

## DWE NEWSLETTER

October 17<sup>th</sup> 2009



**Introduction:** Hello readers! Welcome to our newsletter. This edition is focused on art and education, if you would like a specific topic covered we are happy to search for and collate that topic for generic distribution. Any feedback or contributions are most welcome.

### **Our news:**

DWE is very excited to be helping the City of Whittlesea to develop their 'Accessible Events Guide' for staff members. We plan for it to be a thorough and 'state of the art' resource to make all events in the area accessible and inclusive for all. We are also working with staff members at the Mill Park Recreation Centre to be as inclusive as possible to visitors who may have a disability and want to use the centre's facilities. The disability awareness training has been specifically tailored to suit their needs. If you would like to undertake similar types of training, or development of resources contact DWE.

### **Other news:**

#### **Businessman happy he hired the disabled**

By Danny Rose, AAP August 21, 2009, 2:32 am

A Danish businessman who runs a successful IT firm staffed only by people with autism says it's time to recognise the special skills of people with disabilities.

Thorkil Sonne founded Specialisterne (English translation: Specialists) five years ago, and his team of consultants now make light work of some of the most detailed, time consuming and repetitive jobs in computer programming.

"I have 43 employees now with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and we serve customers like Cisco and CSC, and big Danish companies, for services like software testing, data entry and quality control," Mr Sonne told AAP.

"It's all the tasks where you have to be very structural, you have to have very high precision ... These tasks are very well suited to our staff but not so motivating for people that are generalists."

By "generalists" Mr Sonne means people who don't have ASD, a brain development disorder often characterised by reduced social and communications skills.

However, people with ASD can display a razor sharp focus and attention to detail, boosted memory recall and enhanced numerical skills.

Mr Sonne offers the example of software bug testing, saying it required a series of meticulous tests to find faults, followed by "fixes" by the programmers, and the process was repeated several times over.

The final runs were the most critical, and yet this was the time when conventional testers could find their attention waning.

"The big difference between our consultants and testers ... is that if its generalists who do the testing, after the first two or three times they lose their motivation," Mr Sonne says.

"... So we try to find the niches in the business sector where we can bring in our staff who are motivated by repetitive tasks."

Specialisterne received a top honour in Denmark's IT awards last year and it charges market rates for its services.

"We're not cheap labour," Mr Sonne says.

The company was set up without government funding and the inspiration, Mr Sonne says, was the birth of his third son Lars who was diagnosed with ASD at age three.

It has now expanded to Scotland and work is underway to replicate the business model in other countries.

Mr Sonne was in Australia this week for talks with interested groups and to attend the Asia Pacific Autism Conference, in Sydney.

"It's very likely that we can replicate the concept to Australia ... I think we could create at least 100 jobs here if we transferred our experience from Denmark," he says.

"I get very positive feedback," Mr Sonne also says of his workers.

"The term disability often overshadows the abilities that are typically there, somewhere. You just have to find them."

### **Out of the shadows- By Nicole Precel 13th October 2009 11:05:51 AM**

AN ART exhibition at Williamstown's Substation will highlight a group of local artists that are often under-represented.

Yarraville resident Peter Cave will be one of the many artists with disabilities to exhibit their work at A4 @ The Substation exhibition, which opens this Friday.



Pathways and planning co-ordinator at Annecto - The People Network, Kate Warlond said it was a great way to get their community together and show the wider public what they could do.

"It was the Substation and Hobsons Bay that identified that we do have a range of artists from a different community that aren't often represented, and other people had identified that we have artists from a slightly different perspective," she said.

Mr Cave has been oil painting since he was 16 and said he'll continue to paint "as long as kangaroos are in Australia. It's a personal love, a true love of art," he said.

The artist has had several exhibitions including one at the Louis Joel Arts and Community Centre.

"I have three going in this weekend, one of a tram from the western suburbs, one of Maribyrnong river and one of the West Gate Bridge in the Western suburbs," he said.

“The aim of A4 @ The Substation is to promote social understanding, acceptance and inclusion of people with a disability, while highlighting some of the outstanding local talent of our residents,” he said.

“I started with brush strokes and canvas boards, I always stuck with oils all my life. I keep on going every day of the year since I was 16 and a half,” Mr Cave said. “I’m happy because it’s part of my life, isn’t it? It’s part of my life and growing up as well.”

The exhibition will include glasswork, jewellery, a group mosaic, media, sculptures and paintings.

The exhibition runs from 16-25 October and is open Thursday to Sunday from 10am-4pm. For more information contact The Substation on 9391 2736 or visit [www.thesubstation.org.au](http://www.thesubstation.org.au).

### **New Feminist Disability Blog Launched**

A new blog, FWD/Forward, has recently launched at <http://disabledfeminists.com/>. FWD/Forward is a group blog written by feminists with disabilities. It is a place to discuss disability issues and the intersection between feminism and disability rights activism. The content ranges from basic information which is designed to introduce people who are new to disability issues or feminism to some core concepts, to more advanced topics, with the goal of promoting discussion, conversation, fellowship, and education.

### **Shut Out – excluded from education** - Posted by Jane on Monday, October 12, 2009

Children with a disability are being left behind by the education revolution, according to the patron of a national disability organisation.

“It is still possible for a child with a disability in this country to leave school without the ability to read or write,” Dr Rhonda Galbally said today. “Children with a disability lag behind on a whole range of indicators – yet very little progress has been made in closing the gap. The statistics are outrageous – but where is the outrage?”

Dr Galbally made her remarks during an address to the National Press Club in Canberra today. A long time campaigner for disability rights, Dr Galbally is the patron of the National Disability and Carer Alliance and is Chair of the National People with Disabilities and Carer Council. During her address Dr Galbally presented material from Shut Out: The Experience of People with Disabilities and their Families in Australia, a report recently released by the National People with Disabilities and Carer Council.

Shut Out is the product of extensive consultations across the country with people with a disability, their families, friends and carers. It is the first comprehensive picture of what contemporary life is like for people with a disability in this country. The report details the discrimination and exclusion experienced by people with a disability and the multiple barriers they face in accessing employment, education, housing, health care and recreation.

Dr Galbally also used her address to add her support to the growing campaign for a National Disability Insurance Scheme. She said the introduction of such a scheme would provide government with a responsible economic solution to the funding crisis which confronted them. At the same time it would ensure people with a disability, their families and carers had the support and resources they needed to become full participants in the economic, social and cultural life of the nation.

“A National Disability Insurance Scheme would enable people with a disability to finally get what they need when they need it to participate more fully in the life of the community,” she said.

***Please note - The ‘Shut Out: The Experience of People with Disabilities and their Families in Australia’ document is available at:***

**[http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/disability/pubs/policy/community\\_consult/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/disability/pubs/policy/community_consult/Pages/default.aspx)**

### **Quantum Technology WYNN Scholarship Program**

Quantum Technology is excited to announce the WYNN (What You Need Now) Scholarship Program, which is intended to assist students and those who have been assessed as having a learning disability.

The Scholarship prize is for a full copy of WYNN software, a program which provides enhanced access to all manner of texts – printed or electronic. WYNN is a highly sophisticated and effective program, developed by internationally renowned educators.

The Scholarship is open to any person within Australia or New Zealand who has been assessed as having a learning disability.

- Applications close on Friday 29 January 2010
- In 500 words or less, tell us why you need a WYNN Scholarship and how it will assist you in your place of employment or education
- Applications can be submitted in writing or by audio or electronic format
- Applications must be attached to an application form

***Full details of the WYNN Scholarship Program and copies of the application form are available on our website: [www.quantumtechnology.com.au](http://www.quantumtechnology.com.au)***

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#### **Contact us:**

**E:** [deb@disabilityconsultants.com.au](mailto:deb@disabilityconsultants.com.au)

**W:** [www.disabilityconsultants.com.au](http://www.disabilityconsultants.com.au)

**M:** 0428 991 671

**P:** (03) 5334 4358

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