

MEDIA RELEASE

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A life changing gesture

A small ceremony in Margate has made a big difference in the life of a young Huon Valley woman when she was given a free car.

Breanna Walker is a young single mum who has been working hard to make her life, and the life of her young daughter better. Breanna left school in 2009 (grade 9).

“I went back to do my year 11 and 12 in 2013 which I completed with HA’s (high achievements) – then I had my daughter and went back to study and did my Certificate 2 in Community Service and Certificate 3 in Disability.

“I decided to get my licence and approached the Huon Valley Council and put my name down for their GEARING UP program, so I could get my hours up and get my licence,” Breanna said.

The Huon Valley Council’s GEARING UP program involves volunteer mentors being matched with learner drivers. It is affiliated with Driver Mentoring Tasmania, the body that oversees all driver mentoring programs throughout Tasmania.

Volunteer mentors supervise the learner driver in the Gearing Up Vehicle to help them gain their required driving hours at no cost to the learner driver. Ross Thomas from Margate is a Gearing Up volunteer mentor.

Breanna feels she was very lucky.

“Ross was incredible. He passed on a lot of his knowledge about driving and I’m really grateful I was given the opportunity to have such a good mentor,” Breanna said.



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Ross is also a member of the Channel Men's Shed in Margate. Peter Norris is the Men's Shed Vice President.

"The Shed has 187 members – we opened in August 2013 and we make a point to do quite a bit out in the community.

"A very generous couple in Hobart, John and Heather Dunn donated a car to the Tasmanian Men's Shed Association who threw it open to all Sheds. We went and had a look at it, it looked pretty tidy and we took it for a drive.

The car needed a new clutch which the Dunns kindly offered to pay for as well, but we didn't need to because of Repco," Peter said.

Kevin Plant is the store Manager of Repco at Kingston.

"Repco have had an affiliation since the Channel Men's Shed started. They approached us and we were happy to help them out by providing the new clutch for Breanna's car. We are proud to be a part of the community and this was a great little project," Kevin said.

Peter Norris said the Dunn's generosity didn't stop there.

"The Dunns then kindly agreed to pay to extend the registration by 6 months. The Men's Shed has replaced the clutch, covered the transfer fees and organised the insurance through RACT so that Breanna is not out of pocket. The RACT have been great by organising insurance and donating money as well," Peter said.

Breanna is overwhelmed at the gesture.

"I'm at a loss for words that the Men's Shed chose me to give the car to. Having a car means I have more freedom. My work involves split shifts. I won't have to walk 45 minutes each way to work in the cold and the rain, and I can now do more shifts. It also means I'll be able to take my daughter to places I haven't been able to take her yet.



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“I’d really like to thank everyone who has helped me, from the people that donated the car, to Ross Thomas and the Council’s GEARING UP program, Repco at Kingston, the RACT and everyone here at the Men’s Shed. It’s fantastic, but I’m trying really hard not to cry, everyone’s been so helpful,” she said.

Huon Valley Council Commissioner Adriana Taylor said it’s a great result, given Breanna just thought she was getting her P Plates.

“Getting your licence is like a rite of passage we take for granted but to our learner drivers it can change their lives. In this case, Ross, Breanna’s Gearing Up mentor, put her name forward for the car, so not only has she gained her licence, she has been given a great hand up. On behalf of the Huon Valley Council, I’d like to thank everyone involved and wish Breanna all the best for the future,” Commissioner Taylor said.

Breanna was handed the keys to her new car at a ceremony at the Channel Men’s Shed on Thursday (April 6).

For more information
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Huon Valley Council Commissioner Adriana Taylor, Breanna Walker, Peter Norris, Channel Men's Shed Vice President and Kevin Plant, Manager Repco Kingston at the presentation of Breanna's car.



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