it be through random acts of kindness, volunteering, or some other generous activity. People who regularly give to others report many benefits including:

- increased happiness and optimism
- decreased stress and negativity
- greater sense of belonging and reduced isolation
- feelings of gratitude
- physical health benefits.

This festive season think about different ways you can give. Maybe you could hand make small gifts for family and friends. Handmade gifts speak from the heart (and can help save your bank balance), while giving your time through volunteering is a great way to connect with your local community.



Connect this holiday

Spending time and connecting with other people is good for your overall mental wellness, and can help keep mental health conditions like depression and anxiety in check.



Human interaction helps us to feel supported, appreciated and loved. In fact, close relationships with family and friends can add up to seven years onto our lives.

You might like to think about these ways to connect with others through the festive season:

- Implement a set weekly date to see friends or family.
- Plan a trip or getaway with friends or family.
- Start a new activity, and invite friends to join you or make new friends within the group.
- Make time to visit someone who needs support or company.
- Play a board game with your family instead of watching TV.
- Volunteer with a cause close to your heart.

Mental Health Toolkit

For more tips and tools to help you look after your mental health this holiday season, visit epicassist.org/jobseekers/mental-health/

Festive savings

Did you know that as a member of the EPIC Assist family you're able to join our exclusive loyalty and rewards program, Club EPIC? Save money these holidays by shopping with Club EPIC. Get amazing discounts from Australian retailers including, EB Games, Coles, Kmart, Target and Dymocks. The range of benefits provided is just one of the ways we aim to thank you for choosing EPIC Assist to partner with you on your employment journey.

To join Club EPIC please visit www.epicassist.ewallet.com.au or email us clubepic@epicassist.org



Testimonials

"EPIC listen, explain, support and assist me. They give me the best chance to find suitable employment. I feel like they care about my emotional and physical wellbeing and that we are a team."

I'm so glad I made the change to EPIC, my life is moving forward in a positive direction now with their help, thanks EPIC!"

Lisa

Lismore

"Staff are genuinely helpful, and don't treat me like a nuisance or a number. The office is very clean, inviting, and I am able to talk to staff in a private space without an audience."

Alice

Hobart

"During the two years I have been with EPIC, they have excelled in their duties. Most of all they have helped and supported me during some very frustrating and anxiety causing challenges I have had to face and overcome."

Magdalena

Bundaberg

"You can see EPIC actually care about my daughter. They created a strategy in her first appointment and now she is happily working in her dream job."

"They always keep me updated on my daughter's progress at work."

Natalie

All signs point to go for Donny's employment journey



Pedestrians are safer thanks to Donny
Photo by: Kristy Muir/Southern Star

Donny has come a long way since teaming up with EPIC's Upper Mount Gravatt team over 90 weeks ago. After being out of work for a couple of years, Donny was ready to find support and get back in the workforce.

"I have depression, anxiety, sleep apnoea and Graves' disease. I was out of work 2013 and 2014 after the onset of my medical conditions. I was in and out of jobs and found it really hard to find a rhythm," explains Donny.

EPIC Mental Health Consultant Snezana has worked closely with Donny for two years, and remains impressed with his ongoing attitude and commitment.

"From the beginning, Donny was always determined to work with me to address his mental health barriers," says Snezana.

Donny has now been happily employed with Just Traffic Solutions since March this year.

Donny's job involves looking after the safety of pedestrians, protecting fellow workers from hazards, setting up sites, signs and road and lane closures, exercising safe work practices and completing paperwork.

"If I didn't have this job, I wouldn't have as much freedom to do the things outside of work that I enjoy doing. It is keeping me in the workforce as a contributing member of society," says Donny.

"I'm taking it one day at a time, but I'm feeling positive about life and about the future."

Donny says his EPIC support network have been an essential component in turning his life around.

"Everyone at EPIC has stuck by me this whole time and have never given up on me. I've needed that kind of support in my life!"

"This job gives me a purpose in life" – Adam

Adam still works for the Devonport Chaplaincy where EPIC connected him to the employer four years ago.

"I mentor a student in the local high school, deliver food to schools, and work with our team to organise emergency food hampers for families in the community," he says.

When Adam first began his role, a few minor workplace modifications were needed to help him thrive. His cerebral palsy made typing difficult, and EPIC supported Devonport Chaplaincy to purchase speech to text software.

"Working here is helping me develop my skills and knowledge, so I can reach my professional goals in community service," says Adam.



EPIC Events

A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE ART EXHIBITION

EPIC's art exhibition, now in its 4th year, has become a much-loved celebration of People with Disability.

This year's theme, 'A World of Difference,' challenges us to consider the word 'different,' and discover what we can learn from the insights and life experiences of people with disability.

Graydon Gallery

29 Merthyr Road, New Farm, Brisbane
11 - 21 December 2018 / 10am - 4pm

BRISBANE PARTICIPANT EVENTS CHRISTMAS PARTY

Mark your calendar for EPIC's annual Christmas luncheon. We have a fun event planned for all including carols, lunch and a visit from a special guest.

Saturday 8 December

12pm - 2pm (Doors open at 11.30am)

Kedron-Wavell Services Club

21 Kittyhawk Drive (off Hamilton Road)
Chermside South

Please call the Windsor office on (07) 3857 5085 to confirm your attendance.

BIMONTHLY DINNER

We welcome our participants to join us for an enjoyable evening at our bimonthly participant dinners. Please call the Windsor Service Centre on (07) 3857 5085 to confirm your attendance. Meals cost around \$15. Dinner starts at 5:30pm

Kedron-Wavell Services Club

Thursday 7 February

21 Kittyhawk Drive, Chermside South



GLOBAL DATES

November

November (Mens Health)

3 December

International Day of People with Disability

10 December

Human Rights Day

25 December

Christmas Day

26 January

Australia Day

February

Feel Good February
(random acts of kindness)

18 February

International Asperger's Day

AccessAbility Day



During the week of 26 - 30 November 2018, EPIC is proud to be taking part in AccessAbility Day - an Australian Government initiative developed to connect jobseekers with disability and employers.

We are proud to be part of this important initiative that will give job seekers with disability the chance to experience a workplace or role that aligns with their career interests.

For more information about AccessAbility Day, www.jobaccess.gov.au/accessabilityday or call 1800 464 800.

TTY users can phone 1800 555 677 and then ask for 1800 464 800.

Festive season tips from EPIC

Health

The end of the year can bring parties with food and alcohol. It is important to remember that bad food, poor hydration, alcohol, caffeine and smoking increase or mimic the symptoms of anxiety. Stay hydrated and try to plan your meals to avoid poor eating choices.

Wellbeing

The end of the year is a great time to reflect on our achievements, big and small. It can be a great time to plan new SMART goals which contribute to making you feel positive, healthy and fulfilled.

Work

Work can be a great avenue to feel connected and provide a sense of purpose. However, as the end of the year approaches, workloads and stress can build. Consider trying to stay in the present moment, slow down your breathing and clear your mind. Focus on what is happening in the now.

Finance

The cost of gifts and food can start to build up. If you can't comfortably spend the money, then don't. Consider something meaningful and give gifts you can make or offer to help with the Christmas lunch.

Self-care

If you don't want to be on your own at Christmas but don't have anywhere to go, community groups provide many opportunities to meet other friendly people. You can find community groups on your local council website or community apps like Meetup.