Posted on:
24 February 2020

Warrandyte NDIS participant Steven Oram is using his sewing skills to volunteer to make pouches for orphaned wildlife out of donated and discounted fabrics and he just loves it.

Transcript for 'Steve sews pouches for wildlife'

Mum, Mary, also chips in paying to send them all over Australia to help wildlife rescuers, who care for orphaned animals whose parents have died on the roadside or have been bushfire affected.

An avid sewer herself and employed in a fabric shop, Mary said Steven, who is 33 with a moderate intellectual disability and chronic arthritis, took an interest in sewing two years ago and asked her if he could learn.

Reluctant to teach her own son, worried he wouldn't take notice of her, Mary enlisted the help of a friend, who was happy to teach Steven.

"She taught him how to make jeans, shorts and pyjama pants. He just loved it.

"Then one day a local lady who sews quilts came into the shop. I noticed she had a sling bag on, and while I was serving her this little wallaby popped out. It was just beautiful.

"I looked at her pouch and thought my Stevie could make these. I asked her if she needed more made. She said yes so we set up a basic pattern and began sewing them and we started to supply her."

Mary said they also made contact with Wildlife Rescue and Protection Inc. otherwise known as WRAP's, a network of registered wildlife shelters, carers and rescuers, operating across Gippsland.

"They were happy to receive the pouches so I now send WRAP's treasurer a whole lot of pouches and she distributes them at their monthly meeting.

"Word just spread via mouth, and then we made Steven a Facebook page, then demand grew and grew so we just kept on sewing," Mary said.

"Last year, we had the Tasmanian bushfires so we sent 60 pouches down there.

"We sent a lot to NSW to help support the big bushfires there just before Christmas. We've also sent 66 pouches to a carer in Paynesville to distribute to other wildlife carers around Marlo and Mallacoota."

Mary said their volunteer pouch making charity has grown since they started two years ago.

“Over the past two years, since Steven has been part of the NDIS, it has certainly helped to build his confidence to become more independent and to do and try new things,” Mary said.

“Steven has a twin brother, Mark, who has the same disabilities. Since they have joined the Scheme, I’ve noticed a real difference in them.

“They live in their own home, independently, and now they have support with cleaning and gardening and they enjoy spending Wednesdays with their carer, who takes them out to do a bit of shopping. She’s just marvellous.

“For us the NDIS has been brilliant. It has the boys doing activities away from each other, which is great, and it has given them an opportunity to develop their own interests.

“Sewing and distributing the pouches makes Steven feel productive,” Mary said. “It has allowed him to combine his interests – sewing and his love of animals and he just loves it.”

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