Posted on:
4 September 2024

It was a proud day for Rebecca when son Patrick got his first job at his local pharmacy.

Together they picked up his new uniform at the store and as she drove them home an unexpected wave of emotion came over her.

‘Here’s Patrick who has Down syndrome with very limited speech saying as clear as a bell, ‘I’m the same as dad, I’ve got a uniform just like dad, a uniform just like Harry (his younger brother). I actually struggled to drive home,’ she said.

‘I don’t usually get emotional, but I thought golly, I didn’t realise a job and a uniform were going to be so important to you.

‘My husband wears a uniform to work every day; Harry wears a uniform too. I’m sure they’d rather wear casual, but Patrick couldn’t wait to wear his new uniform.

‘It’s something you don’t think about, you just do it. But for Patrick, it’s given him purpose – he has a job! He’s part of a team and he feels valued and included like everyone else.’

Growing up in Wellington, in regional New South Wales, Patrick, 20, joined the NDIS when it first rolled out in July 2017. He was funded for speech, physiotherapy and occupational therapies.

Rebecca said when Patrick left school, she was encouraged to get employment assistance funding included in his plan, so she did.

A local disability provider, Bamara, was engaged and Patrick met his job coach, Piper. She began working with him to build on his employment, social and communication skills, to help him get job ready.

Piper helped find the pharmacy position, which involves unpacking deliveries and sorting and labelling stock. After talking about it, with Piper’s help Patrick put together his resume and applied for the job.

‘I took Patrick to hand in his resume. He introduced himself and I supported him in case they needed clarification on his speech. He got the job. He was beyond excited,’ Piper said.

‘The best part is going to work, unpacking boxes and putting labels on things,’ Patrick said. I also like seeing all the customers and helping Mick, Sim and Pop (Roger) too,’ he added.

Piper said Patrick’s skills have really improved since he started. Shown what to do, he took it all in and now he has a good routine down pat, and he does the job well.

‘Patrick’s speech has improved immensely since he started,’ she said. ‘He’s clearer in his speech saying good morning; how are you and can I help you.’

Piper has also got Patrick doing ‘Pat’s Pick of the Week’ where he picks out a store item and recommends it and she posts it on Instagram.

‘He loves it. Every week he lets me know what item he wants to feature. It’s become a hit and he’s a bit of a celebrity around town,’ she added.

‘Employment has been the best thing for Patrick. You can see him improving each week, increasing his confidence. It lifts staff morale within the workplace and customers look forward to seeing him.

‘I think Patrick’s success highlights people with disability can do what anyone else can do, they just need some additional supports,’ Piper said.

Related Stories and videos

Ian’s now working at Bunnings, a job he loves

NDIS employment supports help Ian prepare for and find work

22 September 2023
The NDIS supported Bryden to build his job and life skills. Now he’s a teacher’s aide at a local state school and happy living independently.

Bryden’s work is changing lives and shifting mindsets

11 September 2026
Isaiah’s working at Sea Breeze café, and he’s never missed a shift

Isaiah proves disability is no barrier to securing work

18 January 2023

More stories and videos