

Posted on:

11 March 2022

Corio NDIS participant, Matthew (Matty) Field is a respected and popular face in the Greyhound Racing Victoria community, thanks to the kindness of many in the industry and the right supports, which have helped him get there.

The 35-year-old, who has spina bifida, a congenital spine weakness, often causing lower limb paralysis, said he couldn't be happier achieving his NDIS goal, to own Apache, a retired greyhound, and adding to it, owning shares in four other competing greyhounds.

"I've always loved greyhounds, but I never thought I'd have the opportunity to own one or have shares in any," Matty said.

Mum, Cathy, said since Matty was little he's loved the dogs, a hobby he shared with his dad, checking their form, and heading off to place a few bets.

"From there, greyhound racing became his passion. He'd visit the track regularly, then people noticed how keen he was, and they started embracing his enthusiasm," Cathy said.

"Then word got out Matty wanted to own a retired greyhound so a lovely trainer couple, from Anakie, Angela and Geoff Britton, had Apache, a highly decorated race dog in his day, and they offered him to Matty.

"We had to make sure he was placid enough for Matty to manage with his spina bifida, but we were lucky. Apache was a perfect fit."

Fourteen months later, Matty said he's built a strong connection with the nine-year-old.

"Apache's improved my life so much. He's so docile, friendly, and kind.

He doesn't even want to go outside to sleep, he snuggles inside with us," he said.

Spoilt rotten, Matt and Cathy said Apache, and greyhound racing in general, has brought so much joy back to their lives, especially after losing son and older brother, Justin, in a car accident, at 23, 20 years ago.

"It's a pain we've had to live around that never goes away, but it's amazing how Apache has helped lift our spirits," Cathy said.

"As a single mum, I didn't think I would be able to afford to maintain Apache, but thanks to the kindness of many greyhound trainer's majority of his food and vet bills are covered."

Cathy and Matty are also grateful for the NDIS funding Matty's received to help, the now family of two, socially and financially.

"Matty's funding enabled us to engage Access Your Supports and we worked with Aaron, and now Claire there, and they've been wonderful," she said.

"Matty has a support worker, Travis, who takes him to greyhound meets.

They also head over to the shops for a browse, and often sit and enjoy a coffee.

"It's a great social outlet for Matty, and they enjoy each other's company."

Cathy said Aaron also supported Matty to find work, at GDP Industries, not far from home.

"GDP is a light industrial factory and second-hand store.

Matty learns a variety of skills across areas like packaging, textiles, woodwork, steel fabrication and resource recovery.

He just loves it," she said.

Matty said working at GDP Industries is "a breath of fresh air."

"I'm actually allowed to try things and they don't let my spina bifida get in the way," he said.

"The other day I learnt how to operate a saw and I was cutting up materials. I've got a lot of friends there interested in greyhound racing too.

They're always asking for tips, even the supervisors," he said laughing.

Aaron said he is so proud of Matty and how far he has come.

"When I first met Matty he hardly said a word.

I spent most of my time talking to Cathy, but now he is a different man, he is much bubblier and more confident," he said.

"As a support coordinator, Matty's growth in social inclusion and economic participation is what we want to see, and with NDIS funding we've been able to support Matty, and others, to make goals happen."

Related Stories and videos

Scott Tiran is the perfect example of how the NDIS is designed to work.

Plenty of growth in Scott's new business and his social life

18 May 2023

NDIS participant, Gerry Groombridge of Kingston, who has a love for retail, has found his niche designing, making, marketing and selling products at Mosaic Support Services social enterprise, Made By Mosaic.

Gerry's found his niche after learning the retail ropes

13 September 2021

NDIS participant Karan Nagrani says Australia has 'let him be who he is - a blind, partially deaf, gay, man of colour.'

Karan's grateful to Australia for letting him be who he is

20 March 2024

[More stories and videos](#)