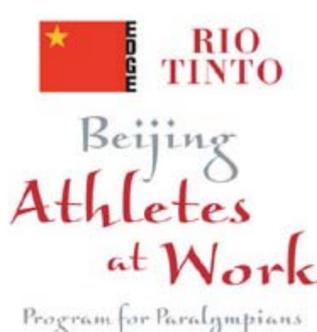


RIO TINTO STEPS UP TO THE BLOCKS FOR THE BEIJING ATHLETES AT WORK PROGRAM FOR PARALYMPIANS

It is generally recognised that for most athletes, participation in elite sport involves personal sacrifices such as reduced career opportunities, loss of income, additional costs of travel and support, and the suspension of a 'normal' social life. Balancing the pressures of training, competition, personal life, and study or career is a daunting task.

The same holds true for elite athletes with disabilities. Athletes with disabilities training for the Paralympics have consistently reported difficulties in successfully maintaining both their training requirements and their employment or educational pursuits – usually to the detriment of both.

EDGE is delighted to announce that it has received a grant of \$50,000 from the Rio Tinto WA Future Fund to assist in underwriting the cost of a **Rio Tinto Beijing Athletes at Work Program for Paralympians**, which will run over the next two years. EDGE first conceived the Athletes at Work concept in 1997 and has managed similar programs in the lead-up to Sydney and Athens with financial support from Lotterywest.



The Athletes at Work program has been independently evaluated by the University of Western Australia and was described as a unique program in Australia and internationally: In relation to Sydney 2000, the evaluators commented that, "Australia was the most successful country in the world and Western Australia was one of the most successful Australian states. Within the WA team, within Australia and internationally, the Athletes at Work program athletes won a disproportionately high number of medals."

The program was subsequently featured as the cover story on PALAESTRA, the leading international magazine for disabled sports and recreation (2003, Vol. 19, No. 2).

Program Manager and EDGE Executive Director, Dr Greg Lewis, said, "EDGE identified Rio Tinto as a logical partner in the Beijing Athletes at Work program due to its strong business interests in China, spanning more than 30 years, and the significant contribution that Rio Tinto makes to the community through the Rio Tinto WA Future Fund."

EDGE Board member and former Paralympian, Priya Cooper, said, "The Athletes at Work program was so valuable to me and my fellow athletes in the lead-up to the Sydney Paralympics. I'm thrilled that Rio Tinto has come on board for Beijing."

The Beijing Athletes at Work Program will assist approximately 20 elite athletes with disabilities currently in training for the Beijing Paralympics.

Athletes who have joined the Beijing Athletes at Work program will return from the Paralympics with stable employment histories and less financial pressures, marketable qualifications or progress towards qualifications, support to re-establish their careers or assistance to pursue new careers.

CHARLIES GAINS THE LEADING EDGE



Sue Robertson presenting Linda Davies with the Leading EDGE Employer Award.

Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital (SCGH) has been recognised with a Leading EDGE Employer Award for its long-term commitment and dedication to employing people with disabilities.

EDGE Managing Director, Sue Robertson, said the Hospital had employed 27 people with disabilities over the last 21 years and continually strived to identify new job opportunities.

"Particularly in the health field, Charlies is really leading by example, and demonstrating to other employers the value of, and contribution employees with disabilities can make to organisations of any size," she said.

SCGH Patient Support Services Manager, Linda Davies, said employees with disabilities are always very reliable, honest, hard working and selfless.

"Our patients come from all walks of life, and so too do our staff," she said. "Successful partnerships with disability employment agencies such as EDGE would not be possible without the acceptance and dedication of other staff. The support of co-workers and the encouragement they offer is so integral to workers with disabilities."

SCGH currently employs six people with disabilities who are supported by EDGE. Throughout the years, workers with physical, hearing and intellectual disabilities have held positions including newspaper vendor, pastry cook, laboratory assistant, ward assistant, gardener, kitchen hand, cleaner, records clerk and linen assistant.

THERESA TAKES CENTRE STAGE

Research tells us that school students who participate in well co-ordinated work experience or vocational education programs whilst at school are more likely to gain employment after they leave school.

Someone who is well aware of this fact is Theresa Williams from Cannington Community College. For the past year, Theresa has been completing a School-Based Traineeship in Hospitality at Jewel's Cafe and has recently been announced as the winner of the VET in Schools Student Awards - Special Needs Category.

Theresa has come a long way since she first started her work experience at Jewel's Cafe as a shy, Year 11 student. Marilyn Sims, the cafe proprietor, said "At the start Theresa lacked confidence and would stay behind the scenes due to her anxiety and her Tourette's (Syndrome). But with some encouragement and by us showing some trust in her ability, she is now out the front and dealing everyday with all the customers."



Theresa Williams hard at work at Jewel's Cafe.

After successfully completing a short work experience Marilyn could see the potential in Theresa and offered her a School Based Traineeship in Hospitality. The traineeship involves Theresa working two days per week at Jewel's Cafe and completing some structured on-the-job training.

With the support of EDGE, Theresa has really come on in leaps and bounds and as such her school nominated her for the VET in Schools Student Award 'to give her some more confidence'. To win this award Theresa had to be interviewed by a panel of experts in the area and answer a set of questions. Normally this would not have been possible for Theresa, but with her new-found confidence she performed so well that she was ultimately announced the winner.

"The whole experience, from the doing the work experience to the School-Based Traineeship and to being interviewed for the award has really given me so much confidence," said an elated Theresa.

Later this month she will get another chance to showcase her talents and confidence when she will be presented with a scholarship of \$2,000 towards future educational needs and then make a speech in front of 1,000 invited guests at the awards dinner.

WHERE THERE'S A WILL, THERE'S A WAY



Mark directing traffic outside Shenton College

It is quite strange to think of a crosswalk attendant as not actually being able to walk. But, Mark Pielage is not the type of man who would let this minor detail get in the way of him doing the job that he wanted to do.

Mark, who has been in a wheelchair since a motor bike accident several years ago has proved to everyone what can be achieved through determination and some creative application of workplace modifications.

In order for Mark to be able to hold the crosswalk flag up to signal to motorists to stop, the Occupational Therapists at EDGE had to design a 'jig' that would allow Mark to raise and lower the flag with minimal physical effort. They came up with a design that consisted of a manually activated swinging arm on a pivot.

"After we designed a few prototypes and tested them with Mark it was pretty straight forward from then on."

said EDGE OT, Evan Williams.

With the workplace modifications in place Mark is now able to do the job and is very happy with his new role. "Even the rainy days aren't too bad," said Mark. "It's just great being out working again and the kids always provide you with a bit of a laugh in the afternoons."