

Surf Coast Times

(<https://timesnewsgroup.com.au/surfcoasttimes/>)

Monday, May 22nd, 2023

Community service workers drive important social conversations

May 19, 2023 BY Times News Group

(<https://timesnewsgroup.com.au/surfcoasttimes/author/timesnewsgroup/>)



Ally Upton and Alex Jones with two of the planned 1,000 houses to be created and exhibited in local libraries throughout June to mark World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

A CAREER in community services can take you in many directions, but at the core of this industry is a deep passion for helping people live a safe, inclusive and valued life.

Gordon graduate Ally Upton was looking for a more rewarding career where she could help people.

“I genuinely care about the wellbeing and happiness of other people. I always want to help, listen and learn about what I can do to be more active and helpful in the community,” she said.

At 36, I decided to go back to study. I found the Diploma of Community Services was right for me. I was tossing up between university and online options, but The Gordon TAFE was the most flexible choice. “I really enjoyed the course and discussing communication techniques. I learnt how to listen, how to really hear someone, and what they were really trying to say. I think I even learnt how to be a better friend.”

Working as a community engagement officer at Barwon Community Legal Service, Ms Upton supports the delivery of a variety of community development projects and explains the challenges and initiatives she is involved with in her job.

“Barwon Community Legal Services is one of 43 community legal centres across Victoria that focuses on social justice and working with marginalised and disadvantaged people,” she said.

“We touched on social stability in many of my study units, which helped me to better understand the importance of community connection.



Gordon graduate Ally Upton now works for Barwon

Community Legal Service. Photos: SUPPLIED

What I personally find challenging in my role is getting people to talk about tough topics.

“I am part of the Barwon Elder Abuse Primary Prevention (BEAPP) network, which aims to prevent elder abuse from happening.”

She said elder abuse is a common issue, so getting people to talk about it and get involved in the conversations necessary to enact change was challenging/

“The network aims to prevent elder abuse before it begins and runs inclusive activities aimed to change social attitudes by increasing respect and protecting the rights of older people.

“The elder abuse prevention initiative I’m working on is the Barwon Warm Safe Home Project.

“This community art project uses craft to engage community members to start conversations about respecting older people and what a warm, safe home means to you.

“We’re asking community members to help us make 1,000 houses that will be exhibited in the Colac and Geelong libraries throughout June to mark World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.”

To get involved, email Barwon Community Legal Service at education@barwoncommunitylegal.org.au or learn more through their Facebook page.

To start your career in community services and make a real difference in the lives of others, head to The Gordon’s website at thegordon.edu.au (<http://thegordon.edu.au>)

// Sponsored Content