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Burnie NDIS participant Joel Bradley is showing true leadership skills taking part in Multicap Tasmania’s horticulture program. He’s enjoying it so much he’s decided to study to be a support worker himself.

Joel, 42, who has talipes equinovarus, a form of club foot, has spent three years working alongside Multicap Tasmania’s horticulture program team leader Jon Moore, and says he now has their daily routine down pat.

“Jon is a great mentor. While I did work in a nursery for six years when I was younger, Jon has taught me heaps more and now we’re like a well-oiled machine,” he said with a laugh.

“We’ve planted loads of fruit and vegies and we’ve been busy harvesting crops, which we send to Multicap Tasmania’s kitchen and give to participants to take home.”

Jon said their regime is essential to the business maintaining its fruit and vegetable supply.

And after an unexpected day off, he was delighted to learn Joel had stepped in to save the day.

“Joel might make me redundant now. I didn’t need to worry about not being there because he did so well,” he said. “I’m really proud of him.”

Joel said when staff let him know Jon wasn’t available that day, he didn’t think twice about stepping up to take charge of the horticulture program.

“There were two of us and our second big boss as well. They listened to my instructions, and we all went out and did the propagating, harvesting and made sure the sprinklers were working at the right times,” he said.

“The boss was amazed at how efficient we all were; how well we all worked together and how everyone was happy to take instructions from me.”

Jon said he received an email from his boss the following day, saying he was doing a great job teaching participants and how it was wonderful to see Joel step up and do a fantastic job.

“I was over the moon to hear how well Joel did in my absence, but I never had any worries because I know how capable he is,” he said.

Inspired by his disability support staff and more confident than ever, Joel said he’s keen to

become a support worker himself, so one day he too could work for Multicap Tasmania.

“I’m going to go to TAFE and by the end of the year I hope to have my Certificate III in Disability,” he said.

“Having lived with a disability I have a good insight into what people with disability need, so I’m excited to be able to give something back.”

Reflecting on his life, the compassionate disability advocate said it has been so much better on the NDIS.

“The Scheme has allowed me to get the supports I need because, as a low-income earner, it was difficult for me to afford to pay for them,” he said.

“Now I get funding to get suitable shoes made and it makes such a difference.

“I see a specialist in Hobart, Ben Curry, who takes a 3D image of my foot and sends the image off to get a cast made. When it arrives back, I get to pick the type of shoe and the colour I want.

“I’ve had red shoes, yellow shoes, purple shoes and now I’ve got fluoro green ones so Jon can find me,” he said with a laugh.

“I also do a couple of other day programs during the week where a group of us head out with staff and do various community activities. We go for walks, out for coffee, play cricket, go bowling and we have a lot of fun.

“I hope one day when I become a support worker, I can work with Jon and the team and support others with disability just like the team has supported me,” Joel said.

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