

Awesome support

Annie Beale, Taranaki support worker

When Annie Beale was awarded Pathways' 2006 Trish Glen Award for dedication and commitment no one was surprised – except Annie!

Her nomination stood out because of the huge volume of heart-felt supporting letters from colleagues, people using Pathways' services, their families and even community members. They all heaped accolades on Annie's head, but Annie says it wasn't until she actually received the award she realised she had a natural talent for her job.

Caring for others was nothing new to Annie when she joined Pathways in 2001. In addition to stints as a dental receptionist, horticultural worker, fish smoker and possum skin processor, Annie had provided support for people with disabilities for many years. On joining Pathways Annie felt right at home. "I just seemed to fit in. Although I had a lot to learn about mental health, the caring and support side came naturally," she says.

For Annie, like many support workers, the best part is helping people work towards their goals and dreams. "Everyone has dreams. When people first come to our services we'll sit down with them to talk about what they want to achieve, then - take it from there."

Paperwork is the least favourite part of Annie's job, although she has discovered she's good at recording and expressing concepts to do with mental health. This is evident from the accolades she's received from a quite different quarter. While studying towards a Certificate in Mental Health Support Work, several of Annie's assignments were held up as exemplary by the Open Polytechnic.

In recent years, Annie has embraced Pathways' Healthy Lifestyle Programme which supports staff and people using services to make healthy choices. Annie and a team of colleagues have been supporting each other to take part in long-distance walks and runs. At the end of 2009, they completed Taranaki's Round the Mountain event. Annie has also completed several half-marathons, and earlier this year was part of a two-person team competing in the Mountain to Surf event from Inglewood to Waitara.

Annie credits the "awesome team" she works with for success in both her working life and to some extent, the running events too. "Without them I couldn't do it," says Annie. "Although I love what I do, it's essential I have that team support behind me. They're awesome!"