

LIGHTNING LIVES

FOR THE SAKE OF OUR CHILDREN TRUST

Official Newsletter Spring 2009

ABOUT US:

Trust Vision

Our vision is to see New Zealand become a place where our children:

- are safe from harm;
- have a sense of belonging, of feeling loved and valued;
- have access to the necessities they need to engage fully with life and realize their own unique potential.

Trust Mission

We aim to be a "voice" for the "voiceless".

We do this through **educating, promoting and raising awareness** of the **wellbeing** of our **children** in New Zealand and the need for **strong families** and **communities** to support them.

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Another review, but the same old questions...

In June of this year the Office of the Children's Commissioner published 'Death and serious injury from assault of children under 5 years in Aotearoa New Zealand: A review of international literature and recent findings'.

The review is comprehensive and draws on research from around the world. Results highlighting the plight of New Zealand children are grim. However, true to its nature the review does little to contribute to policy suggestions, and although providing some valuable information, it neglects to ask the crucial questions of why we again hear more of these shocking statistics, and see little action being taken to address the underlying issues that lead to these tragic outcomes.

Between 1995 and 2004 (inclusive) 443 children, under age five were admitted to hospital as a result of assault (including neglect); almost one child a week. Further,

during the same time period, 51 children under age five, died tragically as a result of the assault they experienced. More recent results show that over the 2005/2006 financial year period Child, Youth and Family (CYF) received 6699 notifications of children under two years of age. One quarter of these were deemed to require no further action; however 62% of these children had been re-notified to CYF by August 2008.

The review goes on to identify 'risk factors' for child abuse and neglect leading to serious injury or death. These risk factors include: the maternal age of the mother, her access to and use of prenatal services, the attitude of the father towards the child, the role of non-biological parents, previous history of family violence, the mental wellbeing and/or illness of the mother, the use of alcohol and other drugs, the ethnicity of the child, as



well as disability of the child, previous physical injuries and the immediate circumstances of the injury.

In brief:

- *Children whose mother is under 15 years of age are seven times more likely to experience abuse and neglect. If the mother is under 17 and already has one child the risk increases ten fold.*

- *A child whose mother does not receive, or drops out of prenatal care have a ten times higher risk of suffering from abuse and neglect. (continued pg 4)*

ASPIRING LEADERS FORUM 09



For the Sake of Our Children is pleased to have endorsed the 2009 Aspiring Leaders' Forum *on faith and values*. Political, business and community leaders and 120 young delegates from across NZ gathered in Wellington from July 30th to August 2nd to listen, learn and examine ideas of leadership across all different sectors of society including community, arts, business, politics or sport.

The Trust sponsored and supported seven young leaders from Auckland, (Annie Nicholas) Hamilton (Hon. Moeofo Virginia Tuita, Asiena Taumoepeau), Tauranga (Jared Phipps) and an international delegate from Tonga (Sosaia Maliu Moe Ao Tufui). Our good friends at Fletcher Trust also sponsored two young leaders from Auckland (Binga Thompson and Kelsie-Ann Fatuamaka). From the Trust John Sax, Rachel Afeaki and Greg were small group facilitators each looking after a group of 6 young people during forum with John sitting on the Business Panel Seminar. (continued on pg 3)

A WORD FROM OUR FOUNDER:

Dear Friends,

It's been a busy last few months. Chairman and month at the Trust..



Chairman and Founder —John

We've heard from the office of the Children's Commissioner concerning child assault and neglect which highlights key issues that need to be discussed if we are to keep our children safe from harm.

When are we going to get honest with our children and ask what form of relationships work and what doesn't?

When are we going to demand responsibility of parents for their inexcusable actions?

When are we going to consider the rights of our children before our own??

Parental education and support is important to ensure our children are kept safe from harm. One organisation who's doing exactly this is Homes of Hope who continue to provide tangible HOPE - to the many children who find themselves in need of care and protection in NZ.

Lets continue to ask courageous questions of our leaders on behalf of our children and maintain support for the organisations who exist to improve the well-being of our most vulnerable citizens - our kids.

Aroha-Nui, John Sax

**TO WRITE LOVE ON HER ARMS....**

Early this month The Trust were pleased to host a visit from Jim Hoyle (a kiwi), Community Development Manager of To Write Love on Her Arm (TWLOHA), a non-profit movement dedicated to presenting hope and finding help to young people struggling with depression, addiction, self-injury and suicide. Set up and located in Florida, USA - the success of TWLOHA is how they connect with a generation using social marketing networks such as MySpace, Facebook and Twittering. In just over two and a half years, TWLOHA has responded to 80,000 messages from people in 40

different countries. With the support of well known music bands and celebrities, TWLOHA deliver the programme 'Love is the Movement' to encourage, inform, inspire many.

Jim, Bronwyn and Elisha Hoyle were able to visit a number of local organisations working in similar areas and in particular getting a better understanding of Maori and Pasifika approaches to dealing with such issues. The interesting discussion between both the Trust and TWLOHA was seeing the similarities of risk factors such as biological and genetic factors, stress and adversity and social risk factors associated with depression, self-injury

and suicide tendencies and that of child assault and child abuse in New Zealand.

TWLOHA hopes to open an office either in NZ or Australia whilst partnering with people already doing great work in these areas. Go to www.twloha.com or myspace.com/towriteloveonherarms



Above: Jim, Bronwyn & Rachel

Hope for our children and families....

The plight of New Zealand's most vulnerable children continues to worsen.

Significant challenges require innovative, creative and comprehensive solutions. Long-term change requires long-term commitment, diligence and stickability. Homes of Hope began in 2002, with an ambitious vision of providing quality, 'wrap around', supervised foster care to children in need of care and protection and for the last 7 years they have been doing just that.

Homes of Hope currently run three homes in Tauranga and in September this year will fully commission their first home in Auckland. The need is great and the solutions are expensive but imperative.

Firm believers that it is more expensive to repair an adult than restore a child they seek to do just

that, restore childhood, belonging and love to societies most vulnerable who find themselves tragically in most urgent need.

Just last week we have heard another story of a young child being murdered. Statistics continue to expose what is no longer a secret, that New Zealand children are some of the worlds most endangered.

Rather than being an ambulance at the bottom of the cliff, Homes of Hope asserts that that while they provide open and loving arms to children who find themselves in that situation, they will lead, guide and love them back to the top of the cliff, to declare to the world that change is possible, that communities can come together to support our most vulnerable, and that cycles of familial abuse and neglect can be broken. Homes of Hope do this by providing a stable

and consistent loving environment, with closely supported House Parents and care workers as well as mentors in the community. Siblings are kept together, and once at Homes of Hope - it is their home where they are able to stay for as long as necessary. The heart and passion of Homes of Hope is to see these children restored and then reunited with a forever family - ideally biological.

For the Sake of Our Children Trust fully endorse the work that Homes of Hope does, and encourages you to do the same. For more information on how you can support, or be involved with this initiative please visit www.homesofhope.org.nz



National RAK Day September 1st 2009.

National RAK Day on September 1st, is a day where you do some *Random Act of Kindness* for someone else.

As defined by Wikipedia—**A random act of kindness** is a selfless act performed by a person or persons wishing to either assist or cheer up an individual or in some cases an animal. There will generally be no reason other than to make people smile, or be happier. Either spontaneous or planned in advance, random acts of kindness are encouraged by various communities.

So why not take time out next month whilst celebrating the 1st day of Spring do something nice for someone else without the expectation of getting anything in return.

Remember, if you enjoy the day so much, why not do a RAK each day for the month of September. We have some ideas to get you started. Why not share with us what you did or even contact your local radio and newspapers who want to know what you're doing.

Go to www.rak.co.nz for more info.



Another review but the same old questions...

31% of child deaths under five years of age. Further the likelihood of serious child abuse increased six to eight fold if the mother of the child was engaged in hazardous drinking around the time of conception, or during the first trimester of her pregnancy.

- *Significant concerns about 'making ends meet' lead to an increased likelihood of abuse of up to six and a half times the population average.*
- *Ethnicity is tragically a significant factor for New Zealand Maori in particular; with a six fold increase in risk of serious injury or death from assault for male children and a threefold increase for female children.*

Risk factors do not appear in isolation. Multiple risk factors mean the likelihood of abuse and neglect are extremely high in some cases.

While highlighting some valuable information, the review fails in the first instance to ask—new and courageous questions—in

regard to the role of marriage, the impact of family structure and welfare dependency and the longterm effects of welfare dependency.

Further the review fails to draw the connection between the exhibiting risk factors and their commonality. The identification of these risk factors will prove most useful if used as tools to begin to look at the deeper issues surrounding the social policy, family structures and welfare, as well as substance abuse that exhibit themselves as leading contributors to these risk factors, and in turn to the deaths of too many of our precious tamariki. Despite these risk factors forming a common and relatively clear picture of the social and economic circumstances of children, prior to or during their experience of abuse and neglect, they in themselves are not enough to direct clear policy changes.

Mainstream media failed to pick up on any light the review shed on the subject of

child abuse. Likewise many of our elected representatives did little to make meaningful changes and capitalise on the legitimate questions that it raised.

Unless we, as individuals, and communities, in our conversations, the groups we find ourselves a part of, and the positions of influence we hold - begin to look at these risk factors as a whole picture, unless we (including our Children's Commissioners) ask the courageous and imperative questions in regard to how children and their families find themselves in these circumstances, and demand answers to these questions, we will neglect to address the deeper issues.

We will never truly address the problem in more than a superficial way, allowing cyclical patterns of abuse and neglect to continue, and turning a deaf ear to the voices and stories of vulnerable children who live, and used to live in New Zealand.

To read the full review go to www.occ.org.nz

(continued from pg 1)

Our researcher/writer Lindsay Price was also a volunteer. This year's speakers included Life Education Trust CEO Trevor Grice, Elim College Principal Murray Burton, former MP Ron Mark and businessman Paul Blackwell. We heard from many of our political leaders including Deputy Prime Minister Bill English, Opposition Leader Phil Goff and many others.

The delegates were also involved in community service in the Stokes Valley area with the Salvation Army. This included painting murals at local schools, gardening for local homes and providing a sausage sizzle & face painting for the local children. The Aspiring Leaders forum was supported and endorsed by sixty-four of our political leaders. We hope to continue supporting young leaders to attend the forum in 2010. Go to www.aspiringleaders.org.nz for more info.



From Left: Asiana Taumoepeau, Hon. Moeofo Tuiita, John Sax, Annie Nicholas, Sosaia Malu Tufui & Jared Phipps (2) Trustee Angus Fletcher, Trevor Grice with Binga Thompson, Annie & Kelsie-Ann Fatuamaka. (3) Opposition Leader Hon. Phil Goff and Team 13 delegates: Rachel, Richard Higgins, Donna Carline, John Sax, Aleki Taumoepeau, Steven Mundy and Luke Herlihy.

RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS—SUGGESTIONS

*Pay for a strangers coffee in a café

*Pop over to your neighbour with some home baking

*Offer to babysit your friends children so they can go out

*While waiting in a queue, turn to the person next to you and compliment them on their appearance

*Adopt a secret RAK buddy for the day

*Mow your neighbours lawn

*Give someone a big smile followed by a hug and tell them they're great!

*Carry someone's shopping bag to their car.

*Stop and talk to someone waiting at a bustop

"How beautiful a day can be when kindness touches it"

George Elliston



Community Leadership Gap Home Update

We are pleased to support the Tauranga Men's Home situated in Greeton. Two local young men: Jared Phipps and Kyle Thompson-Connell have already moved in with Sam Dowdan expected to move in this month.

The mission statement for the home is "to grow and empower young leaders for tomorrow who are passionate about their Nation, have a strong sense of identity and character, and who bring inspiration to many"

The three young men are looking forward to living together with the support of local community and business leaders and the team at For the Sake of Our Children Trust.

The young men will be working very closely with Homes of Hope and Merivale to provide volunteer support where necessary.

The Trust sponsored Jared to attend the Aspiring Leaders Forum where 'servant leadership' was discussed by keynote speakers and is very applicable to the home's Vision



Above: John & Jared Phipps

Over the next few months the guys in the home will be connecting with people of Tauranga and also other similar men's leadership community homes across NZ including Hamilton, Auckland and Christchurch—so if you're from Tauranga and you would like to meet up and support the guys feel free to do so. Contact our office for further information.

Check it out!!

Our new website

www.forourchildren.org.nz

To vote, or not to vote? Now that's a bad question!

Our democratic system of government and our universal right to vote was fought for and gained by many of our forefathers. We should exercise it. We should flex our democratic muscle with due diligence and recognition of historical stewardship. I would be surprised to find that Kate Sheppard would have ever scoffed at a chance to exercise her democratic right. Ms Sheppard was one who fought for the 'civic freedom' to vote. The fact that so many of us and our politicians are discrediting the democratic process, and throwing our arms-up over semantics, and worse - threatening not to participate is dishearten-

ing. Yes, it may be unfortunate that this question was not addressed at the last election, potentially saving the tax payer \$9 million which could have instead been spent on investigating the real issues of child abuse and the role of the family in a more comprehensive and productive way. However, we cannot let our frustration or contempt for the

process or systems drown our seldom granted chance to participate in the political arena.

We must not let seeds of cynicism choke our democratic right to have our voice heard. We must not sacrifice our chance to send our elected representatives a clear message for the comfort of apathy, and the excuse of ambiguity.

Be sure to post your vote by **Thursday 20th 2009** at the latest, to ensure it is received and counted by **Friday 21st 2009**. For more information please visit www.elections.org.nz

