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mind View

Pictured: Heather

A Haven for Heather and her hedgehogs



My name is Heather, and I consider myself extremely fortunate to have been the very first resident of Haven Frankston. I can't believe I've been here over a month - it was well worth the wait to move in. It was a lengthy process to be able to finally move in, and at times I did wonder if it would ever actually happen.

It seems like a lifetime ago that my mum and I interviewed for Haven Frankston and initially I was hesitant to move into supported independent living; I had come to rely so heavily on Mum for support and I had some misconceptions about what it (supported independent living) might be like. But I left the interview feeling hopeful; maybe I could live independently?

Haven Frankston is a supported independent living service for people dealing with mental

ill-health. It was built by The Haven Foundation and Mind provides the support services. It consists of 18 fully self-contained apartments, along with communal facilities including a fully equipped kitchen where Sunday evening community dinners are prepared. There is a pleasant outdoor area too, complete with a barbecue and outdoor setting.

I have thoroughly enjoyed the past month, and the staff has really helped with the transition to living more independently. I just feel so lucky, and it has been a wonderful adventure getting settled; adjusting to a new routine, familiarising myself with the local area and learning to use all my appliances - even if the first dinner I cooked on my induction cooktop was an epic disaster!

There are group activities to participate in here at Haven, but the wonderful thing is that all the

Heather wrote this story about moving from home into supported independent living at the new Haven Frankston and asked if we'd like to publish it. Thank you, Heather, for sharing your story with everyone.



residents have their own space and choose what they want to take part in or what support they need – we all have the chance to actively work on our recovery alongside one another and Mind staff, which I'm finding so very helpful. I had never heard of supported independent living before, but I feel so fortunate to have been offered a place here.

You must be wondering about the title of this article: well, you see, I collect hedgehogs! It's a long story, but the hedgehogs remind me to be happy, like a happy hedgehog. Growing up, my grandma affectionately called me her "Happy Heather", but, for a long time, since I began struggling with my mental health, I had lost touch with Happy Heather. Since moving into Haven, and having a safe place to call home, Happy Heather has returned!

Of course, life isn't perfect, but I can honestly say I am happy. This has all been made possible by having my independence – something I feared I would never have again. My hedgehogs are quite at home in my apartment, reminding me to be happy and healthy! ■

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Heather leads the way

Heather's mum Barbara is thrilled with how Heather has settled into Haven Frankston. This isn't the first time Heather has tried to live independently, Barbara says, but the previous times she tried, she finished up in hospital or back at home with her.

“She has settled in really well and it (the Haven) has made a huge difference to both her life and mind. The Haven is brilliant; there should be a lot more supported independent living options like it. She's taking responsibility for herself and the fact she's got her own place where she feels safe and independent is wonderful,” Barbara says.

Heather's impressive transition into the Haven hasn't gone unnoticed there either. Michala Copeland, Mind's Service Manager at Haven Frankston, says Heather has been a leader among Haven residents and helped others by showing them the way to the local shops and the train stations.

“She's made her place look very homely and she's very proud of it. It's only been a few weeks but Heather really feels there's a level of support (at Haven) that means this time she'll be able to manage to live independently.” ■

For information about Haven Frankston and other Mind support services call Mind Connect on 1300 286 463 or visit www.mindaustralia.org.au

