

## How to keep students connected – a student volunteer story

### The setting

This case study is about a student who joined the dual qualification program – Cert II in Community Services and Cert II in Active Volunteering through [Northern Volunteering](#). Her flexible learning options (FLO) coordinator had heard about the program through the school.

### Her story

The student had been talking about further education around working in community services specifically in youth work but didn't know where to start. She was getting support from her FLO coordinator but wasn't interested in the usual way of learning and was struggling to find a way through.

After family violence, she was forced to leave home. She then spent some time in the foster system.

Her mother had turned to faith as a comfort. The student did not feel this was for her. She was kicked out for 'not conforming' (her words).

She found herself on the street a lot, but decided she needed to turn her life around. She started coming to school regularly and looked after herself. She found a place to live, found a boyfriend who she's still with now and worked two part time jobs to help make ends meet.

### The steps

When she came to us she immediately took to the open, flexible learning model and, because we have small classes, she flourished because she was being heard even if she felt she was 'different to others'.

She loves arts and crafts and it was while talking to a group about the benefits of volunteering, motivations and expectations that she realised that she could use her hobby and her love of making things to help others. She jumped at the chance and interviewed for a volunteer position with an Anglicare aged care facility. Although she did spend some time visiting residents on a one to one basis, it was during art and craft classes for residents that she found what she was looking for.

She made things, connected with older people, and sold some of the items at art stalls to raise money for the organisation. This aspect was exciting for her as she knows how valuable money is. She gave to the residents but received so much more herself.

### How it helped

She continued with the program even after completing her required hours for the certificates and continued to visit to help out during the craft sessions and for fundraising events.

She gained enough confidence to apply for a job at The Adelaide Royal Show at one of the stands. She didn't have the nerve to apply previously as she didn't think she had the skills and didn't think she could handle the crowds. By volunteering at Anglicare, she was able to work on her confidence and communication skills.

She learnt how to make jewellery during her time there and has now used this skill to make her own jewellery which she sells to people she knows and through social media. Her group of friends has grown.

She then enrolled in TAFESA to start on her journey to becoming a youth worker.

### Acknowledgement and thanks

This story was shared with us by Northern Volunteering. Our warm and heartfelt thanks for sharing this encouraging story.