

Pakuranga cafe nominated for accessible business award

Te Tuhi Café in Pakuranga has been nominated for the People's Choice Accessible Business Awards this year.

They have earned this nomination due to an initiative they started in 2020 offering training and future employment opportunities for those with intellectual disabilities. Te Tuhi partnered with the University of Auckland and Rescare Homes to make this happen last year.



Image from Te Tuhi's website showing their team of trainees currently working (<https://tetuhi.art/about/te-tuhi-cafe/>)

This program is the first of its kind in New Zealand and is a big step forward in encouraging other businesses to offer training and employment opportunities to those with intellectual disabilities.

Katrina Phillips was one member of the initial group who created this program and has been working with people who have intellectual disabilities for many years at ResCare Homes.

The idea came after the COVID-19 lockdown left many people at ResCare without a job as they had been contracted to check and test Air New Zealand headsets. After many cold calls to businesses looking for new working opportunities, Te Tuhi offered their café as a place to start a training program for people with intellectual disabilities.

Ms Phillips has a real personal connection to the work she is doing and having known many of the trainees for a long time, shows a true passion in this initiative.

“The reason I chose to work with adults with intellectual disabilities is there is not a lot of resource necessarily put in to support for them. There's lots of resources at a school level...but when someone turns 21 that can be quite hit or miss depending on how your families have been able to advocate to get funding.”

The long-term goal is to develop this training program at Te Tuhi into giving as many people with intellectual disabilities as possible the opportunity to move into future employment. The hope is that their research will allow this structure of program to be replicated not only in more cafes but also in different lines of employment such as horticulture and farming in the future too.

“For me I was excited to be part of something that can make a difference for people. It allows us to do research that isn’t just important for research sake but is important in terms of moving someone’s life forward.”

Maddy Davis who has worked with one of Te Tuhi’s trainees before was very impressed with the positive impact that the program had not only on the trainees but also all the people involved in mentoring and helping this initiative grow.

“We were really sorry to lose him from Uxbridge, ... he’s a great guy and you can see how much he has grown through that role.”

Winning this award would help Te Tuhi and the program gain some publicity and help promote the growth of the work they are doing in helping those less fortunate to gain the skills and experience that could lead to future employment opportunities.

There are eight total businesses nominated for this award and voting closes this Sunday the 18th of April. If Te Tuhi place in the top three businesses for votes, they will progress as finalists, with the final voting round on the week of June seventh to June thirteenth.

More information:

<https://tetuhi.art/about/te-tuhi-cafe/> (About Te Tuhi’s program)

https://www.accessalliance.org.nz/employment_finalist_voting_2021pcaba?fbclid=IwAR3lw2hgb4E30L0yGgdVELDULa2-9WvT_7KrgqXoD7NO83I_BvJXSmBGghI (Voting link)

<https://tetuhi.art/about/te-tuhi-cafe/> (Photo)