

SEABROOK MCKENZIE CENTRE For Specific Learning Disabilities

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2023

OUR VISION

A world where those **He ao e angitu ai te**
with learning difficulties **hunga e uaua ana te**
experience success. **ako.**

OUR MISSION

To support the education, employment, social
development, legal rights and quality of lives of
people with Specific Learning Disabilities.

Hello everyone.

I love hearing success stories about people who have achieved their personal goals such as this one about Sean Boyd. His creativity is truly amazing. It is also fantastic that more and more people are willing to be open about their neurodiversity and not let it limit them. They are great role models for the next generation and give hope to parents who are struggling to see how their neurodiverse children will make their way in the world. Thank you for sharing your journey, Sean!

The Centre continues to evolve in response to changes in personnel. We can now offer Educational Therapy as we have a qualified Educational Therapist, Philippa Evans, who is also a registered Occupational Therapist. We have newly employed an experienced teacher-tutor for the Three Week Intensive, Rose Barlow. To meet the need, we are trying to employ a third registered psychologist to join the Assessment Team. Through generous work from Catherine Marr, we are going to revamp our website – so watch out for it! Our Teacher Training Team (TTT) is also undergoing change with the retirement of Eleanor Marr after many, many years of generous service. I am very grateful for her insights, experience, and institutional knowledge. Eleanor has also resigned as a Trust Board member, along with Terri Donovan. Thank you, Terri, for your positive outlook and wisdom throughout the years. Lynley Read has resigned from the TTT but will continue as a lecturer for our teacher training course. So fortunately, her experience is not lost to us!



Hester M. Warren

Please let me know if anyone is interested in being nominated for the Trust Board vacancies.

And thank you again to all our funders. Once again, your generosity is always a cause for celebration at the Centre.

Encouraging messages

Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2023 1:15 PM

Hi,

It was a pleasure working with Nina. She was very good at putting both Alice and I at ease (as were the lovely reception staff!) and I have come away with a much better sense of how best to support Alice moving forward. An amazing service you provide, thank you!

Hilary

*I'm more than happy for you to use
my statement as it is written. I hope
that helps with fundraising efforts.
You really do provide a great
service, with a smile!*

Kind regards

Hilary

The Seabrook McKenzie Centre is a charitable trust (Charities Commission Registration CC25330).

Phone (03) 381 5383 | Email info@seabrookmckenzie.net | Visit www.seabrookmckenzie.net

SEAN BOYD—JUNK ARTIST

I never did very well at school. I couldn't grasp what others seemed to understand easily. My first experience of this was when I was six years old. We were learning to tell the time and the teacher turned to me and asked what number the big hand was pointing to? I saw both hands as big, one was big tall, the other was big wide, I guessed which one was the "big" one and got it wrong, everyone laughed at me and I felt completely stupid. I withdrew into myself and that set the path ahead. There were many of those moments.

I struggled with reading too. I have never been officially diagnosed with dyslexia or ADHD, or anything else. I have never chased the label, but I am very aware of where I fit into these spectrums. I have always been a slow reader. I have to read and double check every letter to trust the word is what I think it might be and I still do that today. Being a slow reader got me labelled a slow learner in the school's eyes. I would sit in class feeling disconnected from my peers on a learning level and would look out the window at the interesting world around me instead. That behaviour got me labelled a "daydreamer". "He would do better if he focused and stopped daydreaming" is what my reports said right through school. I would stare out the window and wonder how birds fly, what it would be like to be a cat, what was over that hill or under the ground. I was obsessively curious. I would watch how the grounds keeper mowed the grass to get the criss cross pattern, I'd notice how people all walked with differing styles. I would later become acutely aware of others feelings and want them to feel happy if they appeared sad. I became acutely aware of facial expressions and moods that could be read in someone's face. I became the funny guy and the class clown in order to be liked and accepted as I was often called weird and crazy. But unfortunately being the class clown fed the "stupid" label. I would miss the point with some things that were obvious to others, but over time I became aware of how I noticed things others didn't and how that was a benefit to me in many situations. I could solve maths equations, but not the way that was traditionally taught in schools. They tried to teach maths like it's a journey with a start and a direct planned concrete route to the end conclusion. I would take the journey around the block in the wrong direction and go sightseeing on the way, still ending up at the same destination with the right answer (most times), but I arrived late and had taken what was seen as a "silly" route. So I always failed at maths.

I also struggle with any kind of background noise. It becomes the focus of everything and makes it difficult for me to hear, learn and understand what is going on or being said. Nowadays I just tell people I can't hear them over the noise and admit it's a distraction problem for me. Today's world is more accepting of that than in my youth.



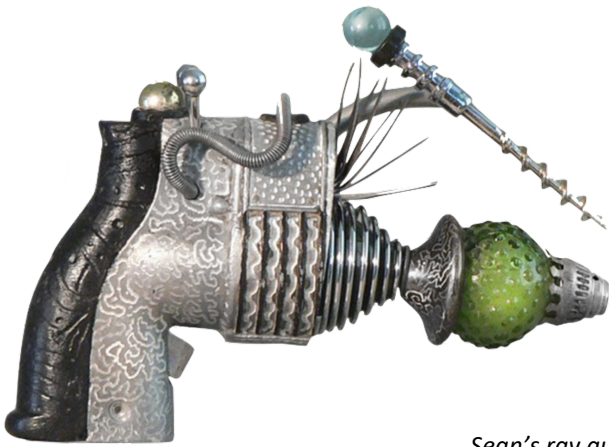
I always wanted to make stuff and be creative, but I was never one of the cool kids at school and never seen as artistic or creative, and I couldn't paint or draw, so never engaged with art or enrolled in any art classes. I wasn't interested in sport either, so there was nothing for me at school, I floundered and left at 15 years old before sitting or gaining any qualifications. I started out steel bending before moving into plastic injection moulding. Then onto oyster farming and takeaway cooking.



USHER The Soul Searching Cinema Robot

I battled with my learning difficulties, but I did learn at 18 years of age that I was able to retain bundles of information if I was very interested in what was being said or observed. This came about after watching a documentary about octopus. I could remember every single fact I had heard and watched and could repeat it verbatim after only watching it once. This had never happened to me before that I was aware of. (This is why my "Octalien" business name and logo is the blend of octopus for that life changing moment and alien for my alienation in school and other parts of my life.)

(Continued on page 3)



Sean's ray gun

But on a sunny Sunday in 2012 I was bored at home and went into my garage. Feeling a very strong urge to be creative I grabbed a box of old bits and bobs and started making a ray gun. Like most children I was fascinated with guns. I was never allowed guns growing up, but at 41 years old I gave myself the permission to make a fantasy ray gun because that's what I could see in my head when I looked at an old drill in my box of bits and bobs. I rearranged the old electric drill and added a draw handle, a corkscrew and a spring, an old miniature oil lamp and some other small pieces of junk. I surprised myself with how good it looked. When I showed people they seemed genuinely impressed, so I put it on Trademe. It made the "Cool Auctions" page and had 10,000 views in two days. I heard Marcus Lush talking about it on the radio, which made me feel a sense of pride and accomplishment I hadn't felt before. It sold that ray gun for \$300! It had made me and others so happy I decided to make another one. After three I thought my imagination would run out. I couldn't have been more wrong, my imagination and creative mind flourished and grew. I started creating lamps and other curiosities and obtained a stall at the Queenstown craft markets to sell my creations on a Saturday morning. This was an amazing place to present my work as 70% of the people in Queenstown are tourists and that opened the door to an international referral market for me.

People who saw my work spread the word and I started receiving requests from all over the world. I was contacted by Heather Palmer from World Of Wearable Arts in Wellington. She had seen my work and asked me to make two items, a Flash Gordon style ray gun with a working laser and a jetpack that could have fireworks go off in the back of it. These two items were wanted for a stage show part of the WOW extravaganza (if you haven't been, you are missing out. It is truly amazing!). I created these items and sent them off to Wellington. As it turned out they were too heavy to use in the performance, but Heather loved them and my creativity, she sent me tickets to the show and offered me an exhibition at WOW in Nelson. The ray gun and jetpack were put on display in the foyer at the WOW performances. At the time Sir Richard Taylor from Weta Workshop was one of the judges of the incredible wearable art presented at the shows. My pieces were not part of the show to be judged, but Sir Richard took time out of his day to email me and congratulate me on such wonderful creations and added that he hoped we could work together in the future. My mind was blown apart with validation and pride. I went on to create many art works and ship them around the world.

I started presenting my art at schools after holding an exhibition in Alexandra and talking to school groups. Children engage at such a wonderful level when they see my work and hear me talk about it. They quickly work out that my art is total fantasy and they identify with it. I talk to them about how I look at everyday objects from different angles to see what else the items could represent or be part of. I talk about how I create for myself first and then offer it for sale. I talk about not having boundaries of genre or theme limitations, that I experiment and trial what I think won't work as well as what I think will work, I often surprise myself which makes this a valuable way of thinking. I talk about what might be perceived as failure and how that can end up being part of something new and a success that sells.

(Continued on page 4)

Encouraging messages

Sent: Wednesday, May 24, 2023 12:29 PM

I'm excited to have a letter to show her dance, Tap, Gym netball and swimming coaches, I watched her at dancing and now totally get why she's struggling, will be so good that they will too and can help her.

Her teacher at school has been amazing with her and A— has really appreciated the extra help she's getting

Thanks so much

Anna.

Hi Shirley,

Yes of course, you can put my name, I don't mind.

you guys have been a huge help!

Thanks again

Anna

Huge thanks to Bounding Box Creative for donating designs and advice for this newsletter! boundingboxcreative.com

I also started telling tall stories about each piece I made. This grew into storytelling and imagination exercises during school visits. I ask them to ask me questions about an artwork and I give totally ridiculous fantasy answers, they recognise it instantly as an imagination game and they thrive on it. It's fantastic to see children so engaged in this Tik Tok eight second attention span era. I advertise that I have managed to keep my 9 year old imagination and get it to be friends with my 52 years of experience. They work well together due to mutual respect for each other and a good company culture. My quirks and weirdness get embraced and absorbed by my work and people seem to appreciate me more for who I am through my art. I have often been looked at like a science experiment sitting behind my art on display. This is usually followed by a flattering and congratulatory comment as if I've truly earned it and they felt compelled to say it. I like it because I can tell the onlooker has gained something positive from my work and it either intrigued them and made them smile.

In April this year I became tired of hiding from my true quirky self, exhausted from working in noncreative jobs that didn't value creativity as a solution to anything. When I quit my job in April, I stayed home in my garage for eight weeks, working 16+ hour days. I would forget to eat or drink and start to slow down in my thinking, so I started setting an alarm on my phone to help me remember to drink water and eat! I created like a mad professor with flashing blue and orange sparks from my welding illuminating the late hours of the night. I created with total freedom, no boundaries or time limits and I was the happiest I've ever been in my life. I had created the FD1XS Rocket Bike and USHER The Soul Searching Cinema Robot in this time and I feel immensely proud of both pieces.

When I had completed both pieces I wrote to Creative NZ asking who I could connect with for my recycling needs and who might be interested in my creativity.

They were amazing and pointed me to a local recycling centre in East Auckland. I get the shakes with excitement like a child entering Disneyland when I drive towards a recycling centre, the anticipation of what I might find is sometimes almost overwhelming. So I just about exploded with pure elation when I showed them my work and they offered me a full time art residency! I am now there everyday living my dream and creating from the most abundant supply of amazing discarded junk. They are not currently open to the public as it is still being fitted out, but there will be several artists onsite and many other offerings. I could not be happier than immersing myself in creativity and art at a recycling centre.



FD1XS Rocket Bike created from everyday discarded items.

We absolutely loved reading Sean's story and hope it is an encouragement to anyone feeling 'alienated'. You can see more of Sean's work on www.octalien.com.

MEET DARCY HOGUE FROM NELSON



Darcy makes the Memory Boards that many of our children use. Darcy's involvement came about when his grandson, Cameron, came to Seabrook from Greymouth for a 3 week intensive course. Cameron's mother came to look after him for the first week. Darcy and wife Sue looked after him the second week and the other grandparents came for the third week.

During our week, Cameron came home with a memory board exercise for homework. He had strict instructions to look after it because it was the only one they had and they couldn't get any more. Darcy took a close look at it and thought...yes I could make that!

In consultation with son Richard, he mentioned the fact that Darcy thought he could make them to the teacher at the final lesson. To date Darcy thinks he's made approximately 60 and more in the pipeline, at no cost to the Centre.



Cameron has now left school and is an apprentice electrician and doing well in life!



SMALL GROUP CLASS SUCCESS

We were so thrilled to hear these spontaneous words from Hamish to his teacher!

"Before I came to these classes, I didn't know how to spell a lot of words. The real easy ones that I should know like 'said', 'little'. After school camps we had to write thankyou letters and I wrote a tiny bit and couldn't do any more and felt real bad. Now I write full letters and I know how to spell 'said' and 'little'.

I try hard out at school and my buddies get the work done really fast like in a day but I take three days. But that is improving. My reading has really improved.

I don't feel left out. I feel really happy."

Left: Mary working with another of our students.

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR SUPPORTERS OVER THE PREVIOUS YEAR

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Guardian)*

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Z Good in the Hood

How your money helps

\$2200 Funds a three week intensive

\$600 Pays for a term of tuition

\$250 Helps cover monthly overheads

\$100 Subsidises an assessment

Even \$5 makes a difference

Seabrook McKenzie, ANZ 06 0257 0253986 00

Please contact us once your donation is on the way so we can thank you and send through a receipt.