

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Applied Reception and Customer Service Training (ARCS)

Real skills for the real world

The Applied Reception and Customer Service (ARCS) training program upskills the long-term unemployed and those facing barriers to work, providing on-the-job skills and the experience required to work as a receptionist, office administrator or in customer service. The 2019-20 ARCS course results have been outstanding – two x 21 week courses ran at the Port Melbourne and 2 x 21 week courses also ran Elwood and St Kilda Neighbourhood Learning Centre sites, with an average of 40 students enrolled each year across all sites. Student feedback shows that they enjoy this unique, holistic and practical program, which for some has proved life-changing.

Traditionally, ARCS involved weekly classroom sessions and on-the-job training, with students developing confidence and employability skills. This year, however, the COVID-19 limitations led the program to transform into a dynamic new online platform. The move to online delivery did not dim enthusiasm - participant engagement remained at 100% in both the classroom and applied learning sessions, and ARCS grew into a meaningful and connected online community, with COVID-safe graduations held onsite at both Centres in June as permitted before further lockdowns. Three graduates of the ARCS Port course have since transitioned into paid work, a remarkable achievement in the midst of a pandemic. Transforming ARCS into an online platform has proved to be an excellent professional development exercise, and we are excited about where this may lead in the future. Thank you to our partners at ACFE and the [Elwood and St Kilda Neighbourhood Learning Centre](#) for their ongoing support.

“I’ve loved ARCS. It has such a holistic approach, so much more to offer than just a training course. I believe what I have learned will be very useful to me - in both my personal development and in opening doors and pathways in my life I would not have had otherwise.” (ARCS Training Graduate, 2019-20)

Surveys of past ARCS graduates show that 91% transition into either employment, further study, or skilled volunteering roles after the course. 38% of those surveyed had found paid employment since completing the training. The ARCS Port Melbourne June 2020 graduation video can be viewed [here](#).

Make Your Mark

Street Art skills for local young people

Make Your Mark is a Street Art Entrepreneurship program for young people aged 14-25 years . Led by artist/entrepreneur *Dråhtfunk* and coordinator/artist Amanda Neville, young people learn how to create street art in a variety of mediums, and explore marketing and sales through both digital and non-digital platforms. At the beginning of the 2019-20 financial year participants created stencils and artworks, and Indigenous artist Chrissray Weetra delivered workshops on Aboriginal dot painting and its symbolic meaning, thus adding to the street art style. We also created an online exhibition for the local community to enjoy during lockdown. Since March 2020, the program was held via Zoom, which led our artists towards collage, the creation of posters and artworks, and product development.

City of Voices

Inclusive theatre group connecting people through creativity

Since 1992, City of Voices inclusive theatre company has given all people, regardless of age, ability or income, the opportunity to engage in the creative arts. Social connection and creative expression have never been more important than during the COVID-19 pandemic, and in these unpredictable times City of Voices has connected people with one another in a way that is meaningful and fun. The July – December 2019 period was full of public appearances – City of Voices sang and danced at the Port Phillip Community Ball, and entertained the crowds at the Port Phillip EcoFest in December with a specially created performance about rubbish in the marine environment. In March 2020, the group transitioned to weekly Zoom sessions, with staff assisting participants, many of whom are isolated, to set up the appropriate technology so they can stay connected. In the words of one participant, *“I wouldn’t have thought three months ago I’d know how to use Zoom, but now I do.”* With financial support from the **Palais Theatre Community Fund** and **South Melbourne Community Chest**, the group is working towards an online performance in late 2020 with the working title *Ballads from the Brink*. Work also continues on the creation of a *City of Voices History Documentary* that will record on film the unique history of this inclusive local theatre group.

You can find out more about City of Voices on their Facebook page [here](#). They also have a range of videos you can watch [here](#).

“It has lifted my spirits amazingly. I’ve been able to stay connected with this special creative group of people I have grown very fond of. We have learnt so much through Zoom, lots of different ways to be creative. Our mentors have worked hard to keep it going, and I’m so appreciative of that.” (Maurya, City of Voices Member)

“I belong to City of Voices and have done for 25 odd years. It’s so important that I keep in contact with the outside world, with my favourite group. We’re like a family and I miss them so much not being able to attend in person. It’s my only outside link.” (Marylla, City of Voices Member)

Voices of the South Side

Improving confidence and increasing connection for isolated people

Voices of the South Side (VOSS) is an exciting network of programs, courses and projects for people who experience isolation and would like to connect to their local community. Funded by the **South Port Uniting Church**, VOSS offers a range of leadership, skills development and creative projects and courses that help people build their confidence, leading to increased social, volunteer and employment opportunities. Prior to the pandemic, courses included creative writing, communications, choir, and a range of social events such as visits to art galleries and picnics. From early April 2020 onwards, the courses went online, with communications, choir and creative writing continuing in a new format. Additional courses have also been added - a Radio Play course that led to an online performance, a Rhythm of Life course which includes both music and writing, and the new Getting Connected course, which is an online adaptation of the Speaking Out course designed to help new students become more confident socially. The VOSS program currently provides four different courses to over 45 students per week. We are looking forward to July 2020, when we will partner with Star Health to deliver our exciting new project [Upstart](#). For more information on our VOSS programs please go to www.southportcc.org.au.