Stepping up to the challenge

Chris was in year 9 at Monterey Secondary College. He was not sure of his future school prospects, and had Chris not participated in a youth training project at the Brotherhood’s Furniture Works Training Centre, it is possible he would no longer be at school. Chris could have fallen through the cracks, another unemployment statistic, destined to a future of disadvantage.

Chris could have fallen through the cracks ... but he didn't

Fortunately for Chris, he was identified by his teachers as a student who was ‘at risk’ of not completing his education at secondary level, and was invited to participate in the Brotherhood’s Step Up – Skill Up program. This involved a 12 week course at the Brotherhood’s Furniture Works Training Centre, gaining practical and hands on experience in carpentry and cabinet making.

Here’s Chris’ story ...

“About 3 years ago I moved to Melbourne with my parents, we came from Sydney. There was nothing like Step Up – Skill Up in Sydney, and I only found out about it when a teacher came into our class one day and asked six of us kids if we wanted to participate in it. We really didn’t know what to expect at first, we thought it was just work experience.

‘At Furniture Works they focus more on you’

I didn’t think I’d get as much out of it, like the hands on experience. It was pretty hard at the start using the equipment, but we got used to it. We got to use a lot of hand tools. It was so different from doing a woodworking class at school. At Furniture Works they focus more on you and tell you about how things are done more accurately.

The program went for 12 weeks and we had to make a cabinet. My cabinet is hanging in my room now, I’ve got all my DVDs in it. My parents thought it was really good. I don’t think they thought I could make something as good as that. I suppose neither did I.

‘When I got back to school I wanted to achieve’

When I got back to school I was much more focused on my school work and I really wanted to achieve.
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Rob is one of the guys at Furniture Works who taught us what to do. He was around us the whole time and would show us what needed to be done to make the cabinet but also explain to us how at the same time. He was great and would help us out whenever we needed a hand. It was really easy to ask for help when you needed it.

I’m in year 10 now and I am definitely going to stay on and complete school. I really want to be a carpenter or a furniture maker. It’s been a great hands on experience.”

Chris

A mother’s view
Patricia is Chris’ Mum and she says, “I was amazed at the quality of the cabinet Chris made. Knowing Chris now intends to stay and finish school makes me happy, but more importantly, I’m so proud of him”.

Teaching for life
Rob is a retired teacher who volunteers one day a week at Furniture Works Training Centre. “When I retired I felt isolated. I wanted to be more involved with the community, I missed being around people. Step Up – Skill Up was just as good for me as it was for the kids”

A word from our Acting Executive Director, John Wilson

The Brotherhood welcomes a new Executive Director

The Brotherhood’s Board is delighted to announce the appointment of Tony Nicholson as our new Executive Director. Tony will commence in October. I will remain as Acting Executive Director until that time.

Tony is currently the Chief Executive Officer of Hanover Welfare Services, a Melbourne based organisation regarded as Australia’s leading agency in the field of homelessness. He has overseen significant growth at Hanover through service development and innovation, research and policy analysis and compelling advocacy for people experiencing homelessness.

We strongly believe that Tony has the experience and leadership to make a great contribution to the Brotherhood, and we look forward to introducing Tony more fully in the future.

Is there an election in the air?

The media might lead us to believe that an election is due soon! We believe this is our opportunity to highlight the vital importance of upholding social policy which has faced a two-decade subordination to ‘the economy’ in this country.

As a nation we need to urgently re-invest in a new social policy architecture. One that encourages the reinstatement of increased social investment for health, housing, education and employment.

Together, let’s ensure that our voices are heard during this election campaign to support an Australia free of poverty.

We need your continued support

To ensure that the Brotherhood can be heard for those who have no voice during this election campaign we need your continued financial support. At tax time, if your gift reaches us before June 30 you can claim a tax deduction this financial year. Most importantly, you will be helping to make sure that exclusion in our society does not continue.

Regards,

John.
Here come the mighty Bulldogs!

When Terry Roberts, Employment Manager of the Brotherhood of St Laurence's GAPCo program, read through his local paper in March this year, an advertisement for an Aussie Rules football coach grabbed his attention. But this was no ordinary coaching position – it was for the head coach of the Bulldogs, a local team playing in the Football Integration Development Association (F.I.D.A.).

F.I.D.A is purposely run for the needs of people with disabilities and Terry saw the link with the Brotherhood's Graduate and Professional Career Options (GAPCo) program. GAPCo is a specialised employment service that assists and supports people with physical, sensory, psychiatric and intellectual disabilities into work. With a background in the disability sector, Terry applied for the coaching position and was successful.

When Terry called the first training session for the season only four players showed up and he quickly realised that he had taken on a challenging role. This didn't faze him however. The Bulldogs was made up of a group of young people who had no idea what it was like to win. They hadn't won a game in the F.I.D.A. league in two years and this was the reason the team advertised for a coach with experience. As Terry says, 'These boys didn't deserve to keep losing games. It was de-moralizing, their self esteem wasn't what it was when they first came to the Bulldogs and there wasn't much fun in it for them losing games week in, week out.'

By the second training session the numbers of players began to grow. The initial four players had sent the word out through their friends and networks that the new coach was good. Some even thought he was an ex-AFL coach. By the time the first game was due to be played the Bulldogs had gone from a team of four players to a formidable team of thirty-one.

Terry says he draws upon his fifteen years experience in the disability sector when coaching the boys. 'I run a very tight ship based around discipline and mutual respect,' Terry says. 'Aside from the intellectual disabilities there are some players that have serious anger problems. By rotating the captaincy each week the team is built on the philosophy of inclusion and participation. These boys know that it’s not about disability but ability.'

Terry’s philosophy, which is also the Brotherhood's, is that ‘what we do for one we do for many’ and he sees this as the reason why the Bulldogs have bonded and been so successful. ‘These young men now have goals and aspirations and are made to feel included in what is such an important part of Australian life – sport.’

The Brotherhood has embraced the team, and Terry’s hard work, and has fitted them out with team jumpers and jackets. They are now officially called the GAPCo BSL Bulldogs.

The team, and the changes in the young men involved, is evidence that inclusion benefits all. 'There have been some major changes in the attitudes and self esteem of the boys,' Terry says, 'and GAPCo has also benefited from the experience. It has given us exposure out there in the community and with other disability services. I have also been able to develop links with the local government and other community sectors in the western suburbs.'

"The boys have just played game number five. They haven’t lost a game this season and for these boys this is the stuff that dreams are made of."

Well done to Terry and the mighty Bulldogs.
Interested in becoming a volunteer at the Brotherhood of St Laurence?
Volunteers form a very important part of the BSL and we can't do it alone. Give something back to your community. Your time is worth so much to us. Become a volunteer today!

**Metro** – Rosa D’Aprano (03) 9483 1390  
**Peninsula** – Heather Ingram (03) 9770 1544

**A gift that lasts**
Remember a loved one or a friend by honouring their memory.

As a last wish, many people request that money, which may have been spent on funeral flowers, be used to help others instead.

Money raised in this way will be used to pay for the funeral of a Brotherhood client, to enable them to be buried with dignity. Call (03) 9483 1301 to send your remembrance.

**Home pick-up service**
The Brotherhood operates a home pick-up service for good quality furniture donations in metropolitan Melbourne and Geelong area. Call (03) 9385 6111

**Savour our screen saver**
We have developed a screen saver representing our vision – an Australia free of poverty through advocacy, innovation, partnerships and sustainable programs.

It's easy to install. If you would like a copy of this screen saver free of charge, contact Nicole Dunham on (03) 9483 1369 or e-mail ndunham@bsl.org.au

For a copy call Peter Hannan on (03) 9483 1399.

Contact Nicole on 9483 1369 or e-mail ndunham@bsl.org.au