

# News from Jersey Employment Trust

## ‘In the past, people called me lazy or slow. But I’ve proved that I am able’

The latest news from Jersey Employment Trust, by JET fundraising and relationships manager **Caroline Spencer**

A YOUNG man who has autism – and who had no art skills six years ago – is now proving that he has the potential to become a selling artist.

Christian Basilio started upcycling at Acorn in 2019. “I didn’t have hardly any skills,” he said. “I was very slow. It would take me two months to complete a piece that today I can finish in days. It’s like the more I do, the better I am getting at it.”

Staff at Acorn noticed the change after they ran a creative arts project in the community in 2023. With support from the Government of Jersey’s Connect Me funding, the Arcorn team ran art workshops in partnership with the Harbour Gallery, and that was where Christian met tutor Dawn Burrows.

“I was scared of Dawn and her dog, Bali,” said Christian. “Now I love the dog! My art was really bad. I didn’t know any techniques. But now I am showing more initiative. Dawn says to me you feel more brave in what you have got and you bring that to the table.”

While tackling a range of subjects and media, animals and landscapes are his favourites. He has found his own distinctive style and he comes alive talking about his art. Two pieces, a lion and a bird, have already sold through the Harbour Gallery.

“I have done a drawing of actor Chris Pratt. I am pleased with it but I think it has come out more like David Beckham,” he laughs, but he readily adds that he has room to grow.

Christian, who has autism and has had mental health issues, absorbs what he is taught.

Ms Burrows said: “Christian has become a great art student who displays talent, focus and a drive to keep learning and improving. He works in both large and small scales, on canvas and paper, in acrylics and pencil. His positive attitude to lessons with me has also enabled him to grow as a person, improving communication and relationships with others, including my golden retriever.

“Christian is a pleasure to teach and I hope he will continue to develop into a selling artist and have his paintings on exhibition at my new art gallery, The Colour Rooms at Beaumont.”

Acorn training and development co-ordinator Linda Smith said: “The change we have seen in Christian has been enormous since he’s been doing art. He has blossomed and grown as an individual. His confidence has improved, his ability to regulate his emotions is much better, and art has brought him a lot of happiness. It has given him such a positive direction and focus for his life.

“We started it here but it was Dawn who really helped him develop into an amazing artist. The creative arts have been very good in allowing him to express himself and his emotions and we are excited to see where art takes him next.”

Christian’s creativity is showing no signs of slowing down. This year he has had an upcycled table featuring Seymour Tower at the Jersey Eisteddfod, he has enjoyed a pottery course at Highlands, and he is also engaging with Jersey Mencap art sessions.

He said: “Coming to Acorn helped me because I wanted to show I could do something. The skills I developed here I can also do at home, sometimes I do a lot.

“Art is my favourite thing. I’ve found my own style, and I will carry on doing what I’m doing and keep getting better. I do feel proud.



■ Christian Basilio: ‘At first my art was really bad. I didn’t know any techniques. But now I am showing more initiative’



“In the past people have called me lazy or slow. It was like people saying I am not able.  
“I’ve proved to me that I am able.”

■ Christian drawing a picture of a lion, and right: the finished artwork



■ Seymour Tower by Christian Basilio, and above: Christian upcycling a table

### The return of the JET Jaunt

IT’S time to sign up for the second JET Jaunt, sponsored by CSC. Inspired by the TV show Race Across the World, it involves teams of two travelling over land, with checkpoints and challenges on the way.

This year, it is being held over the week-end of 19-21 September and the destination is Prague.

Teams are asked to fundraise a minimum £500 per team, which goes to support Islanders who have a disability or long-term health condition in the workplace.

Last year the Jaunt raised £24,000.

We are grateful to sponsors CSC, as well as the continued support of Ports of Jersey and All Island Media. We are again working with travel experts Lupine Travel who devise the route and clues.

■ You can sign up here: [lupine.co.uk/race/2025-jet-jaunt.html](http://lupine.co.uk/race/2025-jet-jaunt.html)



■ Lorna and Jamie Pestana were among those who took part in the JET Jaunt last year, and are doing so again this year Picture: ROB CURRIE

### From the Chelsea Flower Show to the Gardener’s World live event at the NEC

THE Acorn Woodshack is proud to be playing just a little (but very exciting) part in the above events – having provided the waste timber to make this cute sparrow cottage.

The Lego BrdBx is on display in Callum Corrie’s garden, which was featured on Gardener’s World on BBC2. BrdBx is a start-up wildlife habitat brand of eco-friendly, architect-designed wildlife boxes, the brainchild of Jersey resident William Davies.



■ From this (above) to this...



### St Saviour support for mental health training

WE would like to thank the Parish of St Saviour for giving us £1,000 towards training in Decider Skills.

Decider Skills help people recognise thoughts and feelings, allowing them to manage their emotions and mental health. More than half of our clients report mental health as their primary disability, a percentage which is even higher amongst the under-25s.

Our project is run by Employment Co-ordinators Linda de Jesus and Jo Anderson, who are pictured here with the Constable, Kevin Lewis.

