

Ian and Rose's story

Ian's Story:

In about February or March 2009 I was browsing through the RACV's magazine "Royal Auto" and came across an item where volunteers were being sought to start a driver mentor program in Bendigo. Being a retiree, with an almost clean driving record, I thought "This is something I could do" and completed the on-line process to register interest in becoming a 'mentor'. And waited. And waited.

In June 2009 I was contacted by the then Program Coordinator Meryn Ryan and advised that I had been selected as a "mentor/supervising" driver, and to attend a 'meet and greet' with the other 20 or so candidates on August 25 2009. A mixed group of folk turned up at the Kirsti Harrower room at BCentral and was given an outline of what was expected of them and the L2P program. Over the next few months, several training sessions were attended by all, including role-playing, rules knowledge and social skills tests. Eventually an assessment test was conducted by a 'professional student' in the form of an experienced driving instructor/tester. Interestingly, I was the first of the new mentors to be assessed and did not pass this first test, being told that I was "too abrupt when giving instructions to the mentee!". I was re-assessed a short time later, by a different tester and came through with flying colours, receiving my accreditation on November 12, 2009.

Matching with potential 'mentees' began shortly afterwards, and I was initially matched to a Burmese student who had good driving skills and just needed the hours. This student moved to Melbourne after just a few weeks and I was then re-matched with another mentee, also a student and also a refugee from Kenya. Rose had no driving skills at the start of her sessions but between us we went on to create a couple of firsts in the Bendigo L2P program: Rose became the first mentee to complete all 120+ hours and go on to win her driving licence at the first attempt, I was the first mentor to accumulate 100 hours of 'mentoring' and to take the same person for the duration of their course, with Rose receiving her licence on July 12, 2011. We have remained good friends even after the 'mentoring' had finished, and I will most likely go on to mentor Rose's younger sister as well!

And Rose's story:

I came to Australia on December 12, 2007 from Kakuma Refugee camp which is located in the northern part of Kenya with my younger sister and brother to join our lovely uncle. I got my



Learners licence in June 2009. It was funny, all my friends were on their learners too, so we could ask each other how many hours we had.

I came to know about the L2P program through my friend, she is just so beautiful and a great person and one day we decided to go to BCentral to find out more about it, and all in all, everything went well, so I filled in some papers and was put on the waiting list. After a few months I was called in to meet my mentor and organise which days and time suited both of us. Imagine my surprise to find out my mentor was an 'old' guy! I had no driving skills at the start but I soon had learned the basic skills, and when I started my supervised driving with the help of this amazing person, I started to build some skill and confidence. Not only has he taught me how to drive but also how to be careful on the road and responsible. Along the way I had several lessons with Geoff Dixon, a Driving School instructor, and he showed me what the licence testers would be checking on.

We had a lot of fun along the way, and even a very minor accident, which was a pretty steep learning curve! We travelled many country roads and I thought some of the country we saw reminded me of parts of Africa. I learned about traffic in the Bendigo city area as well, doing many 'blockies' both during the day and the night. And those supermarket parking lots...what a drag! Maybe the highlight was a day trip to Melbourne where we experienced freeways, hook turns, and heavier traffic than we find in Bendigo. And a great lunch at a café by the beach. Ian kept the driving interesting by giving me a score out of ten, and kept a log so that I could look back at what I had done and what he had written (my right foot got lots of mentions!) so that I could keep improving.

I got my licence on July 12 2011. Wow!

Dear Ian, I still mind my right foot and the head checks are doing me great. I am really very grateful for all the time you have put in, and I also want to thank the organisation for giving me this opportunity. I cannot thank you enough but you have done wonders for me.

Ian and Rose's journey hasn't ended, Rose and Ian are now the L2P Bendigo Ambassadors and assist the program coordinator with promotion of the program. Rose is now an official volunteer, so she has gone from L to P to V!!! She hopes in the future to become a supervising driver - what a great outcome.