



# Wendy's FRESH START

While the Club strives for ultimate success – the 2011 premiership – another local has achieved great success of her own, thanks to the community-based Fresh Program.

Wendy Isaako, 19, was a young mother struggling to find a place at a mainstream school when her sister, a Fresh student, suggested she try out the program. Keen to finish her schooling, Wendy had been knocked back time and again for being 'too old', so she took her sister's advice.

Dropping out of school at the end of Year 10, Wendy believed she was destined to work a job she hated. She even tried home schooling for a year and a half but found it difficult to sit down and get the work done. So in 2010, Wendy joined Fresh.

Enrolling in Fresh's VCAL program, Wendy began working towards the nationally recognised secondary qualification. The program involved lots of practical activities, including Virtual Enterprise, which saw her group simulate working in Human Resources. "We had to figure out how much people get paid,



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work out their hours, holiday and sick pay and make sure they sign in and out. Before this, I didn't even know there were different parts of a business."

It was this type of activity, alongside the teachers, that made the experience so worthwhile. "You get people in schools that just don't care – they're there to do a job. The teachers at Fresh really enjoy being there." Wendy explains that they are a lot more understanding and know each student's personal background and factor this in to their learning. Like trying to study while looking after an active two-year old.

Having graduated and being awarded Student of the Year 2010, the future is looking much brighter for Wendy and her family. She has now started a Diploma of

Auslan (sign language) and would eventually like to work as an interpreter. What inspired her was witnessing a young girl trying to interpret for her parents at hospital but struggling with the big words. The family had to abandon medical help and return the next day when an interpreter would be available. While at Fresh, Wendy was able to study Auslan 1, which made it easier to be accepted into the two-year course.

Says Wendy, "I didn't think I'd get into a Diploma or anything. My course is so interesting that I actually enjoy going to it. That helps a lot." When asked what she'd tell young people who are currently in her old position, Wendy doesn't hesitate: "Go to Fresh. It might change your life."

## FRESH PERSPECTIVE

Helping an average 60 students each year, Fresh Program Manager, Belinda Batty says Wendy is considered one of their success stories because of the way she's managed her personal and study commitments.

"We're just so proud of Wendy's achievements. She's a caring, thoughtful young person we all take inspiration from." This year's curriculum is jam-packed, with Virtual Enterprise this time focusing on developing a t-shirt and accessory printing business called 'Fresh Prints'. While the product and money are virtual, Belinda explains, the business processes that students learn are very real.

Essential to Fresh's success is its links to the community. Fresh regularly links with

organisations and businesses to gain access to resources they otherwise wouldn't have, such as joining forces with Youthworx Productions to deliver a digital stories project where students make their own mini documentaries. Then there's the generous support from partners including Victoria University, Olex Australia, Macquarie Sports, Marstel Terminals and Qenos. Fresh is also kindly supported by organisations including Odyssey House Victoria, Lions Club of Footscray, Village Cinemas Sunshine and Victoria Police.

"It's important that students feel connected with the community and feel they can be a positive contributor," says Belinda. "I think once students have experienced success in our program they begin to feel positive about their future." And Wendy wholeheartedly agrees.

## WHEELS IN THE WEST

Last year, two Fresh students, Wendy and Victor, were invited to participate in the Wheels in the West Learner Driving Program. A Maribyrnong City Council initiative, the program matches mentors with learner drivers to clock up the driving practice needed to become safe and confident road users.

Each week for a year, mentor and student take to the roads for an hour driving session. With the mentor's guidance and encouragement, students develop their confidence and skills both on and off the road.

Two more Fresh students will this year be given the opportunity to participate in Wheels in the West thanks to the Maribyrnong City Council. 🇮🇹