



Newsletter

September 2009 Issue 14

Thoughts from our Secretary, Allen Little QSM, JP, Dip RS, NZEN

TOWARD A FUTURE

Can you remember your first day in class perusing your Professional learning? There was a modicum of excitement, apprehension and mystery. New and exciting things were learnt in anticipation of a bright future as a Recreation Professional. The question to consider now is what good did your study do for you and those you work with. It's no good answering for someone else as you and you alone are responsible for what you learnt and apply in real life.

At the **Annual General Meeting** your Executive thought I might have a contribution to make and I was elected as Secretary. Just what it means for me to be Secretary of NZTRA has yet to be proven. I was told the job was neither complex nor arduous. To date there has been scant evidence of or input from our Therapeutic Recreation work force. Whilst I have some ideas about choices we might make and opportunities we have as a Professional body, there needs to be a blowing at the cinders and stitching in of the remnant which is Therapeutic Recreation Education. The first question to be asked is: **What has happened to the hope we had as a Profession?**

There is an ancient Chinese proverb "**There are many paths to the top of the mountain, but the view is always the same.**" What do you see from the top of your mountain? As your new Secretary I see a canopy of opportunity.

The Government has recently announced changes to the work, welfare and education incentives for 16 to 18 year olds. As an Association of Recreation Professionals do we have a role to play in this aspect of Social Policy? Is involvement in Social Policy one of the priorities we need to engage around?

Since taking over this role it has concerned me that we may be a little flimsy around the parameters; **disorganised; disinterested and disorientated...**

The reality is, no matter what has or has not gone on in the past there is still a role for this organization. I am convinced that with a little good will and collaboration we can and will make a difference in Therapeutic Recreation. We are a diverse group with plenty to offer both members and the people we work with. I pay tribute to the handful of members who have held NZTRA together, with their continuing good will plus your support and input, the future is worth striving for.

You are welcome to correspond with Allen by email: vision@inspire.net.nz

Professional Portfolios: A valuable document

At the AGM someone asked the question “Do you have a professional portfolio?” And others asked “What’s that?” Having one is recommended so here is some basic information for you.

A professional portfolio documents the person’s competence in their job. A model or photographer would have photos but a professional person needs to have documents that show professional competence. It allows you to reflect on your TR practice and helps you see where you might preserve some practices or improve others. It shows your skills, abilities and achievements as well as the quality of your work. For Recreation Therapists in a clinical role that would include copies of their documentation in client notes – minus all identifiers except your own of course! It could also be an exemplar you wrote about an incident and your role in that incident (e.g. hazard management, client safety, cultural safety, ethical issue, etc). Exemplars increase in value when verified by another staff member because it’s too easy for someone to fudge it and write anything.

The bottom line is: include evidence that shows you are competent at your job. The information needs to be relevant and recent (e.g. within the last three years).

There are many ways to present a professional portfolio but it is helpful for the reader (prospective employer?) if the format is logical and has an index. Presentation in a ring binder using clear plastic sleeves for the evidence and coloured dividers for different sections is usual.

A suggestion: Index/Contents page

Introduction section – include job description, key performance indicators if they aren’t in your job description, etc

Personal Information section – include CV, proof of professional membership(s) (e.g. NZTRA membership), academic record, references, etc

Professional Practice section – include such things as documentation of clinical practice hours, performance development review, evidence of mandatory training such as fire safety, documentation from client notes that show that you are fulfilling your KPIs, exemplars of TR practice, reflection on your practice of TR, consumer/client feedback, samples of your TR work, first aid certificate, etc

Professional Development section – here you need proof of attending ongoing education, feedback from any teaching you do, postgraduate courses, etc

From the Editor:

Don’t you love winter? The beauty of skeleton trees, opportunity for snow sports, flaming fires, comfort food, and so much more. And now comes the pleasure of spring.

We need readers to contribute to this newsletter, so if you have any ideas or a book review stashed away, feel free to send it to me.

We are still keen to have articles in the newsletter that share TR knowledge and help build our own NZ body of knowledge. The article needs to be 1500 – 2000 words and focus on TR practice in NZ. Any Letters to the Editor, articles, jokes and enquiries should be sent to seeking_linda@hotmail.com

Wishing you a safe and happy winter,

Linda Johnson

**In the long run you hit only what you aim at.
Therefore, though you should fail immediately, you had better aim at something high.
Henry David Thoreau**