

get about

issue 61

term 4



The Voice

What's the Risk?

Where are they now?



Note From the Editor 🐾

Dear CMS'ers,

Happy 15th Birthday Children's Mobility Service! Yes that's right, the Children's Mobility Service has been providing orientation and mobility services for blind and vision impaired children in Victoria for a whopping 15 years! To celebrate this milestone, we have asked past students to answer a short questionnaire about their memories of CMS programs.

We also take a look at the most recent Junior Mobility Camp Program, called 'The Voice'. This camp was all about one of our favorite subjects, self-advocacy. You will read the students story which was captured at the end of camp when we debriefed with all the parents present.

Daniella gives us great insight into life at Braille music camp and Darren tells us about his recent trip to an international Orientation and Mobility Conference with his presentation titled "What's the Risk." We also have our regular contributor Zoz giving his insightful doggy Pupdates.

We would also like to give a big shout out to the families and students that participated in International White Cane Day on 15th October 2015. International White Cane Day is celebrated all around the world to recognise the achievements of vision impaired and blind people. International White Cane Day recognises the long cane as an important symbol of blindness and a tool of independence.

I hope you all enjoy this bumper 15th Birthday edition of Get About.

Happy reading,

Paula Foote 🐾



Dates for Diary

Get Real – Job Ready
7 - 9 December 2015

CMS Turns 15 Party
10 December 2015

Jan Senior Program
11 - 14 January 2016

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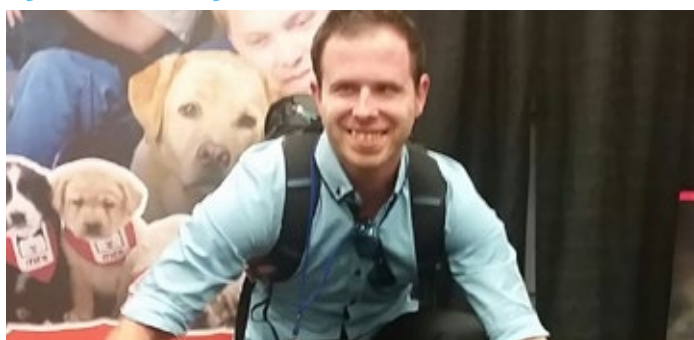
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FORMAT REMINDER

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15th International Mobility Conference report 🐾

By Darren Moyle



In July I set off to attend the 15th International Mobility Conference in Montreal, Canada. The theme for the conference was 'A World of innovation' where O&M's from over 30 countries shared new innovative ideas about accessibility, technology and mobility programs. It was such an interesting experience to hear all about services available in different countries like South Africa and Turkey and I loved sharing my passion for working with children. I learnt a lot about different ways to teach O&M skills to kids as well as shared what we do in the Children's Mobility Service at Guide Dogs Victoria.

I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to present a paper called 'What's the risk?' which was about the importance of encouraging children who are blind or have low vision to take calculated

risks. Our lives are never certain and the ability to take a risk in the playground such as climbing a tree or playing a new game is important for all children. We also need to learn how to take social risks with the people we interact with to make the most of opportunities that come our way. I discussed the lessons we learn from taking risks and even the lessons we learn from the mistakes we make. If we do not have the chance when we are kids to make our own decisions and take risks it makes it difficult to learn how to take positive risks as an adult.

I finished with this quote I felt sums it up the best. **"To laugh is to risk appearing the fool, to weep is to risk appearing sentimental, to reach out to another is to risk involvement, to expose feelings is to risk exposing your true self, to love is to risk not being loved in return, to live is to risk dying, to hope is to risk despair, to try is to risk failure. But risks must be taken because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing. The person who risks nothing does nothing, has nothing and is nothing. He may avoid suffering and sorrow, but he cannot learn, feel change, grow or live. Only a person who risks is free".** (William Arthur Ward) 🐾

Your contributions!

GetAbout is as newsletter written for you, by you! We love receiving your contributions and in this edition, we're featuring Sam's amazing drawing. He is a budding artist and recently asked Paula to give him three words to draw to - she said, "Cat, Dog, Spaceship". We think it's a pretty cool drawing, don't you? If you have something you'd like included in the next newsletter, send it through to us, we can't wait to see it!



The Voice - Junior Mobility Camp 🌟

This article is an extract from a discussion with students summing up their activities during 'The Voice' Junior Mobility program.

Day 1

Oscar - We went to Performing Arts Centre to do 'Theatre Sports', and James was our awesome performing arts teacher, then we went to a fancy restaurant in Southbank called La Camerra.

Christian - At the restaurant the instructors didn't sit at our table. We had to order everything by ourselves. I couldn't read the menu because it didn't have any Braille on it, so I asked for help. We got to these places by public transport. We went on a train and left Fairfield about 12.30pm and after dinner we left Flinders Street Station at 8:05pm. We got into Fairfield at 8:40. We had to travel in the dark and catch public transport in the dark.

Paula - During the theatre sports performance, what was James teaching you about body language?

Danny - James got us to speak up and talk to people.

Paula - When James told you to roll your shoulders forward and put your head down what body language does that show?

Danny - Slow and quiet

Students learnt how to change their character by adjusting their body language. When the students were asked to put their heads down and shoulders forward, they were speaking quietly and looking passive, but when they put their shoulders back and heads held high, this gave the students more confidence to speak up and speak loudly.

Lizzy - You looked more confident, like nobody was going to get my way and it makes you feel a lot more assertive

Day 2

Liam - We did our own breakfast and we had to get dressed. After breakfast we went and did some role-plays about being passive, assertive and aggressive. Then we split into groups, I was assertive, Oscar was aggressive and Tyler was passive. We were practicing how to use our voice again in our group's role-play.

KIIS FM visit.

Gabe - When we were at the Radio station KIIS FM, Alex the producer, told us how they can position ads in the radio show and how they can get the ads and put them in the most popular parts of the radio program. We learnt that the money the advertisers have to pay is more if they're in a popular radio show.





We also went in to the real studio at KISS FM while a show was going to air.

When we got back to Guide Dogs, we had a visit from Police Officer and Community Education Officer - Linda.

Sammi -Linda talked about how sometimes you might need to talk to strangers or you might not need to talk to strangers and what you would do in certain situations. Linda also told us about her weapons, like a gun. Linda is not allowed to show us her gun and she wasn't allowed to take it out of the holster. She can only take it out when there's an emergency

The police officer would only take the gun out of the holster if there was an emergency situation where a member of the public may be in danger. We learnt about when it is appropriate to call 000.

Then we practiced a new song with Christine Casey for a competition called Sing for Good. The group made up the words to the song and each person sang their own lines.

Liam - Jane, a Guide Dog Instructor came in to show us the Guide Dog puppy called Howie. Howie is only 16 weeks old and he has just lost all his baby teeth. Jane brought them in and showed us. Jane said that Howie was going to put his teeth under his doggy pillow that night and wait for the tooth fairy.

Then we practiced our radio show and had a delicious chocolate pudding for dessert at dinner time.

On our last day we did a radio show at guide dogs and took over the PA system. We had news broadcasts, weather reports, fashion tips, music, interviews and a sports report. 🌈

Braille music camp article

By Danijela Zebic



On Saturday the 20th of June, I met with a group of other blind and vision impaired students as well as visiting teachers and other staff at Southern Cross station. We headed for the National Braille Music Camp, which runs every year for a week in June. It is held in Mittagong, New South Wales and is for students aged 9 and over who play a musical instrument and/or are interested in learning braille music.

After the 10 hour journey, we were all quite relieved and excited to get into the fresh air and walk from the station to Frencham Girls Boarding School. We were met by staff and students from all around the country. This year, there were about forty students who attended!

The next day, you are given a choice of which part you'd like to sing in. The parts you can choose from are soprano (the highest singers), alto (the singers in the middle) and the men who are the lowest singers. Once you have chosen which part you'd like to be in, booklets are given out to everyone. The songs in each booklet come with the lyrics and the braille music. Most of every day at camp is spent covering each piece very carefully, because at the end of the week, a concert is held and people from the town come with their families. During the concert, we perform everything we have learnt throughout the week. There is a choir, for students 14 and under and a senior choir if you are over 14. Everything you learn during choir is also performed at the end of the week.

We get the opportunity to learn a bit of braille music each day at camp. We are all put into braille music classes where you learn about certain musical signs, depending on how advanced you are in braille music. You are taught how to write the signs in braille, what each sign means and when it is appropriate to use these when writing a piece of music.

The Braille Music Camp holds mini concerts so if you've learnt a really cool piece of music and you're feeling really anxious to share it, feel free to participate in one of them. You might even get chosen to perform your piece at the concert at the end of the week.

Getting around the camp is actually fairly easy. Before camp, the school has ropes put up so when you're walking from room to room, all you'll mostly have to do is follow them. Some

of the routes are a bit tricky and you may need some assistance but that is, of course, the same everywhere else.

Overall, in my opinion, Braille Music Camp would be a great experience for all students, the camp provides an excellent opportunity to expand

friendship groups with others from all around the country. So if you're 9 or over, you play a musical instrument and/or you're interested in learning braille music and you'd like to meet other people from parts of the country, then I'd definitely recommend the National Braille Music Camp. 🌈

Where Are They Now – A Special '15th Anniversary' Story. Past CMS Students reflect on their CMS memories

Mel Stephens, Aged 21

What are you up to now? At the moment I'm completing a certificate 3 in education support; working as the secretary of Swish Victoria; volunteering at Blind Sports Victoria; looking for a job; and participating in many other activities around my local area and in Melbourne.



What's your fondest memory of your involvement with the CMS? I'm not really sure. I think that the fondest memories I have of the CMS are coming to camps and having lots of laughs and meeting people who were in the same situation I was in; learning new things; learning how to be an active and valuable member of the community, with no differences; learning how to show people that I am no different from others; learning how to adapt my skills to my changing vision; and over-all just getting to know my strengths and weaknesses and how to build on them.

What was the most useful thing you learnt? To be honest, I can't say that there was one more useful thing than everything else. Therefore I think the most useful thing was learning what skills were useful to me at the time, and how I could adapt those skills in the future.

If you had one bit of advice for a young person today what would it be? I would probably say that you need to grasp all the opportunities the CMS gives you in both hands, with an open mind. Be proud of the skills you have, know what skills you need to learn, and don't be ashamed if someone knows more about a subject than you do. Also, be willing to share all the things you know you know, and keep quiet and learn the things you don't know.

Daniel Pritchard, Aged 21



What are you up to now? Australian Fast Bowler for Blind Cricket, Australian Goalball player, Recruitment and Development Officer & U14s State Coach for Victorian Goalball Association, President & Captain St. Pauls Blind Cricket Club, Guide Dogs Victoria Senior Children's Mobility Service Consumer Advisor, Studying Psychology at Monash.

What's your fondest memory of your involvement with the CMS? My best memory was attending my first CMS camp. The other participants and I were sitting around chatting about issues accessing materials at school, Me "don't you hate it when teachers write on the white board with a red marker?"

Friend A, "Yeah I know, I wish they'd just use blue or black."

Friend B, "Man, I can't even see whiteboards anymore"

Friend C, "Oi, stop complaining, I can't see a thing." and that was the first time I'd been actively included in a group conversation on that scale as well as being the first time people actually understood where I was coming from.

What was the most useful thing you learnt? The most useful thing I learnt was understanding how to effectively self advocate.

If you had one bit of advice for a young person today what would it be? Piece of advice, Just get involved! The amount of doors it opens up and the amount of pathways and opportunities it gives you is just ridiculous and you won't even realise it.

If you had one bit of advice for a parent what would it be? For parents: Trust the O&Ms and your child. The freedom that comes as a result of learning how to get around safely is such a boost in confidence as long as they are trusted enough to express it and not held back.

Peggy Soo, Aged 29

What are you up to now? Currently job seeking. I'm looking for work in education or disability services. I graduated from university as a primary school teacher.

What's your fondest memory of your involvement with the CMS? Fondest memories would be the camps organised by CMS such as a trip to the Grampians and Sydney where a group of us planned our whole week's activities. We learnt orientation and mobility skills such as using a long cane to move around independently and learn to navigate new environments with the skills we learnt. I also learnt to advocate for myself such as asking for directions and making sure I make good decisions in regards to keeping safe such as where to cross a road safely.

What was the most useful thing you learnt? The useful things I learnt were making sure you asked all the questions needed to get the directions you were after such as checking whether people are telling you to turn left or right rather than 'over there'. Making sure you are safely crossing a road, even if you have to move along the street to a quieter crossing.

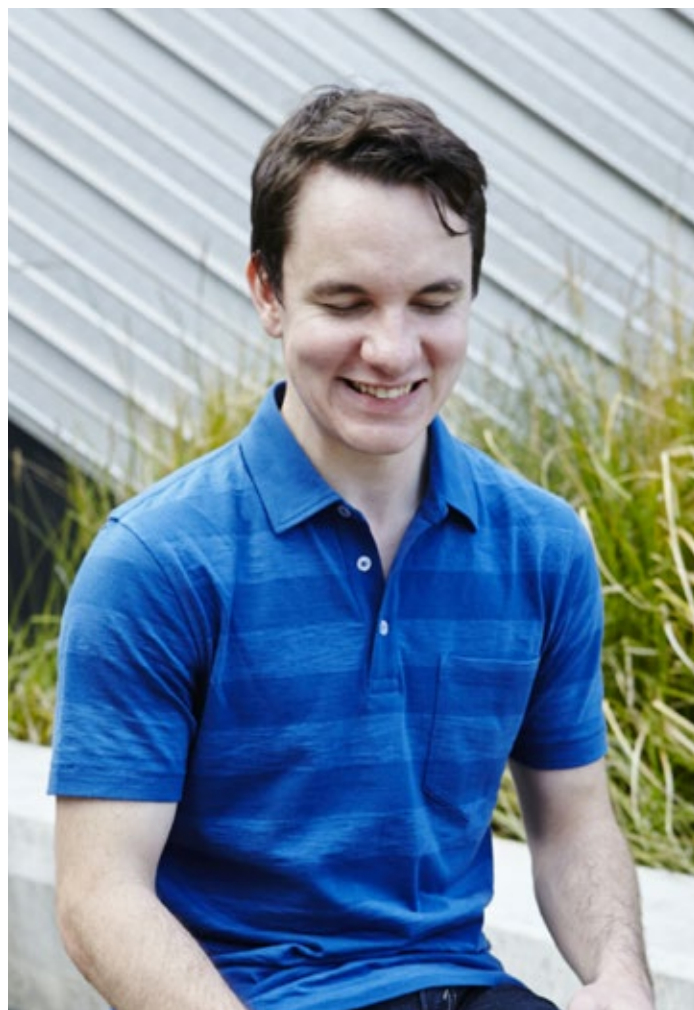
If you had one bit of advice for a young person today what would it be? If you are considering a CMS camp, the skills you learn will follow you on your lifelong journey. I have learnt to be so much more independent beyond the camps and mobility sessions. I have made so many friends who I still keep in touch with to this day.

If you had one bit of advice for a parent what would it be? Have a look at what Guide Dogs and CMS have to offer. I have pretty much grown up on these camps and the skills I learnt helped me to be more productive at home and in my community. I have traveled on my own and lived overseas and I couldn't have been successful without with opportunities from Children's Mobility Service and Guide Dogs Victoria.

Daniel Dalton, Aged 22

What are you up to now? Currently in my last semester of my Computer science degree at Monash University. I have a summer software engineering internship lined up at Google in Sydney at the end of the year to also keep me busy. After that most likely will be looking at trying to find a job in the field that I've been studying for the last few years.

What's your fondest memory of your involvement with the CMS? Really enjoyed a lot of the camps. Making friends who were in similar situation as me and facing similar challenges was really beneficial for me.



What was the most useful thing you learnt? Having the confidence to explore new areas on my own and orientated myself or instruct someone else (a friend or family member) to orientate me to a new place rather than relying on a qualified mobility instructor all of the time.

If you had one bit of advice for a young person today what would it be? Don't be afraid to challenge yourself and step out of your comfort zone. Whether its visiting a new place or something else.

If you had one bit of advice for a parent what would it be? Definitely let your child go for it and don't hold them back from trying new things. Always encourage them to be independent and to get out and about on their own. 🌈

Pupdate

By Guide Dog Zoron

I love food and I love walking. It's that simple. These are two of my most favorite things in the world. Oh and I do love my family who love me right back. So why do I love these two things the most? Well food is pretty obvious, I am a Labrador and food is the single most important thing in a Labrador's life. It doesn't really matter what kind of food you offer me, I'll be happy to chow down on it. This can be a problem for my breed as we do tend to show it on our hips when we over indulge. I may have gained a few kilos over winter but I am on a strict diet, which I am not happy about. Paula says that I need to look more like a Guide Dog and less like a pear. Hmmmmm that's a little unfair don't you think?

So why is walking my second favorite thing in the world? Well, walking makes me feel great! I get to have an olfactory overload, that's dog speak for having a good sniff. Walking also helps improve my fitness, lower my blood pressure and builds stronger muscles and bones, and it decreases my stress. And guess what? Walking can do all this for you too! Well, maybe you won't get as much of a smell overload as me, but you will develop muscles and stronger bones if you get out of the house and go for a regular walk. If you don't already go out walking, maybe you could talk to your mobility instructor about learning a new walking route just for fun! Write to me and let me know what you love and your story could be published in the next Get About newsletter. See you next year. 🐾



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If you wish to contact the CMS team or would like to ask about our programs, please ring the phone number of the instructor you wish to speak to, or alternatively, you can email: cms@guidedogsvictoria.com.au

Thank you letters

From Anna and Shana

Dear Guide Dogs Victoria,

Thank you for the wonderful camp and all the excursions we did.

I loved Puffing Billy the train.

I had a fantastic time on the camp.

I had a lot of fun there.

Shana

Dear Guide Dogs Victoria,

Thank you for having me on your fantastic Planes, Trains, and Automobiles camp, I had a tremendous time there.

I loved being on Puffing Billy, I had a great time sticking my legs out of the window.

Thank you for organizing everything.

I loved going to Lindsay Fox's private hanger.

The talent show was very very enjoyable.

I had great fun at the Harp Hotel restaurant. The food was delicious.

I learnt lots at the camp.

With lots of love **Anna** x o x o 🌈

FEEDBACK?

If you have anything to contribute to this newsletter, please feel free to contact us with your piece. We welcome all contributions from anyone.

Please either contact or email our referrals officer with your contributions as below:

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Having fun at camp!



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