



## International Day of Disability

The International Day of People with Disability occurs every year on December 3rd and aims to promote a positive image of people with disability by showcasing their skills and abilities.

The Board of EDGE Employment Solutions determined that International Day of People with Disability would be an ideal day to hold a lunch to acquaint their business associates about the valuable role that people with disability play in the workforce.

Former International Marketing Manager for IBM Australasia and current Managing Director of Innov8 Consulting Group, Mark Bagshaw, was brought from Sydney to talk about his experiences in the executive workplace as a person with a disability. Mark talked about the proportion of the community who have a disability and impact, actual and potential; they had on the community and business. Guests at the lunch were both moved and inspired by Mark's presentation. EDGE has subsequently been inundated with offers of employment and general interest in doing more to recognise and support people with disability.

The lunch was held at the Old Swan Brewery and attended by more than 100 guests



Mark Bagshaw presenting the topic of the day – Barriers to Employment that People With Disability face.



(Left to Right): Adrian Ferguson (disability Services Commission), Marian De Souza-Scott (Australia Post), Irene Bishop (Woolworths), Rachael Freeman (Woolworths), Sandra Foster (Target Australia), Will Beresford (EDGE) and Rod Ross (Araluen).

## Katharine Patterson Steps into Law

**Stepping into . . .** provides participating students with disability four weeks' paid work experience within professional firms, to help them develop their technical and professional skills and to gain practical, hands-on experience in their chosen field.

The program was launched by the Australian Employers' Network on Disability, with the initial program, **Stepping into Law**, commencing in Sydney in 2005. Since then the program has gone from strength to strength, growing across Australia (Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Canberra and Perth) and across professions (Law, Accounting, Banking, Human Resources, Information Technology and, Public Policy and Research). EDGE Employment Solutions has been selected as the Western Australian disability employment representative.

Participating organisations include KPMG, Qantas, Federal Court of Australia, FaHCSIA, Australian Tax Office, Department of Defence, Sparke Helmore Lawyers, Freehills, Baker & McKenzie, Henry Davis York, and Stockland Corporation.

Katharine applied to the **Stepping into Law** program during her final year of her Bachelor of Laws degree. Katharine was eligible for the program due to a musculo-skeletal disability. Katharine secured a placement at the Federal Court of Australia (FCA) WA registry. Katharine, FCA and EDGE Employment Solutions jointly developed solutions to her workplace needs.

The quality of Katharine's work was acknowledged by FAC. She was very much a quiet achiever, and her presence within the office was very beneficial in helping to dispel many of the myths that are associated with people with disability.

## John Dawson – Apprentice /Trainee of the year 2009

John Dawson has recently been awarded first place in the Bullsbrook Chamber of Commerce Apprentice/Trainee of the year for 2009 in the category of First year, through his dedication to his current employer the City of Swan.

John has been an employee with the City of Swan for approximately three years. City of Swan hosted John in his Certificate II Traineeship in Horticulture. He then applied for and was successful in obtaining a full time permanent position with the City of Swan, as a Certificate III Trainee Horticulturalist. Since commencing his Traineeship in August 2008, John has undertaken studies at TAFE WA in Horticulture. John's aim is to be a certified Horticulturalist within the next two years. To gain the title of Horticulturalist John will need to complete studies to a Certificate IV Level.



John Dawson Horticulturalist for the City of Swan.

John is registered with EDGE Employment Solutions, as John is diagnosed with Audio Dyslexia. John claims the job and training has been great assisting him in improving his literacy, comprehension and communication skills.

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John's achievement to date have been extraordinary, he has completed his Certificate II and is half way through Certificate III in Horticulture, thus putting him on schedule to complete his apprenticeship within the next two years.

John started out with the Horticultural crew working in the Ellenbrook and has since worked in various suburbs, including Ellenbrook, Bullsbrook and The Vines. Duties undertaken include various mowing and horticultural works.

John's work ethic, enthusiasm, pride and general commitment to ensuring he delivers exceptional work in his community, has seen him progress quickly to acting duties as a team leader. John's continued dedication, expertise and commitment will hold him in good stead for permanent position as Team Leader in the very near future.

John has shown the leadership and levels of maturity mainly seen in much older employees, which is a credit to him and the team he works with both at EDGE Employment Solutions and the City of Swan.

## Resources to Regions

EDGE Employment Solutions has implemented its own variation to the State Government's Royalties to Regions program.

EDGE has offered free training and support to rural and remote disability employment services in Western Australia.

Earlier this year EDGE delivered a three-day workshop to Kimberley Personnel staff in Broome. Later in the year EDGE delivered a three-day workshop in Perth to disability employment services from Port Hedland, Kalgoorlie and Geraldton.

EDGE has also provided a number of one-to-one mentoring opportunities for managers and staff from rural and remote disability employment services and has providing ongoing information, advice and support via phone and e-mail.

## Kicking a goal for the Eagles – Shane McGowan's Story

When I was initially asked to write something for Inside Edge, I was unsure of how exactly I could put into words the changes in my life over the past 18 months. To have gone from being unemployed and unsure of where I was heading, to working for the West Coast Eagles, has been an unbelievable journey. This would have been impossible without the help and support of my family, close friends, West Coast Eagles and EDGE Employment Solutions.



Shane McGowan enjoying the energy and view of the Subiaco football oval.

The difference between being employed, and not, is like night and day. Having a sense of purpose and commitment to something far greater than oneself is so very special. Never before have I been a witness to or part of, anything resembling this. To have been afforded the chance to work for the club I have loved for 22 years is somewhat surreal. In addition to that, being surrounded by a group of people so driven and hard-working, whilst possessing complete trust and respect for one another, is a pleasure and privilege. As a result, my transition into the workforce has been made so much easier.

It is one thing to be given an opportunity such as I have; another altogether to be given the tools to capitalise on it. This is where EDGE comes into their own. By combining their expertise, with hard work and genuine compassion for their clients, EDGE's support staff provides you with every opportunity to succeed. It is then up to the individual regarding what they accomplish. What I did not, and am certain many do not, understand is just how much is involved.

There is somebody who I have become particularly close to: my EDGE Job Co-ordinator. Every time I have stumbled, my Job Co-ordinator has been there to pick me up. The fact that she has always been honest regarding my progression ensures that I know exactly where I stand and, as such, never have any misconceptions about how I am going. My Job Co-ordinator has also been responsible for maintaining constant contact with my family, ensuring those closest to me are always in the loop. This is absolutely vital, as it allows me to concentrate on my work, whilst knowing that those I care for are always at ease. Then there are the practicalities of providing me with a work station that is 100% accessible: a Voice Recognition System, without which work would be impossible.

I hope that I have been able to provide a clear understanding of just how much my life has changed. As I have said before, the strength and support of family and close friends, a wonderful opportunity provided by the West Coast Eagles, along with the support and expertise of EDGE, has transformed the lives of both myself and my family. No longer do I simply exist - I now live life! And for this I will always be thankful.

Management and staff of EDGE Employment Solutions would like to wish everyone a safe & happy festive season.

