Posted on:
18 December 2020

Children and adults who live with disabilities have celebrated diversity and friendship on the football field with an end-of-year event that brought inclusive football teams together from all around Adelaide.

NDIS provider, One Culture Football, which provides inclusive football programs for people aged 6 to 65, marked the end of the year with an inclusive championship event.

“Everyone is super nice and everyone is included,” said 10-year-old Jayden Wright, who lives with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

“I’m pretty good at it, so I like to help other people, younger and older, it doesn’t matter who it is—everyone counts.

“One Culture is super, super fun and everyone is super nice and I really like doing it because I don’t need to worry about any bullying problems.”

One Culture is a not-for-profit charity organisation, whose inclusion football programs are funded through the NDIS.

Players like Jayden use their NDIS core funding to pay for coaching and mentoring programs, which focus not only on building football skills, but also on health and wellbeing, gross motor skills, self-confidence and self-esteem.

“I love it so much I get a bit emotional talking about it,” said Jayden’s mum Alison.

“As Jayden says in his own words, everyone is included, and if he’s having a bad day, no one cares if he eats his clothes or he needs to roll around on the ground, they just keep going.

“There are kids in Jayden’s team who have no arms or are deaf or have other physical disabilities or are completely non-verbal. There’s a little boy in his team who is mainly non-verbal and Jayden’s always like ‘high-five mate’ and I’ll help you get a goal’. It’s just beautiful to see.”

One Culture Football has four different inclusive football clubs—South Adelaide Panthers, Playford Patriots, Modbury Jets and Adelaide Comets. They are aligned to SA Federation clubs so players wear the same jerseys and train at the same venues.

“We aim to empower people of all cultures, abilities and diverse backgrounds to forge community connections through inclusive football,” said One Culture co-founder Josh Smith.

Mark Snook, whose 10-year-old son Ben plays with the One Culture Adelaide Comets club, says Ben has made lasting friendships and has a strong sense of belonging to his team.

“It’s been fantastic, he is so excited to have his own jersey with his name and number on the back,” said Mark. “In his mind, Ben plays for the Comets, just like his big brother used to. He likes being part of that team environment and being part of the team. And he can’t wait to go every Saturday.”

Ben also lives with ASD, which impacts his learning, social and communication skills. His mother Deb says One Culture Football is the first time Ben has found lasting friendships.

“We tried all sorts of things, we tried a special karate program and gymnastics. He would get told off all the time. It wasn’t inclusive. There was a lot of lining up, which he couldn’t handle.

“Now he looks forward to football every Saturday, it’s one of his favourite activities and it’s the only thing he has actually stuck with because they accept him. He really misses it if he doesn’t go.”

Ben’s dad Mark says One Culture also provides a community where families can build relationships and exchange helpful information.

“Ben has made good friends and so have we,” he said.

Related Stories and videos

Tom's expanding skills and friendships through the AAA football clinic

It’s AFL All Abilities footy clinic time and Tom can’t wait

30 September 2020
Family club has footy fanatic bouncing with joy

Benson kicks goals with the Kangaroos

1 May 2023
Communication no barrier for Mitch at Underwater Immersion Therapy

Mitch discovers calm, confidence and inclusion underwater

11 May 2021
More stories and videos