

EDGE MOVES TO BE MORE ACCESSIBLE

People with disabilities who are looking for work will have easier access to employment opportunities with the move of Edge Employment Solutions to Subi Centro.

Edge, one of Australia's largest, longest established and most successful employment agencies for people with disabilities, has been based in Subiaco since 1998 and expects to move to Subi Centro after their custom built offices are completed in March next year.

Edge Employment Solutions' Managing Director, Susan Robertson, said Subi Centro was a perfect fit for the company.

"It is close to public transport and its universal design approach means it is fully accessible for people with disabilities," she said.

"Edge's move to Centro proves that commercial development can easily incorporate universal design principles, allowing easy access to all members of the community and that, incorporating these principles at the planning stage, is not financially restrictive for developers."

The move has come about as part of the Subiaco Redevelopment Authority's (SRA) commitment to social and economic diversity in any new development in the project area.

SRA chief executive Tony Morgan said the SRA identified land in the Subi Centro project area in 2003 suitable for potential use by not-for-profit groups.

"Edge Employment Solutions' decision to move into Subi Centro is a significant one for the SRA, as it demonstrates that the area is desirable to a range of businesses," he said.

"It is also significant in terms of the effect it will have on expanding the precinct's economic base and diversifying its social demographic."

The \$2 million, two-storey building has 770sqm of floor space, undercover parking and state-of-the-art access for people with disabilities.

Ms Robertson said since the organisation's inception in 1984, Edge Employment Solutions has assisted 1243 people with disabilities into more than 3200 award wage jobs.

Article appeared in the Post Newspaper on the 17.08.04



Sue Robertson and Tony Morgan from the Subiaco Redevelopment Authority go over the plans for the new office in Hood Street. Photograph courtesy of the Community Newspaper Group.

PROFESSIONAL EDGE – HELPING UNI GRADUATES INTO EMPLOYMENT

Edge Employment Solutions has recently developed a new service, Professional Edge that assists university graduates with disabilities into employment. Statistics show us that university students with disabilities face many barriers to employment and can often struggle to gain employment even after graduation. Professional Edge has already had some great successes stories. One such case is Nicole Humble who is currently employed at the Department of Land Information (DLI) in Midland.



Nicole Humble helping promote Edge at the launch of the Premiers 'Accessing Abilities Policy'.

Nicole, who works in the Spatial Upgrade Section, was recruited through the highly competitive Graduate Program earlier this year with the assistance of Edge. Nicole who has completed a Bachelor of Science degree in Cartography, and also has a Diploma of Cartography was still experiencing some barriers to employment and contacted Professional Edge after attending a workshop held at Curtin University.

Edge was able to assist Nicole with her application and in the preparation for her interview. With the knowledge that Edge and DLI already had a successful partnership, her aim to gain employment at DLI was able to happen. "DLI attracted me because it suited my career aspirations, has a good employment rate for people with disabilities, and is a fair and equal workplace," Nicole said.

Apart from her academic achievements, Nicole is also a talented athlete. Next year she will represent Australia in women's soccer at the Deaf Olympics. Strategic HR Manager Meg Somers said DLI had implemented strategies to ensure the agency has a diverse workplace. "Our customers are from all areas of the community, and therefore it is important that our workforce reflects that," she said.

Edge's Manager of Corporate Marketing, Ian Hughes said that the Public Sector was well behind in its targets for employing people with disabilities. "Edge and DLI are trying to improve this situation," he said. "Professional Edge was something really quite exciting as it was the only program in Australia dedicated to university graduates with disabilities and that out of the eight people in the program, so far five had found employment within their chosen profession."

If you would like to find out more about the Professional Edge program or how we can assist you or your company to recruit university graduates with a disability please call Ian Hughes on (08) 9388 0077.

STUDENT MENTOR PROGRAM – IMPROVING THE OUTCOMES FOR TAFE STUDENTS

Edge Employment Solutions and TAFEWA - Swan and CY O'Connor Colleges have embarked on an innovative project that links students with a disability to industry specific mentors, to assist in the transition from studies to employment.

Research about students with a disability has shown that having a mentor who works in their area of interest:

- Makes getting into the workforce quicker, smoother and more successful; and
- Enhances the students' confidence, self-esteem and professional identity.

For mentors, the positive benefits have been shown to include:

- The development of a more innovative and flexible culture in their workplace;
- Demystifying disability and related workplace issues;
- Being perceived as a good corporate citizen to the wider community; and
- Increased awareness of the potential of students with disabilities as employees.

Over 45 students are currently participating in the Program, which aims to place 100 TAFE students with mentors before December, 2005. EDGE has received some very positive feedback from students and mentors alike:

Lee Holland, soon to complete his Certificate III of Engineering recommends the Program to other students as "a way of getting practical industry specific exposure". Lee's Mentor, from Phoenix Metal Fabrication is Alistair Dunstan. Alistair reports that the Program "appears to have lifted Lee's self-esteem and assisted him in refocusing on his studies at TAFE. Further, the Program has provided Lee with the opportunity for return to work." It is hoped that this experience will give Lee an EDGE over others when vying for employment when he graduates at the end of the year.



Student Lee Holland with Mentor Alistair Dunstan from Phoenix Metal Fabrication.

Peter Fenton, Owner/Operator from Empire Cleaning and also a Mentor in the Program, has found it to be a "real eye opener; the Program provides an opportunity for mutual learning and understanding. The mentoring has given the student confidence in his abilities and enhanced his self-esteem. It has given me the confidence to consider employing a worker with a disability".

Murdoch University, the University of Western Australia, Notre Dame University and Edith Cowan University also have students undertaking a similar experience for third year students. The Student Mentor Program was adapted by EDGE to meet the needs of tertiary students with disabilities.

Recent progress from one protégé at the West Australian Newspapers lends further support to this feedback.

Murdoch University, the University of Western Australia, Notre Dame University and Edith Cowan University also have final year students undertaking a similar mentoring experience. The Student Mentor Program was adapted by EDGE to meet the needs of tertiary students with disabilities.

To participate in or find out more about the Student Mentor Program please do not hesitate to contact Trevor Paterson or James Back at Edge Employment Solutions on 9388 0077.

SALLY HAS THE EDGE FOR SUCCESS

Sally Blythe has this month been named the sales person of the month at Wildflower Nursery at Wembley Homebase.



Sally Blythe at work amongst the hydrangeas at Wildflower Nursery.

The award recognised Sally's sales ability, having exceeded sales targets for the month of October. This combined with her positive attitude and strong commitment to customer service makes her a worthy winner.

Sally started at Wildflower Nursery in May and has been studying a Certificate II in Horticulture at Midland TAFE, in an effort to improve her horticultural knowledge.

Sally, who shows a true passion for all aspects of the position, said that "Working at Wildflower has been great and I like coming to work. The customers and staff are great and I am happy they value my

assistance."

This award also recognised the positive affect that Sally has on her co-workers. Kathy Boyer the manager said, "Sally shows so much team spirit and is always smiling which is great for our business. It just lifts the spirit of the staff around her as well."

Next year Sally hopes to go on and complete her Certificate III in Horticultural studies at TAFE and looks set to have a long and rewarding career ahead of her.