

Noble AIMs

The front room of the AIM (Adults in Motion) house is sunny and crowded. Everyone has just arrived back from a walk to the supermarket and it's time for sharing the weekend's highlights. As the guest, I go first and relate my story of a nice surf at Omaha, even though I fell off a few times – which gets a laugh from the others. As we work our way around the group, there's news of birthday parties, ten-pin bowling, a trip to Tauranga, Sunday church, and more. Then it's morning tea time.

So what, you ask? What's interesting about this story?

What's interesting is that all the participants at AIM are intellectually disabled in some way and they come for companionship, skills training, goal setting, time out from home, and trips out into the community. I was surprised how many faces I recognised from seeing them around town.

AIM was established in 2006 by a parent who was concerned about the absence of transition facilities for her child who was leaving school. AIM fills that void with its Warkworth base which is open Mon-Thurs and currently caters for 13 participants and six staff.

Corinne Lake is the manager of the facility and tells me she loves her job. 'There's an amazing array of personalities and it's very satisfying when they show you something they have made at cooking or sewing. I feel proud and they feel like family.'

AIM runs a varied programme that includes in-house things like cooking, sewing, maths, art, music and writing. However, getting out into the community is a high priority. 'We go for walks to the shops, go to the gym, visit the donkey sanctuary, go to the disco, and help with native bush planting,' Corinne tells me.

Funding comes from a range of sources and participants pay a small daily fee. Corinne says, 'We have to watch our finances carefully and we can't always do what we want to do. We have to 'save up' to take everyone out for a day.'

AIM is always on the lookout for volunteers to help out at their Warkworth base, but one of the big challenges is to find locations where their participants can get work experience.

Corinne explains, 'We have three who go to the donkey sanctuary on Tuesdays to help out. We also had some working at the Home Builders op shop but that closed last year. They loved going there. A staff member is available to facilitate these placements so we'd love to hear from anyone who is able to help.'

This amazing service deserves your support and, if the hugs and handshakes I got on my short visit are anything to go by, it will be richly rewarded.

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