Dottie Shultz— a quest for learning

When Dottie rang adaptCARE in November 2024 to see if there were any jobs available, she was told: 'There's always work for the right people.' A month later she had joined the adaptCARE team as a support worker. Twelve months on, Dottie is very happy to be here, and she loves the people she works with.

Dottie has brought to the job a breadth of experience as well as a host of qualifications collected over many years, including being an Enrolled Nurse. Although she gained this qualification only relatively recently in 2021, Dottie always wanted to be a nurse. As a seven-year-old she remembers making her cat suffer her ambition by tying it into a pram so she could bandage it up and 'nurse' it. 'Poor thing, it had no choice,' says Dottie. When she was older, after she got her first job working at Peace Haven nursing home and observed the work done by auxiliary nurses, Dottie knew exactly what sort of nurse she wanted to be. But if life has taught her anything, timing is everything and sometimes you just have to wait to do what you want.

Dottie began work at Peace Haven when it first opened in September 1986. She was hired on the spot she says because she was told she looked exactly like the Matron's daughter, Vibeke. Dottie found to be true when Vibeke, her fiery-red-headed doppelganger, visited from Denmark and worked alongside her for a year.

For a decade Dottie worked in the Alzheimer and Dementia units at Peace Haven and later at Nazareth House (now Mount Esk Nursing Home). She started as a 'Ward's Maid' and later became a permanent part-time carer. Thoughts of pursuing a career as a nurse were put aside after Dottie married in 1990 and had two children. For a time, they lived on a farm in the rural district of Targa, 33 kilometres north-east of Launceston, not that far from a farm near Scottsdale where she had spent the first 4 years of her life.

After her first husband broke his neck in a swimming pool accident, Dottie took a few years off work to look after him and raise her children. When she returned to work in 2004, she left aged care and spent some of the next decade working in childcare with the Northern Children's Network. However, after her marriage ended in 2006, she took some time out to spread her wings and go further afield, picking up work wherever it was to be found. In Western Australia she stayed with her niece in Kalgoorlie for six months, working in the town's Super IGA store. In NSW, 'for something different,' she spent six months in Grafton working with her best friend in a cleaning business and two years living in Stockton near Newcastle. She also spent three months in Sydney, which was three months too long she says. Eventually she became homesick and returned to Tassie in 2011, saying she will never leave home again to live elsewhere.

By 2015, Dottie had remarried and was again looking for a change of scenery. This time it was not somewhere else to live, but a career change. In 2015 she trained as a barista at the TasTAFE Drysdale Campus. She followed this in 2016 with a Certificate III in Hospitality, where she was taught by a lady who had worked for Gordon Ramsay, and by another lady, who had worked for the Queen when she was younger, who instructed her on the etiquette of setting a table. In 2017

she did a Certificate III in Tourism, only to be told after she completed it that she was too old to work in the sector. Her biggest takeaway from all these pursuits was concocting her signature cocktail she named the Mint Pattie; made with crème de menthe, Baileys and chocolate syrup, it tastes like an after-dinner mint.

But perhaps all roads do lead to Rome, both literally and metaphorically. In 2019 a friend told Dottie she had just enrolled to do an Enrolled Nursing course and that Dottie should do likewise. Dottie protested, saying she was too old. Nevertheless, she sat the entrance exam and was accepted into the course. However, as the course coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, getting the hands-on practical side of training was difficult. To make up for the disruption caused by COVID, Dottie opted to do a further six months of training and did her practical training at the Scottdale Hospital and on Ward 6D at the Launceston General Hospital. Dottie knew that she did not want to work in a hospital, or even in an aged care setting again, she doesn't like the factory-like care process that happen in institutions. She has always wanted to work in community and care for people in their own home environment where you can build a rapport with the people you support.

While Dottie has no intention of living anywhere else but in Tassie, this does not preclude her interest in travelling to visit different places. This year she ventured overseas for the first time. In March she went on a land trip and cruise around the Mediterranean, and she just loved it. She flew to Barcelona, before travelling through the south of France visiting Arles, Grasse, Nice and Cannes, then through the Principality of Monaco and onto Tuscany in Italy, down to Rome and then to the port city of Civitavecchia where she joined 6,200 passengers and 2000 crew members on a seven-day cruise around the Mediterranean on board the MSC Sea Cruise Ship.

L-R: Dottie with her sister Maggie Krushka at the Trevi Fountain in Rome, the Colosseum, and the MSC Cruise Ship

Dottie's, studies were not the only thing affected by COVID-19. So too was an earlier overseas trip she had planned in 2020 to go to Scotland to attend the Highland Games being hosted by the Clan Leslie from which she is a descendant. She is again planning to go to the UK and

Scotland in 2026. The trip will include a pilgrimage to Leslie Castle in Aberdeenshire, as well as a stopover in Dubia where Dottie wants to ride a camel along with her travelling companion, adaptCARE work colleague Mary Ann; she is hoping to see a camel will spit on her friend. Not that she really wants this to happen, as camels only spit when they are agitated, and Dottie likes animals. She has a cat called Ollie and two Australian Eastern Red-rumped parrots. One is called Maui (named by her granddaughter after the demigod character in the 2016 animated *Moana*), the other Loretta (because she sings like country music singer Loretta Lynn). There was a third parrot called Billie Bob (after actor Billie Bob Thornton) that died.

Like travel, Dottie's quest for learning is not over either. She is now completing a Diploma in Leadership in Disability Services. Intended to lead, inspire and support frontline workers in the disability sector to effectively deliver services, the course is designed to promote how organisations manage their operations to improve customer outcomes in accordance with their NDIS plans. Adding this string to her bow will augment the already well-rounded skillset she brings to the job, and as she was told when she rang adaptCARE a year ago, 'there's always work for the right people.'