

THE PAINT



THE STORY

This story began when Jessie bought a house in Dunedin with a large garage wall facing the park.

She had an idea to beautify this wall and shared it with her daughter Harriet, who is a Local Area Coordinator (LAC), and Claire, a local artist she met recently.

Together, they started to think bigger – what if we make it more than just a nice wall? What if we make it together with the community?

PLAN

Claire drafted a design for the mural and planned an event using her previous experience of creating murals with children.

To pay the artist and buy the paint and other supplies, Harriet applied for community grants using her knowledge of funding options from her work as an LAC. The applications were successful and they received three grants – enough for the event to go ahead!

They sought the consent from the Council and set the date for the painting.

INVITE OTHERS

Harriet contacted Iona, a second year art student Harriet was alongside in her LAC role. Harriet knew about Iona's art skills and invited her to join them. Iona was keen and offered to create her own art on the panels of the fence to the side of the garage.

The next step was to invite the community to join in. Harriet, Jessie and Claire designed flyers and did door knocking, meeting neighbours along the way. People were keen to join. Bev, an older woman who lives with a disability, was excited to hear of the mural. She also mentioned that she was looking for a new dog-walker for Jess, her service dog.

PAINTING

The event was a success. About 20 locals joined together to make the mural with Claire and Iona. While some kids were helping with the mural, younger children were offered old panels of wood to paint a piece to take home.

Everyone contributed in some way – painting, chatting, bringing food, looking after younger kids – and the mural wasn't the only outcome. Locals got to know each other better, and new ideas for making the neighbourhood an even better place to live were hatched and actioned:

- ~ One neighbour turned up with cookies and juice, a parent of a painter provided pizzas to share, another mum brought food to share and offered up spare canvases.
- ~ One parent identified herself as a support worker supporting people who love animals. Harriet mentioned Bev who needed a dog walker for her service dog and suggested that two women connect.
- ~ Some neighbours who had been in the neighbourhood for 30-40 years shared the stories of how past generations were using the park.

~ People enjoyed the improvised picnic and talked about wanting a picnic table and more seating. A neighbour shared his enthusiasm for anything that would support the community use of the local park.

~ As they painted, children talked about things they would like to see at the park and wrote their ideas down to send a letter to the Dunedin City Council. This was delivered directly to the Mayor.

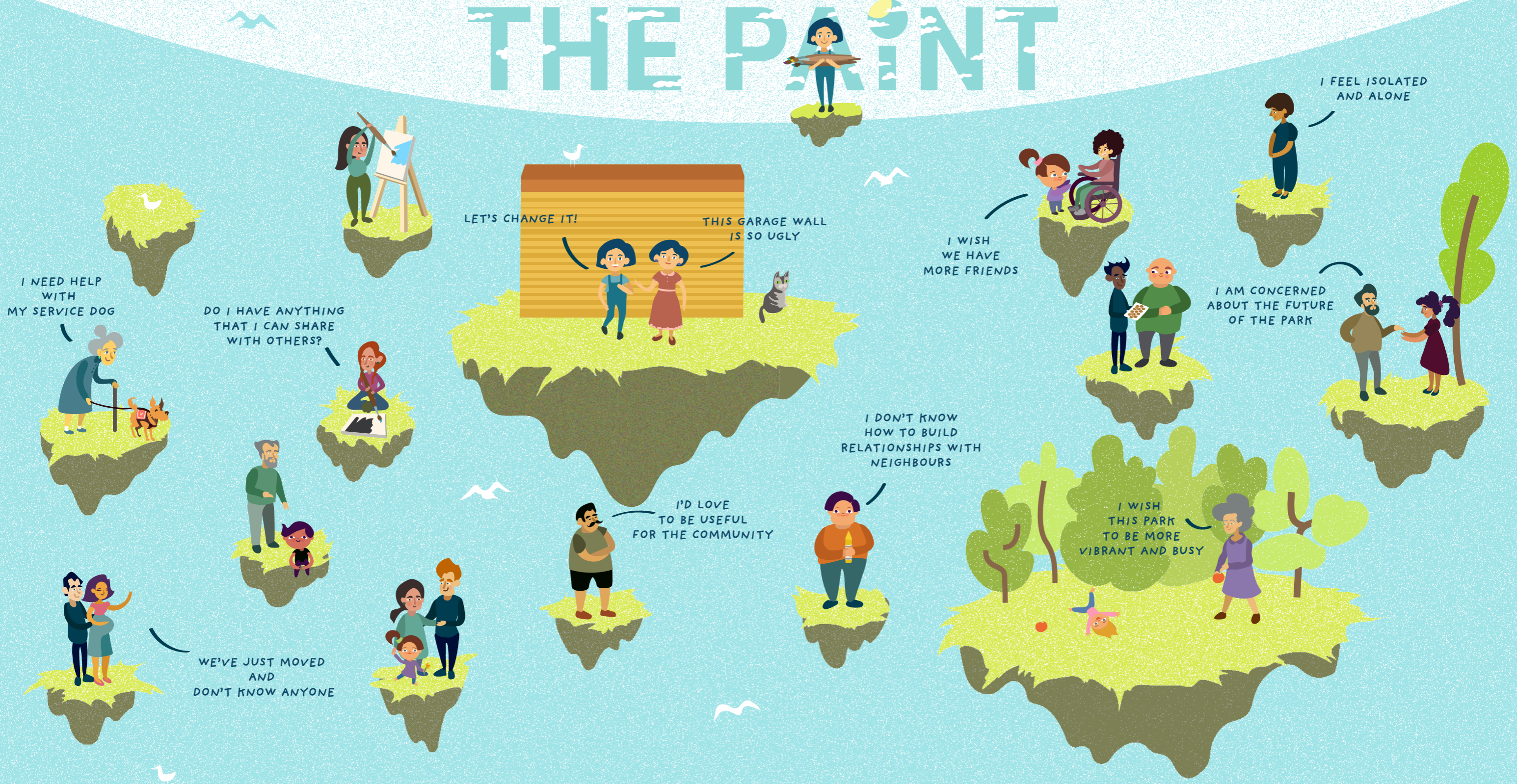
~ People were keen to have another picnic to celebrate the completion of the mural and meet some other neighbours, too.

~ They set a date, made fliers and dropped them in letterboxes and just a few weeks later another community event happened. It was a wonderful day where many more connections had happened and led to other great things in the neighbourhood...

~ Visit our website to read the full story of the paint and explore how little things can help bigger things grow!



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In LifeUnlimited, we dream of a community approach where disabled people live well now, can dream big and live the life they have imagined. This is why Local Area Coordinators (LACs) provide more than just services to people with disabilities.

We aim to inspire people with disabilities to dream and make plans for a good life, using the community connections as a natural support line.

LACs role is to uncover all of the opportunities available in the community, help people build connections with others and identify skills, strengths and talents that disabled people can offer, too.

To be able to do so, LACs are always active and present in the community. They know what's happening and available and have trusted relationships with local groups, organisations and businesses. This way, LACs can help people meet and create the change that matters to each and all.

This story of a mural is an example of how little things can help big things grow. It began when Jessie, a community member in Dunedin, got an idea to beautify her garage wall facing a local park. She shared the idea with her daughter Harriet, who is a Local Area Coordinator (LAC), and Claire, a local artist living nearby. And together, using their skills and knowledge and inviting others, they created much more than just a beautiful wall.

Instead of just painting the wall themselves, Harriet, Jess and Claire decided to make it a community project. They got together to answer some questions:

How to get funding?

Harriet knows a lot about grants through her work as LAC, so she helped with applications. In several weeks' time, the project got enough funds to go ahead. They also sought consent from the city council and chose a date.

How to make this a fun day?

Claire has previous experience doing murals with children, so she offered a list of activities for people of all ages and crafted some attractive flyers.

How to get people involved?

Jess and Harriet did door-knocking and put flyers in the mailboxes. Local people expressed their interest to do the painting and shared their stories about the park.

Who else might join the event – especially of those who usually don't come?

Harriet contacted Iona – a young woman she has worked with as an LAC. Harriet knew that Iona has strong art skills. Iona, a second year art student, was keen and offered to create her own art on the panels of the fence to the side of the garage.

On the day, about 20 locals joined together to make the mural, meet their neighbours and have fun. Claire, Iona and other locals created a beautiful mural. Attendants also suggested that more regular use of the park would be a wonderful thing. So they decided to organise another community picnic, where they collected ideas for the park and later sent them to the Mayor.

At the garage wall, beautiful connections have been made, new friendships have begun, and many good things in the community are now happening as a result.

Community work is an essential part of what LACs do. By being involved in the mural Harriet has built new relationships in the community and developed a better understanding of what is present, what needs and aspirations local people might have, what opportunities exist and how people can be engaged to support one another. As an LAC, Harriet can now introduce these opportunities to people she is alongside, but also identify how their strengths, skills and interests can be offered to the community.

People with disabilities have many skills, resources and experiences to contribute to communities and community connections are a key part of living a good life. LACs help to build bridges in communities so these connections can happen and skills, resources and experiences can be shared. Together, we create stronger communities where everyone can live the life they have imagined.

YOUR STORY

