

HELPING HANDS

Sometimes inspiration strikes at the most random of times... as Brad Edwards, a carer at Bundaleer Care Services discovered at work late last year. The unique beauty of the hands of the residents he helps care for inspired a creative project like no other. The result can now be viewed as a series of framed photographs at "Not a Café" in Wauchope.

Hi Brad. Tell us about your position with Bundaleer Care Services and what's involved in the role ...

I work as a carer at Bundaleer's Johnstone Street facility. My favourite part of the job is working with the team on group activities with our residents. Especially those that either re-ignites an old passion for something like music, cooking or even gardening; or that introduces new activities that the residents may have never had the opportunity to do before, in this case like modelling and or creating pieces of art.

You've produced a series of really interesting photographs recently, which feature people's hands. How did you come up with this idea?

I was admiring the way that one of my residents was playing a harmonica – which also happened to be the very same harmonica that he carried and played throughout the war. I was just completely mesmerized by his hands – they were lined, experienced, skilled and beautiful with a million stories to tell – and that's when the idea came to me. I guess I just had to capture that moment in time and it just grew from there, as all our residents have their own special story.

When did your interest in photography begin...was this "hand" project the start of a new passion, or have you held a long term interest in the field?

I guess I've always had an interest in photography, but it was actually an article in the FOCUS last year that inspired me to turn that interest into a project with the residents.

Describe some of the individual shots that you took that formed part of your series...

I love the collection as a whole because to me it just proves that age, frailty or living in a nursing home doesn't have to stop you from doing the things you have always done.

My favourite shots include:

An artist and former President of the Port Macquarie Arts Society, whose life's passion is painting and art appreciation, still has a keen eye and an interest in creating beautiful works of art.

Another of my favourites, purely because it represents so many of our residents who have a love of flowers, gardening and nurturing is the beautiful Gladioli being cradled.

And I love the passion behind the photo of the lady who plays the piano with one hand, better than most people will ever do with two. Such an inspiring story.

What did you enjoy most about the entire creative process of shooting these photos.

For me, I think the collaboration with the residents was the most enjoyable part. Convincing them that I wasn't crazy in wanting to undertake the project in the first place, then taking them on the creative journey with me and finally watching their joy as we chose frames and assembled the final product together was the most rewarding part.

If you could do a similar project again, what would you do differently (if anything)?

If I was to run a similar project, I think it would be interesting to give the camera to the residents themselves and give them the license to let their creative juices flow.

What feedback have you received from the people whose hands form the basis of your work?

Our resident models were tickled pink with the results, especially considering they didn't believe their hands were photogenic initially.

Your hand photos can currently be viewed at “Not a café” in Wauchope. What processes did you have to complete to ensure your work could be displayed in this way?

I worked with Ash and Indy from the café, who gave me the size requirements for the display board, advised their preference for recycled photo frames and confirmed they were supportive of my vision for a black and white theme.

What’s next on the agenda...are there any future project ideas in mind?

Drumming up the support of some more wonderful volunteers so we can do some more amazing projects! So if you’re like me and you like the idea of making a difference in the lives of our residents – and are interested in becoming a volunteer, we would love to hear from you.

Your time and energy will be put to good use across a range of activities, including cooking classes, dancing lessons, gardening programs, men’s sheds, choir, social excursions, reading, playing cards, walking groups and much more.

And with studies showing that people who volunteer are happier and live longer – it’s a win/win situation! Training and support provided – please call 02 6585 2811.

Final say...

We are currently planning a Family Fun Day for our residents, their families and the entire Wauchope community. There will be lots of FREE activities including jumping castles, a giant slide, animal farm, market stalls and much more, it will be a great opportunity to come and check out Bundaleer and have some fun – so please bring your friends and family and join us on Saturday March 25 from 10am to 4pm on at 142a Cameron St.

Media Enquiries - for any questions or to organise an interview with Brad Edwards, Carer of Bundaleer Care Services please call Brooke on 02 6585 2811.