

Cam-Can & Associates: *Your Time Is My Business*

By Marc Lema

Are you tired of waiting for deliveries, installation or trades people to arrive?

Then Cam-Can & Associates is for you.

Cam-Can & Associates takes the wait out of waiting. In this fast paced world of deadlines, career pressures, dual income families, the self employed, people don't have time to waste on waiting. Cam-Can & Associates will come to your home and do the waiting for you. While we're waiting, we can also attend to those small jobs that we all simply don't have time for – get the cobwebs down, pull the weeds out of the lawn, clean the windows, sweep the driveway, clean the car. You name it and CAM-CAN do it. You don't even have to be waiting for anything to engage the services of Cam-Can & Associates.

To make a booking either phone: 0488 286 968 or **book on-line at** www.cam-can.com.au

Cam-Can & Associates is a new innovative business that has been created around the skills and interests of a young man who has an intellectual disability. Cameron is 19 and like all young people he was unsure of what he would do when he left school. We, his parents, were also perplexed as to what Cameron would/could do at the end of his school years. Most people in Cameron's life thought that he would leave school and attend a sheltered workshop or maybe spend the rest of his life wandering around our community aimlessly. All the so called professionals told us that Cameron was too challenging and that we shouldn't expect very much of him or for his future.

Most of the support provided to Cameron in his early years was at best underwhelming. His life before school consisted of doctors' appointments, specialist assessments and endless therapy. When he started school things quickly took a turn for the worse. The Education Department decided that their multi billion dollar system could not possibly cope with educating a 6 year old child in a typical classroom setting. Cameron became a label that needed to be managed. In all their collective wisdom the best the education system could come up with was segregation, a draconian strategy that has done a great

disservice to all who have experienced it. Needless to say, Cameron's 13 years of schooling amounted to very little.

Three years before Cam finished school we decided that if left to "the system" Cam's life after school may once again take a turn for the worse. At that point there were no recognisable friendships or relationships outside the family in Cam's life. We knew that we needed to do something about this as a matter of urgency. We were fortunate enough to meet a number of very creative and knowledgeable people. One such person was Eddie Bartnik. Eddie is well known to many people with disabilities in WA as he has dedicated his life to improving government and non government support to people with disabilities in WA. Eddie has also spent a great deal of time promoting the importance of family leadership and governance. It is very rare in life that one experiences a light bulb or eureka moment, it is rarer again that one recognises the importance of that moment. We are very grateful that we experienced such a moment. We were invited to attend a meeting where Eddie was to talk about a new idea that he discovered on his travels around the world. Eddie had recently been to Canada and met people who described their strategy of gathering a small group of friends and family to assist their family member with a disability to plan for their future. A circle of support, a circle of friends, a network, this idea takes many names but its beauty is in its simplicity. The notion of inviting others to help Cam plan for his future was the challenge that Eddie left with us that day. Not the sort of people to shy away from a challenge, we decided that this idea was exactly what we needed.

Initially we were apprehensive about asking others for help, firstly because admitting that you need help is difficult to face and secondly, we were scared of being rejected yet again. I am very pleased to say that we needn't have been concerned because in the true Aussie spirit of a fair go for all, people stepped in to be part of what we now call Cameron's Support Crew and we have never looked back. This group of incredible people have spent many hours helping Cam create a good and fulfilling life in his community. Together, amongst many other things, we created Cam-Can & Associates; Cameron now has a number of people that he can call friend and more recently Cam has moved into his own home in Willagee.

Cameron still needs the support of people around him and we acknowledge the importance of the paid support in his life however, who amongst us would embrace a life

devoid of freely given friendships? Which one of us would like to be congregated and segregated based on a wayward gene developed before we were born? And who would support a system that did not acknowledge, respect and cherish the individual that is you? Remember, anyone of us are a slip in the shower, a motor vehicle accident or sporting injury away from being recipient of services, a disabled person and dear I say it, a client of the system.

Cameron has had a warm welcome into Willagee and is quickly settling into his home. With assistance from friends, neighbours and family, he is now getting to know a few people who live close by and is making a good start on embracing life in Willagee. We have heard that Willagee is one of the most community oriented suburbs in Perth and we will be ensuring that Cameron does his best to actively contribute to supporting his local community.

The author Margaret Wheatley once said: "You'll never fear those whose stories you know". I've never heard a truer utterance that reflects the importance of getting to know people who have an intellectual disability. You need look no further than those who now call Cameron their friend.