

MAKING CONTACT

'MY SEARCH FOR ACTIVITY PROFESSIONALS AROUND THE WORLD'.

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Making Contact

My Search for Activity Professionals Around the World.

Main Objectives

Make international contacts for Diversional Therapy Australia, (DTA).

‘As a newly appointed member of the DTA International Liaison Portfolio, later to become the Team Leader of the portfolio, I had to find international contacts ,both individuals or organisations that are involved, work as or represent leisure and health professionals around the world’.

Reason for making International Contacts and Proposed Benefits for DTA.

The main aim of making international contacts is to promote Diversional Therapy Australia and the profession that is Diversional Therapy, to the rest of the world. For the benefit of the DTA Board and all of DTA’s members we aim to develop an International Forum and an International Contacts list. Networking is a big part of being a DT and the benefits are potentially enormous especially when we have access to activity providers and the different markets, cultures and setting where activity providers are utilised, around the world.

My plan of action.

By researching on the web, for the existence and location of activity practitioners around the world I began my search for contacts.

One of the hardest problems I faced in searching was that quite often Diversional Therapists and leisure and health professionals come under many different names. Searching on Google, the various headings I used included – Activity Providers in Nursing Homes, Nursing Homes with Activities, Therapeutic Recreation Organisations in various countries, Diversional Therapists in various countries and so on.

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In the first 2 months of 2015, I sent out approx. 30 emails to various individuals and organisations around the world. I chose English speaking countries because I realised they would provide me with the best chance of receiving a reply from the potential new contacts.

(Please see attached an example of the emails that I send to potential new contacts around the world).

Review on my work on the portfolio so far till March 2015.

By the end of February 2015, I hadn't had any replies to my emails. I considered that I may have to change what I say in the emails. After re-reading them, I concluded that I was happy with their content, so I decided not to change what I said. I had to try a different approach

A different approach and my plan of Attack.

I decided that I needed to create a purpose for a new contact to want to keep in touch with myself, my residents and DTA.

(Please see attached the Plan/ Design, review, implement and evaluating of the Anzac Concert to Dunedin April 24th 2015). Also please see attached evaluations of the Anzac Concert, the Veterans Remembrance Day Concert to Hawaii and Dunedin and the 3 tenors Concert from Dunedin.

The Result.

By proposing and then performing an International Skype Concert to Beth Sizemore and the residents of the Radius Fulton Care Centre nursing home in Dunedin with the Barunga Village choir, I was able to provide my residents with an amazing activity and I had achieved my first successful international contact for DTA. In the time since I have become very good friends exchanging emails with Beth and we have even done another concert together along with a home in Hawaii as well as held many skype sessions with her and her residents.

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Through my work with the choir at Barunga Village we have performed 4 international concerts to Dunedin, Auckland and Wanganui in NZ, the Plaza Assisted living Nursing home in Pearl City, Hawaii and a nursing home in Perth Western Australia and planning has already begun for another Skype Christmas Concert to Auckland and Perth for Christmas 2016.

Having ongoing projects with these international homes has also provided me with a great opportunity to keep the new friendships going and I would encourage any DTA member to embark on similar projects with our new international friends as it is an amazing experience both personally and for the residents involved as well.

Evaluation Review first 12 months on portfolio.

Towards the end of 2015, though I was very happy with the new friendships I had made with the international nursing homes, I realised I needed to try getting in contact with larger activity organisations around the world.

My Course of Action.

Searching Google again I came across the website for the National Association of Activity Professionals, (NAAP), in the US. I phoned the NAAP President who lives and works in Las Vegas, Nevada. Her name is Alisa Tagg. I introduced myself saying who I was and that I was extending an invitation on behalf of DTA, for NAAP to be part of a working relationship with DTA.

In the following days, Alisa emailed me, extending an invitation, to meet the NAAP Board, via skype, at their National Conference in Dallas in April 2016. DTA Vice President 1 Sue Tripney and I met the Board of NAAP, via Skype, in April this year.

I had started on my way to making contacts with the larger activity organisations around the world.

Review and my progress so far July 2016

2016 has by far been the most productive year for DTA, in making international contacts. Along with the existing working relationships with The Diversional Therapy Association of Japan, DTAJ, The New Zealand Society of Diversional Therapists, NZSDT, in 2016 we can add new working international contacts with the National Association of Activity Professionals (NAAP), The American Therapeutic Recreation Association (ATRA), Dr Marie Young from the University of Western Cape in South Africa and Dr Gerda Joubert, President of the Biokinetics Association of South Africa (BASA). In 2016, Members of the DTA Board including myself have held web-casts with these individuals and organisations, as a method of establishing the new professional friendships between DTA and themselves.

Benefits for DTA, DTA Members and myself as a representative of DTA

A major benefit of having international contacts with fellow DT's enables the exchanging of information, knowledge and experience between individuals and organisations.

DTA are in the process of formatting a Memorandum of Understanding between NAAP and ATRA in the United States, strengthening our professional ties with these organisations into the future.

Having international contacts opens up travel opportunities for all DTA members as well.

As a result of this new friendship with the NAAP team, I have accepted an invitation from them to attend the NAAP 2017 Conference in Denver, Colorado in April 2017 and look forward to meeting everyone there from NAAP and also giving a presentation on my international contacts that I have made.

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As part of the ongoing relationship with DTA's International contacts, this year in May, I was part of a DTA delegation that attended the wonderful Japan Study Tour that was organised by the President of DTAJ, Takako Serizawa.

As part of the tour, we attended 2 symposiums, the first being in Tokyo where I had the pleasure to give a presentation on my international contacts that I have made. To be part of my presentation as an example of what can be achieved between DT's in different countries, Beth Sizemore from Dunedin was very kind to make a short video about a competition she entered with the residents at Radius Fulton in Dunedin, to get members of the New Zealand Allblack Rugby Team to visit them. In August 2015, I attended the NZSDT National Conference in Auckland along with DTA President Louise Absalom. On this occasion I met many of the NZ DT members and still correspond with them to this day. I also gave a short presentation about the original International Skype concert to Dunedin. The President of NZSDT- Mary Gracie in her opening address at the National conference in Auckland and then the Gold Coast DTA National Conference also paid tribute to me for initiating the concert to her country. She said it was a fantastic, positive way to further the relationship between DT's in Australia and New Zealand.

Impact on the Author

The success I had with the Anzac Concert to Dunedin, gave me a lot of confidence. Confidence that I feel I needed, in order to proceed with my search for contacts around the world for DTA. I'll always attribute the moment that I first spoke to Beth Sizemore in NZ and then being able to stage an absolutely wonderful concert for our new international friends in NZ, as the time that I really felt part of the DTA Board.

I had started to do the task that I was entrusted with as part of the DTA Board and as the Team Leader of the International Liaison Portfolio. I have always been a very shy person, so in becoming a DTA Board member and taking on the Team Leader role, I was really out of my comfort zone. In reality, It took quite a while for me to feel comfortable as part of the DTA Board,

this was in no way the DTA Board Members fault, it was just me. Now I couldn't be more at ease with my role. I know I still have a lot to learn about the DTA Board and all the inner workings of the DTA organisation. I get such a thrill when I make a successful contact with a DT or Activity Practitioner somewhere in the international community. I have also, quite unexpectedly, become quite comfortable presenting at conferences and workshops in Australia and on an international stage.

I consider having the opportunity to make new friends around the world, a highlight of my working life. Top of the list would be the times I have met the lovely Takako Serizawa, President of DTAJ, here in Australia on 3 occasions, in Auckland NZ in 2015 and of course in Japan on the Japan Study Tour, this year.

I have also got a lot of pleasure being able to plan and initiate the 4 international skype concerts to the various locations as well as the many skype practice sessions we have had with our residents over the past year. I have recently been able to establish international penfriends for 2 of my residents in Ireland and Scotland as well. I was very grateful to have the 2 international speakers present at the DTA Barunga Village Workshop in June this year. They were the ATRA President - Dr Dawn DeVries from Grand Rapids, in the US and the Registered Diversional Therapist – Orquidea Mortera from Selwyn Village Nursing facility in Auckland NZ..

At Barunga Village, we even had what we called, 'Tales from across the Seas'. This activity involved a Skype link up with the Plaza Assisted Living Nursing Home in Pearl City, Hawaii. Our residents took it in turn telling stories of their lives and what it was like to grow up and live in their respective countries.

As Team Leader of the DTA International Liaison Portfolio I have gratefully accepted the responsibility of keeping our members informed of my progress making international contacts. I do this by writing a monthly update in the DTA Connections newsletter. I have also on several

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occasions been able to get my new contacts to write an article on where they live and what they do as activity professionals in their home countries.

I have also written articles on my own personal programs that I run at Barunga Village for the DTA newsletter and for the NZSDT newsletter about our Anzac concert to Dunedin and about our wonderful trip to Japan this year.

My success as the Team Leader of the International Liaison Portfolio.

I measure my success by the number of international contacts I have made for DTA in the time I have been a member of the portfolio. I consider any particular contact a success if I have repeat emails and correspondence and on several occasions the new contacts have requested to meet as a way of introductions, with DTA representatives on a webcast. Both Louise Absalom and I met the ATRA team in March this year as well as Dr Marie Young in South Africa. In April, DTA Vice – President 1 Sue Tripney and I met the NAAP team at their national conference in Dallas and then in May both Louise and myself met with Dr Gerda Joubert in South Africa.

Into the future for DTA and our International Contacts and the Benefits for DTA

I believe all the activities that I have been able to do with our international contacts and the continuing correspondence between me and other DTA Board members with our new international colleagues and their respective organisations has laid down a strong foundation for future interaction of our organisations in the international activity provider's community.

As with any organisation and profession, there will always be problems we have to overcome. By having DTA exist as part of the International Activity Providers community, and by all working together, we can maybe overcome these problems. The DTA International Forum and contacts list, that contains individual and organisation contact details, is nearing completion and will soon be available to DTA members and members of the international activity community. I don't see for any reason why any member of DTA who has access to the International Forum and contacts list,

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can't also do and even improve on what I have personally been able to accomplish with my international contacts.

As Team Leader of the DTA International Liaison Portfolio, I have had amazing successes with my search for new international contacts. I would love the opportunity to introduce DTA to as many activity professionals and providers around the world as I can.

I believe Diversional Therapy Australia is up there with the best in the world when it comes to representing the DT profession and our members and I think it can only be a positive if we share our knowledge and experience with the rest of the world activity community.