



Wednesday 17 March 2010 (11.30am – 2.30pm)

Glenquarie Community Centre at James Meehan High School

### **Local Career Stories:**

#### **Lawyers Encouraging and Assisting Promising Students (LEAPS)**

James Meehan High School has an ongoing partnership with the law firm Minter Ellison. Minter Ellison provides leadership support to students and staff in a large number of ways. For example, the firm helped the school acquire our school bus through the Variety Club in 2004. Minter Ellison has also been involved in mentoring JMHS students through the LEAPS program. LEAPS is a program in which young people in disadvantaged areas are mentored by staff from large city law firms.

The LEAPS program brings the students into the workplace to show them the types of jobs that exist in large businesses. Volunteers from Minter Ellison are trained to mentor each student. The students are also trained in workplace behaviour. The mentors visit the school to meet the students and their families to be matched. Both mentors and students sign commitment statements.

Students in the program travel to Sydney once a fortnight to spend an hour doing structured activities with their mentors. These activities include study skills, goal-setting, ethics and work skills.

#### **Macquarie Fields Local Area Command Police program with James Meehan High School**

The police program is run across several schools in the area. It started out because the Police Commander mentioned that a number of students from James Meehan High School (JMHS) were interested in becoming police officers. Constable Myrna Williams picked it up and ran with it! Year 12 Students were taken to Goulburn Police Academy and began fitness training with Myrna after school. This year (2010) because of the high interest ex-year 12 students had in policing, a course was created at TAFE to cater to their needs. Hopefully these kids (young adults) will then take the next step in fulfilling their dreams.

Last year JMHS began interviewing year groups to broaden their understanding of career options based on their strengths and interests. Students were interviewed by Plan-It Youth mentors who have worked with JMHS students on various projects. We started with year 12 and worked our way down to year 9. We intend to continue this process as it has been productive and for some students, has opened up their mind about what they could potentially do.

#### **Rosalinda Perido-Roberts (in her own words)**

I am volunteering in the Department of Housing doing the Community Vegetable garden in partnership with School for Social Entrepreneur (graduated) The goal is to move from dependency to income-generating projects and break the cycle of poverty. This project will affect the larger community by improved nutrition, better health, sustainable community and possible employment leading to improve the physical, emotional and economic well being of people from all ages in the community visioning the community growers market as one of the outcome. This was based on my felt needs and observations using my skilled being a masters degree in Agriculture (overseas) Currently I am maintaining a 2 demonstration garden here in the community for the residents to see the technology ( permaculture ) I am also enrolled now in TAFE on Community Services hoping that I can find work in this country .

#### **Peter Phillips (in his own words)**

I was brought up in Macquarie Fields from the age of 11 in the worst street in Macquarie Fields at the time. I was getting into a lot of trouble and was in a state of mind that didn't give me no hope for a bright future. Jigging School, stealing cars, breaking into houses was what normal teens in my street did and I followed the trend "that's what we knew". Then the

riots happened in Macquarie Fields and I was involved along with a lot of my other mates. That's when Youth Off The Streets set up their outreach down the basketball courts.

At first me and my friends were wondering what YOTS were up to then we talked to two of the workers and they seemed to be approachable. We regularly came down after that and I was building up a good relationship with one of the Youth Workers named Scott Allan. One night I offered to cook the Barbeque for Outreach every night and then a couple of weeks later Father Chris Riley saw me cooking the BBQ and offered me a service learning trip overseas to Albania to help kids and young people who were working on a rubbish tip collecting recyclables for money.

Seeing how they lived with no electricity no running water or hot water, struggling to buy something to eat. Made me want to help these kids, so I had to think twice about the lifestyle that I was living and what could I do to change my lifestyle. When I got back to Australia I asked Father how could I become someone who could help kids in need? He said I could be a Youth Worker and offered me a traineeship to become one. I started in 2005 and completed the traineeship in 2008 and I have been a fully qualified Youth Worker since.

#### **Paul Gavel** (in his own words)

Since 2007 Sydney South West Area Health Service has been running the Healthwise program to bring a greater focus to careers in health and to encourage students to consider a career in health. We run seven Healthwise Fairs each year; two specifically for Aboriginal students. These are half day events; held mostly at our hospitals. They are for schools students interested in health (generally year 10) and typically we have between 30 and 200 people attend. The schools bring the students and we place in front of them our staff from the full range of occupations – clinical and non clinical. This just facilities interaction and we use our staff to talk about what they do and why they like doing it and to offer any helpful advice about pathways into the career. We encourage students to consider the range of career options. Usually try and organise tours of the hospital.

Work experience is a natural follow up to all of this – we take around 200 students a year – so placements cannot be guaranteed and there are some places it is difficult for people to work in + there are more requirements to work in a clinical area (immunisation, understanding patient privacy and confidentiality for example).

Results are really only measurable at present in terms of attendance at Fairs and feedback from Fairs and work experience – as its almost too early to see any students in the work place yet – given most have to undertake some form of tertiary training. The main thing is just to have health known and people aware of what opportunities exist and how to go about pursuing a goal to work in health.

To our knowledge no-one else has focused on health careers in the way we have and certainly the Healthwise concept was something we pioneered with our partners. We were recognised for this in 2009 with the Career Development Association of Australia large employer of the year award and we have had Healthwise endorsed and promoted nationally as a model to follow by the Health and Community Services Industry Skills Council.

#### **David Johnson** (in his own words)

Current title, Manager of the Macarthur Building Industry Skills Centre (MBISC). Substantive position Head Teacher Wood machining, Saw doctoring and Floor covering. Qualifications in brief:

- Bachelor of Education
- Diploma Adult Education
- Wood machining Trade certificate
- Post Trade Wood machining
- Post Trade Cabinetmaking
- Architectural Drafting Certificate
- Certificate 4 Workplace Assessment

I was part of a migrant family of 7 that arrived in Australia in 1964. I those days it was a case of sink or swim, there was no support either transitional or financial support for migrants you just got on with life. In England I was progressing well at school. I was a 9 year old from England who was used to a different school and syllabus. I did not have a teacher that was will to help me adjust to a different syllabus you either understood what was going on or considered dumb. When I look back now it was just a case of not understanding some of the foundation work. We moved from the city to Cartwright in Green Valley in 1966 where I attended Miller High School.

At the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> form or what is now year 9, I was old enough to leave school but typical of most parents it was conditional on getting an apprenticeship. My dad was a Wood machinist and he gave me a few leads. I started work on the 8<sup>th</sup> December 1969 for a grand total of \$13.00 per week during a probation period prior to an apprenticeship. After the following Christmas break they offered me an apprenticeship as a Wood machinist. The company name was Robert Wilsons and they made commercial and custom built furniture. I stayed with them for 12 months learning how to set up and operate lots of different types of machines especially when the foreman wasn't around the other apprentices would get me to do their work. I stayed with them for about 12 months until the management change and all of a sudden I just became a production worker. I contacted the old manager and he offered me a job in his new factory Hermann Furniture to continue my apprenticeship but also have the opportunity to learn some cabinetmaking, furniture polishing and

upholstery. By the end of my apprenticeship I was doing everything from unloading material off the trucks to delivering and install office fit outs.

At the end of my apprenticeship I was assistant to the production manager organising the manufacture of custom built and commercial furniture. I also found that I really enjoyed the atmosphere in TAFE and found myself enrolling in more courses to complement my trade course. I firstly completed the post trade Cabinetmaking and found that I enjoyed drawing furniture so the next course I did was Architectural Drafting then Management. While studying in the evening I was still working 40 per week and overtime on Saturday mornings. I stayed with this company for 4 years after completing my apprenticeship. I then started to get itchy feet, I needed a new challenge and change. I applied for job as an Instructor in a rehabilitation centre teaching people how to use Woodworking machines. The job included working in a sheltered workshop and working with people who had a serious illness or accident, assessing them for open employment . I continued my studies of an evening and I think in total went to Tech for 13 years during the evening.

After three-and-a-half years I decided that I needed another change. I thoroughly enjoyed that work but the centre was looking at closing down or changing its focus. I noticed at that time an advertisement in the news paper for a Teacher of Wood machining at TAFE so I thought that I would give it a go. I applied and sat for the tests received an interview and didn't get the job. Something went wrong but I was now determined that I wasn't going to give up I wanted to become a teacher. I waited for the next advertisement and reapplied and was successful. I started working for TAFE in July 1980 and have been with them ever since. I started off as a teacher, acted in many senior positions, was appointed as Head Teacher of Wood machining, Saw doctoring and Floor covering and I am currently Manager of the Macarthur Building Industry Skills Centre at Ingleburn. This centre will open at the beginning of the second semester this year. In all that time I still managed to keep studying for a Bachelor of Education, various CAD courses, Fibre Glassing, and other courses. I now earn considerably more than \$13 per week. I still enjoy using my machine and Hand skills, I have made most of my furniture and commissioned to make one off pieces of furniture for friends and associates.

### **Mandy Edwards**

Mandy is currently employed by MAX Employment as an Employment Consultant, having previously been a client up until August of last year.

Mandy was a client of MAX Employment for 203 weeks. Through a time of considerable personal upheaval, Mandy continued to participate in a range of voluntary work including helping to run the Aboriginal Women's Group.

Last year, Mandy was invited by MAX Employment to work on their Innovation Program in Macquarie Fields in what she thought was a voluntary position. Jo Sammut from Housing NSW had been approached by MAX Employment about the new program and put Mandy's name forward to work on it. This is a good example of how interaction with community programs can lead to career pathways. After receiving training from MAX Employment, Mandy now works four days a week at MAX Employment helping others to find employment.

### **Christine Gray**

Christine Gray is a single Mum, living in Macquarie Fields, with a 10 year old son who attends Macquarie Fields Public School. Christine enrolled in a Certificate 1 Computer Course for Woman through the Outreach section at Macquarie Fields College in 2008. Christine completed the Outreach course and then enrolled in Certificate 11 in Business Administration as an on line student. Christine successfully completed this course as well.

From here Christine commenced voluntary work at the Break Away Café a role she enjoyed for 6 months. In January 2009, the organisation was successful in gaining funding and Christine was offered a paid position in the role of Café Coordinator. Christine is now employed 15 hours per week supervising Job Network volunteers, planning organising and preparing meals.

Christine has also completed a Safe Food Handling course in her spare time! Christine is also the Vice President for the Parents and Friends at Macquarie Fields Primary School, Vice President for the Ingleburn Bulldogs Junior Rugby League Club, as well as the Team Leader and Registrar.

Christine, as a single Mum, has had to single-handedly parent her child, overcome enormous challenges whilst maintaining her own sense of worth to become part of the workforce.

### **Joanne McWilliam**

As the Mother of four children, fifteen, twelve, eight and six Joanne's role was to remain at home raising her four children. Joanne enrolled as an Outreach student in Introduction to Community Services in Semester 2 2008. Joanne successfully completed the course and gained confidence, awareness and knowledge along the way.

In November 2009, Joanne read a job advertisement for an Aboriginal Education Officer at Guise School. The advertisement was pinned up outside the Social Housing Office in Macquarie Fields. Joanne applied for the position, and following a competitive application process, Joanne was successful in gaining the paid position.

The interview for the Aboriginal Education Officer was only the second interview that Joanne has ever attended. The first interview was when she was seventeen years old.

**Julie Hemmett** (in her own words)

In 2005, I had a major change and experience in my life. I was walking through the shopping centre and saw a pamphlet asking for people to become mentors and helping students in a local high school. I felt I could help, giving students hope and goals in their lives. After completing the mentoring course, I was mentoring at James Meehan and Elderslie High Schools.

I then moved on to complete modules from the Outreach Program being conducted by TAFE NSW focusing on welfare and perspectives of youth. This then led me to continue my volunteer work at James Meehan High School, not just as a mentor, however working with students in reading programs. I enjoyed this so much and noticed the change in the students.

Further from the reading and mentoring with students, I completed a Tutoring in the Community certificate (again through TAFE NSW) where I learned to teach english and basic maths to people who come from a Non English speaking background. This new knowledge and skills was put to great use both in and out of the School.

I love doing this and I have since completed a TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) certificate, which focused on developing programs for speaking, reading and writing English and the teaching methods associated with them. I chose to do the elective "Working in Australia" which has been co-developed by Universities around the Nation. This course enables me to work anywhere in Australia with different Migrants.

I help students in the School, and the adults within the Community. As part of working with the students at the High School, I completed the Macarthur Careers Assessment certificate, which enables me to assess and advise students particularly within year 9 on what their strengths and weaknesses are, and which career path would best suit them. I worked on our community magazine "The Buzz". I am now working as a support officer at James Meehan High School. This would not be possible without the original Mentoring Program and Plan-It Youth which set me on my path