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When Annika Hill talks about Harry’s Healthy Treats, you can tell she’s in her happy place.

Running her own small dog treat business (a social enterprise) from home, named after her old dog Harry, mum Diane said, ‘It’s proving to be quite a success in so many ways for Annika’.

Mixing bowls, ingredients, rolling pins, bone-shaped cutters – the production all takes place in the Hill’s family kitchen in Kew.

Diane said the small business has made her 44-year-old daughter, who has an intellectual disability and mild autism, more confident, independent, and feeling more included in her community.

‘Annika joined the NDIS in 2018 and it’s been life changing,’ Diane said.

‘She has support to help her cook and budget; she’s running her own business and she’s out nearly every day. She really is a great NDIS success story.’

Initially, Diane said she and husband David were looking to increase Annika’s community participation, so they included that goal in Annika’s NDIS plan first.

‘We also focused on her weekly routine and building her a small social enterprise she could manage and enjoy,’ Diane said.

‘Annika loves to cook; she loves animals so we thought a small dog treat business would be perfect for her. She could bake the biscuits, sell them, and give back to her community.’

Diane said she’s seen so much growth in her daughter since she’s started her business.

‘I can see Annika’s confidence and independence has really grown – from putting together the ingredient list and baking the biscuits, to engaging with clients when she delivers them.

‘Now Annika really enjoys her weekly routine and when she’s not baking she’s out and about in her community supported to do activities she loves.’

Diane said prior to the NDIS, they got together with 4 other families and opened a café.

‘We employed our own children and other people with disabilities, but it got too much for Annika. During that time she had depression on and off for 7 years. We ended having to leave.

‘Not long after her café employment ended the NDIS was introduced. It’s been perfect for Annika. She hasn’t had depression since.’

Naming her dog treats ‘Oatie Bones’, Annika said she loves baking them with her support worker Amanda who Diane interviewed and employed to ensure was the right fit.

‘Amanda and I have a lot of fun baking biscuits. She helps me a lot,’ Annika said.

Partnering first with one local café to sell Harry’s Healthy Treats, Annika now supplies to 4 other local businesses who happily on sell them to local pet owners.

Annika also supplies The Farm Gate, a small shop at the Collingwood Children’s Farm – a not-for-profit charity offering a hands-on farming experience for inner city residents.

‘I volunteer at the farm. I’ve been doing it for 15 years,’ Annika said proudly.

‘I help out with the Guinea pigs. I do gardening and some other jobs. I love animals.’

Since starting Harry’s Tasty Treats, Annika said she’s donated all the profits to support The Collingwood Children’s Farm.

‘Prior to Christmas (2023) I donated $500 for that half year,’ she said proudly.

Diane said the NDIS support Annika has received has ‘just been incredible.’

‘The Scheme has improved her life and in doing so it has improved ours,’ she said.

‘We’ve been able to get away by ourselves on a few holidays while Annika has stayed home with her support worker.

‘Now we’re working on Annika staying at home on her own at night just with her dog.

‘It’s baby steps, she’s 44 but it has to be done. We’re not going to be around forever, and it will give us peace of mind,’ Diane said.

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