

introducing organisational members:

NADO

by **Joshie Hwang**

NADO is a community-based charity that supports people with disabilities, their families and carers in Western Sydney, including the Hawkesbury, Blue Mountains, Penrith suburbs and surrounding areas. NADO is an ASID member

I am Joshie Hwang and I have been thinking a lot about what story NADO wants to share with IDA audiences, and finally I have decided to share our independent living support stories. So I went to see our Accommodation Manager, Vanessa Vella, who looks after the entire process of independent living from end to end.

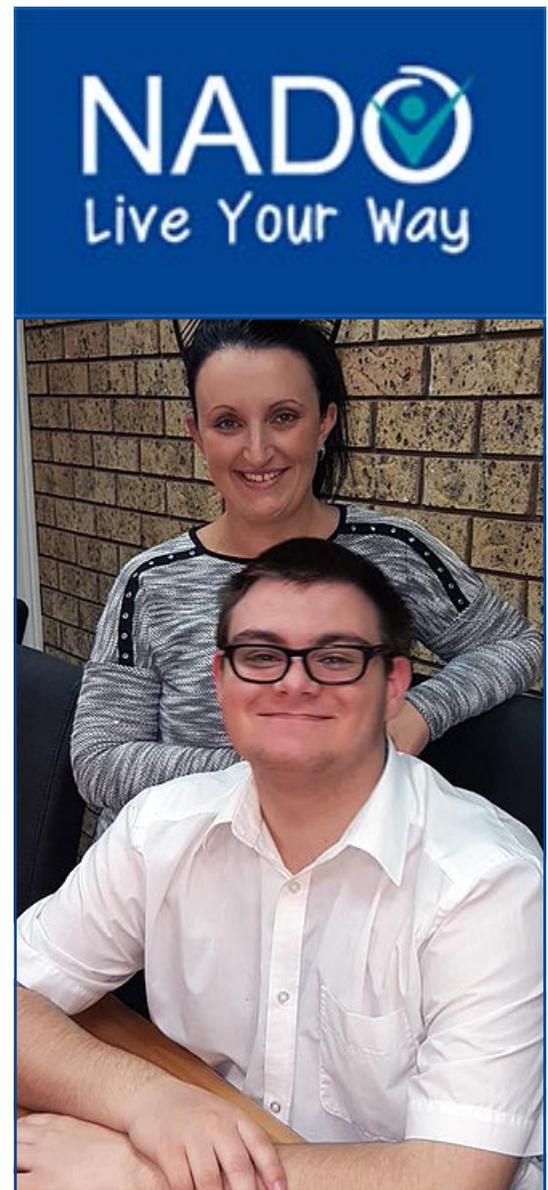
She manages the responsibilities of each team leader and helps them to manage their support workers to achieve participants' goals and lifestyle. One of the challenging parts of the job is rostering, ensuring staff for 24/7 care in accommodation where a support worker is needed to assist participants' daily lives such as cooking, cleaning, groceries, teaching them how to select healthy ingredients and how to cook, banking, paying bills, taking them to doctor appointments, etc.

Vanessa oversees 11 places of accommodation, including group homes, respite cottages and independent living support.

Vanessa said, "Everything that our participant needs for 24/7, we help them stand up on their own feet, we are behind the scenes making sure their plans are being followed and troubleshooting day to day problems, we are trying to do 'with' our participants, not 'for', so that they can learn and have confidence to Independently live their lives in their way".

She shared with me so many incredible stories, I struggled on whose stories to share and finally, I decided to share Michael, Graham and Bradley's stories, (with their permission), who are all working hard to be independent and achieve their dreams.

Michael has been temporarily residing in one of our respite cottages proudly shared his achievement of learning to cook so that he can be more independent. Important to him is building a better relationship



Vanessa Vella and Michael Kimble

with his mum. He found the transition of moving out of his house and moving into the cottage not too hard because he felt very well supported. He also made some friends as well. His next goal is to move into a shared home and get a job.

Graham recently came to NADO, but for the last eleven years no one noticed his interest in music, and he doesn't have the communication skills to communicate his opinions to others well so he was just sitting and listening to others. Vanessa and the other staff realised that he loves music and he wants to learn how to play the guitar, so she suggested joining a music class, and ever since, he is just so happy, he carries around his guitar everywhere. His tutor noticed his guitar was strung incorrectly and after adjustments, his love and ability to learn and play music has changed his life. Vanessa said, "When I can help our participants find their happiness that makes me so happy. That is *continued page 30*

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what we do in NADO, we care for each participant, to connect with them, to understand what can motivate them to try harder and achieve happiness along with independence”.

Bradley had been wanting to learn how to read for a very long time, and NADO support workers, Danielle, Janelle, Belinda and Karen have been helping him with how to read for at least an hour every day. Now he is able to read! It is not easy for him, but with reading, he puts all of his effort into learning and now, with the help of our team he can finally read his favorite Marvel comic books and also he can text his family and friends. He has reached his goal and now, all he wants to do is read, reading aloud so that others can hear and enjoy with him.

At NADO, we don't just provide services to our participants, we want our participants to achieve their goals because that achievement empowers them to try their best to live their way.

Most of us take day to day tasks for granted, but they are not easy tasks for our participants. They overcome fear and difficulty every day to live their way, step by step, with support of their friends, family and NADO being their shadow to guide them to learn how to enjoy the freedom responsibly and with hope. They move forward every day, towards independent living.

For further information please contact Joshie Hwang, Marketing Director of NADO jhwang@nado.org.au