



Initiatives

CYBI Inc.

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Inside this issue:

Beracah Gardens	1
CYBI Regional	1
Martyn Ellis	2
Leading Edge	4
CYBI Mailing List	4

Beracah Gardens



When the garden centre where Rebecca Salvair worked closed down in 1997, she decided to make use of her experience to start a garden design business. 'I'd been working there for about 10 years, which gave me a passion for the horticultural side of things,' she explains, 'It also gave me the contacts to get into peoples' gardens and do design conceptsso the business really grew from doing what we already knew.'

The business initially concentrated on consulting and providing ideas on garden design, but has evolved over the years. 'Back then people were more focussed on doing it themselves,' says Rebecca. 'Now it's really turned around ...Shows like 'Backyard Blitz' and 'Auction Squad' have opened up people's minds to the potential of garden design. The busy people who can't do it themselves come to us and we do it for them!' Experience has led to change, as well. 'We found there wasn't a lot of money in design alone. It's only when we added construction that we started to make a reasonable income.'

Rebecca has a background in resource and environmental management and human sciences. Her training has been largely on the job. 'I worked with a garden designer for quite a few years... I've also had a lot of input from my brother who's a landscape architect.' Since starting Beracah Gardens, Rebecca has also developed her business skills. 'I love to look at figures,' she admits. Keeping the business plan up-to-date is key. 'Just checking your goals and seeing whether they've been

(Continued on page 3)

CYBI Regional Expansion – 'impressions from along the way'

With partnering arrangements now being concluded between CYBI and the Business Enterprise Centres for the Southern Tablelands and Highlands, and Queanbeyan, the project is nearing completion. In order to help our readers gain some insight into what the project involved, *Initiatives* asked Brendan Preiss, who has been the project's driving force, for his impressions of the key moments and players who have helped to bring it to fruition.

"We at CYBI knew from the outset eight years ago that participants valued our scheme. The idea of broadening its reach strengthened as time went on. However, our ability to canvass local communities in areas near the ACT was lim-

ited because CYBI is run entirely by a group of volunteers (who have other responsibilities for work and families!) and spends minimal funds on administration (which leaves more for our loans).

Then we heard about the Regional Assistance Programme (RAP) and eventually obtained funding from it, for a project that aimed to inform regional communities, test the feasibility of expanding our scheme, and support implementation of CYBI in suitable areas. Over the past months, we have been greatly assisted by the Capital Regional Employment Council (CREC), and by cooperative administration from the Department of Transport and Regional Services' staff in Wollongong, who handle the RAP.

Our project officer, Bob Jones, is widely known in the ACT and NSW for his long-term involvement in small business

Martyn Ellis

When Martyn Ellis applied to CYBI in mid September, he already had a lot of experience behind him.

Born in Alice Springs in 1979, he spent the first years of his life moving around various outback stations with his teacher father. Following a couple of years in Darwin, the focus shifted to Adelaide and Canberra, where he completed year 12. Since then, at a professional level, he has trained as a chef, become a qualified arborculturalist, and completed an Associate Diploma in Aboriginal Studies, focusing particularly on Jazz fusion. Although he has been accepted to do a Bachelor of Environmental Science specialising in Forestry at the ANU, he is not sure whether he wants to start straight away – at this stage of his life, Martyn prefers ‘hands on’ to theory.

Martyn’s business offers tree pruning and related services, with the objective of enhancing the natural environmental landscape in private or public gardens. Martyn started the business last year, while completing the NEIS programme, and has found plenty to do since then. He has done contract work for CSIRO (where he had worked as a Research Assistant into soil degradation), the Queanbeyan Council, and a South Australian company, Arbortec, as well as a number of private jobs around the older parts of Canberra. Most business comes to him now by word of mouth – although he had unsuccessfully tried to start up before doing the NEIS pro-

gramme, response to a flyer he had put out then continues to work for him now.

Martyn is going to use the CYBI

loan to buy a specialist climbing saw, and to help deal with public and professional liability insurance costs, both of which are substantial. The main aim at this stage is to build up some capital – it’s a good idea to put some aside from each job, as otherwise it has a tendency to disappear very quickly. Challenges? At this early stage, Martyn specifically mentions organising to keep adequate records, particularly for financial transactions.

‘Keep busy; keep as much happiness in your life as you can, and try to look after your family’

Martyn Ellis

‘You really have to get into the habit of doing it every day,’ he says.

The NEIS training obviously provided a base in these areas, which Martyn found useful. However, the networking offered by NEIS was even more important, and this will continue to be a key benefit of CYBI. ‘It’s useful just



to have someone to bounce ideas off,’ he says. Isolation can be a real issue when starting a new business. The best advice Martyn has received, though, came from a family friend with his own successful business - ‘Research everything; have an idea then look at it from all angles, and prepare thoroughly.’

Martyn continues to have many interests outside work, as one would expect from someone with his broad background. He is an ACT rock-climbing champion, South Australian bouldering champion, and has an interest in amateur acting, having played in Dante’s *Inferno* some years ago. As well as plans to expand his business in the future, together with some partners who have similar qualifications, Martyn is looking to farther horizons. There’s a trip to Asia on the drawing board, to travel the Mekong region of Laos and Thailand, and some rock climbing in the spectacular islands of southern Thailand.

Martyn prefers a balanced view of life. ‘Keep busy; keep as much happiness in your life as you can, and try to look after your family,’ he says. With the pressures of starting a new business, it seems like good advice.◊

Ponderings

It takes ten years to grow good trees, but a hundred years to grow good people.

Chinese Proverb

Beracah Gardens

(Continued from page 1)

achieved and if not, why not. As well, we've seen that it's really important to have a clearly defined process, so we can give the same standard service to all our clients. It makes it easier to train managers, too.'

The role you play in running your own business can change over time. 'Now we're getting other landscape architects to work for us, so I can step back and delegate a bit more.' Rebecca and her partner David, who also works in the business, have been able to use the flexibility of being self-employed, keeping the business going while having three children.

CYBI Regional Expansion

(Continued from page 1)

training and guidance, including the delivery of NEIS training and directing the Business Skills Centre in the ACT. This background and Bob's strong support for young people developing their skills and their businesses, contributed to useful and friendly interaction with interested people in the local communities we visited and spoke with.

Amongst the many highlights (and several are just as important) was the interest and warmth of members of the Crookwell Regional Advancement Group (CRAG). Our biggest problem was to puzzle out how the CYBI scheme might have a place locally. We talked through NEIS (virtually unknown), Centrelink servicing, school-to-work transition (which CYBI doesn't handle). However, the breakthrough came when the group realised they knew a young woman who could have been helped to set up a business organising functions, events and family celebrations. This concrete example made the abstract idea real. It also helped underline that business opportunities in this Internet age are not necessarily traditional - the fact that (as one person put it) 'all the shops in the main street are occupied' does not make the programme irrelevant.

Youth work through Councils and Centres featured in several discussions, particularly in Goulburn and Yass. Although CYBI takes people from 18 to 28 years of age, in practice they tend to be mid-20s. We all believed that local young adults participating in CYBI would become role models for younger people looking for career options.

The first two steps Rebecca took were to enrol in the NEIS training scheme, and to seek funding from CYBI (then known as YBI). This helped her build her business plan, and fund the initial purchase of computer equipment. 'I really recommend the NEIS scheme. It was very valuable knowing how to write a business plan well,' she says.

What are the secrets of success? 'Determination,' Rebecca says without hesitation. Then, you need to be passionate about what you do, and have a bit of a thick skin. 'Although you need to listen to what people say and take certain things on board, you need to know how to take the good advice but not the bad.' Finally, it's important to stay focussed, which isn't always easy at the beginning. 'The tendency is to try and add on to the business if you see an opportunity. You risk not doing anything well.' ♦

CYBI is a community-based organisation, relying on local support, which we have found is readily available. However, many interested people already play other roles in their communities. We solved the problem of establishing a local presence by setting up partnerships with Business Enterprise Centres. Through them, CYBI joins a large group of regionally based organisations, with significant experience in business development and employment growth, and good knowledge of relevant programmes, including NEIS. They will be an important local link and referral point, able to continue working relationships with people moving on from CYBI. In order to facilitate regional activity, CYBI will also undertake a range of new initiatives, including launching a dedicated web site and streamlining telephone access.



On 8 December, the CREC will mark the launch of CYBI regional services at a function in Queanbeyan. Past and present participants in CYBI will be there to talk about their experiences with our new partners and supporters. This will be an opportunity to thank all who have contributed to extending the scheme from its base in the ACT, where over 50 new businesses have successfully begun with CYBI support. All in all it has been a most rewarding exchange of views with regional communities."

Full details of the CYBI scheme in its new and broader operating mode will be in our next issue. ♦



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Creating Youth Business Initiatives

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The Leading Edge

One of the fundamental features of CYBI is its community based approach, rooted in a belief in the vitality and opportunity of the small and medium business sector. Recently, a new initiative promoting and aiding the sector has been launched by the Faculty of Business and IT at the Canberra Institute of Technology.

'The Leading Edge' is a free e-newsletter, which gives Canberra's small and medium business community the opportunity to exchange ideas and insights. Its aim is to encourage dialogue within the small business sector, in the belief that this interchange will help stimulate innovation and development, as well as provide networking opportunities for participants.

Each month 'The Leading Edge' focuses on a topical theme, presenting a range of views and news, and giving its readers the chance to have their say in response. The October edition, for instance, looks at 'Skill development for small and medium sized businesses,' covering topics such as mentoring and coaching, as well as training in general. The November issue will look at e-business. The newsletter is electronically distributed through a number of channels, including the ACT Government's Business ACTivity newsletter (about 2 500 recipients), Canberra Business Advisory Service, and Australian Business Limited.

More information is available from www.cit.act.edu.au/bit/leadingedge.◇

LEADING
BUSINESS FORUM EDGE

The CYBI Mailing List

Initiatives is produced by CYBI every quarter, to keep the community informed of its activities and to create awareness of the benefits of its community focussed, practical approach to supporting disadvantaged young people starting their own businesses. It is distributed electronically to an audience of more than 100 people, including past and potential participants, members of the Job Providers Network, and supporting organisations and government departments. We know, what's more, that the newsletter is passed on from these primary contacts to a much broader audience.

We would like to strongly encourage all our readers to continue this practice, and forward a copy of *Initiatives* to any of their contacts who might be interested in CYBI's work. In addition, we encourage any readers who currently receive *Initiatives* indirectly, and who would like to be placed on our mailing list, to send an e-mail to the editor (garth.britton@netspeed.com.au) with relevant contact details. This will help us tailor the newsletter better to your needs, and ensure you receive your copy reliably.◇

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