

Out of the BOX

Using technology to follow your dreams.....

What's it all about?

"Out Of The Box – Using technology to follow your dreams" aimed to enhance leadership skills for people with communication difficulties through effective use of technology. Eight people with little or no speech were exposed to a range of technology, including communication aids, telephone use through the National Relay Service and access to the internet.

Three intensive workshops were held over a 12 month period. The participants worked towards achieving skills in four areas:

1. Expressing their dreams and aspirations and setting personal goals to make them a reality;
2. Gaining access to mainstream technology e.g. access to the internet using an adapted mouse or touchscreen;
3. Communicating with the use of a Speech Generating Device;
4. Learning about advocacy, empowerment, and leadership.

Support workers, families and therapists also attended the program in order to learn about the technology and communication devices and enhance their own skills. This was a vital part of the program, as it gave participants access to ongoing support when returning home. There were also opportunities to build positive community attitudes towards people with little or no speech, during interactions out in the community when everyone gathered round for a coffee or a drink at the end of the day.



Who was involved?

This project was made possible through the generous donations of funds, expertise, and access to equipment and resources. Those who contributed included Friends of Australian Communication Exchange Support program (FACES), the National Relay Service, three Regional Communication Services in Victoria, Yooralla, ComTEC and staff from the Communication Resource Centre, Scope.

What has it changed?

- All participants developed a dream and took their first steps towards realising that dream.
- Most of the participants logged into an online social networking tool to stay connected.
- One person has taken positive steps towards living on her own.
- Three people have been offered paid work as training facilitators.
- All have demonstrated increased confidence using technology which has increased their self esteem.
- People in the community have an increased awareness and acceptance of communicating with people with little or no speech.
- Melinda Smith, community development project worker and person with complex communication needs, was awarded the FREE SPEECH NOW award, from Temple University, which is presented to an individual who has actively promoted freedom of speech for individuals with significant communication disabilities.

As one participant said...

"I loved it, it was fantastic. I learned so much and have gained so much confidence in myself and what I can achieve."

For more information about this project please contact:

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