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Wynyard NDIS participant Chelsea Gunn collects beach driftwood, dries it, then meticulously strings colourful beads onto fishing wire and attaches them to make decorative beaded wall art.

The 23-year-old, who has an intellectual disability and autism, has become so good at her craft, each time someone sees her make one, or they see one hanging up in her house, they ask her if she would sell it to them or if she could make them one to buy.

Proud and inspired by the popularity of her beaded wall art, not to mention the joy she gets making them, Chelsea, with the help of her Multicap Tasmania support workers, is hoping to build her confidence so in future she can take her hobby to the next level – to hold a stall and sell them at the local Wynyard Foreshore Market.

“Chelsea is so talented,” one of her support workers, Kym, said. “She has been doing her beaded wall art for a while, and it has really helped to improve her fine motor skills and her concentration.

“Bead making was one of Chelsea’s NDIS goals but seeing how much people are drawn to her work, we all thought if she makes a few and puts them away we could support her to sell some at the local market.”

Excited about the prospect of selling her beaded wall art at the market, Chelsea said she loves the fact she can do something she really enjoys; more people will get to see her artwork and appreciate it, and if she sells some, it will give her some extra money to create more.

“I love doing beaded wall art,” she said. “My support workers take me to the beach, and we collect all the driftwood. When we come home, they help me lay it all out to dry.

“Then when we go shopping, I buy beads at Spotlight, or I buy them online, then I divide all the beads into separate colours, put them in bags, and then put them in my bead work basket, so when I go to make one, everything I need is right next to me.”

With a mum, sisters, a brother, loads of nieces and nephews and support workers in and out of her home regularly, Chelsea said not many have missed out on receiving one of her carefully considered and colourful beaded wall art pieces.

“I even made Kym’s two daughters one each to go in their rooms,” Chelsea said.

“They loved them, but the one I did for Ava is my favourite. I beaded her name in it and added lots of pink and purple beads – my favourite colours.”

Kym said she can see Chelsea is “quite proud” of her beaded wall art and she gets a lot of satisfaction when people say they would like to buy one.

“When Chelsea’s behavioural therapist came to visit, as soon as she walked in the door, she commented on one. She loved it and asked Chelsea if she wouldn’t mind making her one. Chelsea was proud of that. It’s now hanging in her behavioural therapists’ office,” Kym added.

Also quite tech savvy, Kym said when it comes to anything online or to do with her phone, Chelsea, like any Gen Z, is right across it.

“Chelsea is incredible with technology. I’m not so up with it but if I don’t understand something she’s always able to show me how,” Kym said with a laugh.

“That’s why we are also contemplating supporting Chelsea to set up her own website to highlight and possibly sell more of her beaded wall art.
“It’s all a work in progress. Chelsea is a shy person but once we build up her confidence and we do the market, we will see how it all goes.

“Chelsea really enjoys doing her beaded wall art and it’s great to see through her NDIS funding she is able to accomplish anything she puts her mind to. It’s amazing,” Kym said.

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