

LIGHTING LIVES

FOR THE SAKE OF OUR CHILDREN TRUST

Official Newsletter Summer 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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Collaborative Dialogue begins with leaders....

For the Sake of our Children hosted three collaborative meetings in October with leadership representation from 20 organisations from the community, health, education, government and business sectors throughout NZ.

For the Sake of Our Children recognize the need to initiate dialogue with key leaders across the board and felt it important to hear their views on the state of our families and the wellbeing of our children in NZ.

The general consensus across all three meetings was the need to: *uphold the family unit; build stronger partnerships between government and communities; and continue to work collaboratively towards leaving a positive legacy for our children.*

Many identified the need for fresh and innovative solutions to effect change in NZ's social policy and our welfare system.

We will continue to speak with both community and government individuals and provide our suggestions to social

social policy change and work towards the development of a collaborative social "green paper" with the hope of an issue of a social "white paper" from Government.

We wrote letters and encouraged all our MPs to provide their input into our conversation. Their response indicated the need for more proactive policy development frameworks—focused on policies that have the best prospects of delivering good outcomes for our children.

Other suggestions from our meetings included push for a Royal Commission where most of the organisations said they give their support if the inquiry looked into areas concerning the wellbeing of our children, the key responsibility of families to their children, a look at child abuse cases—those who have died and those who continue to remain in such unsafe environments asking the question—what environments are these children coming from?

We will continue to do further research into issues concerning our children and families as this was another suggestion and

also remain in dialogue with our leaders. If you wish to provide your support for a Royal Commission into the welfare/wellbeing of our children please go to our website www.forourchildren.org.nz or contact our office and give us your voice. We can't do it alone, we need your support.

Participating Organisations

- *Homes of Hope (Tauranga)
- *Human Rights Commission & Race Relations
- *Office of the Children's Commissioner
- *Families Commission
- *Vaka Tautua
- *LIFE Church
- *Great Potentials
- *Affirming Works Ltd
- *Life Education Trust
- *Brothers in Arms
- *LIFE Education Trust
- *Pukeroa Oruawhata Trust—Ngati Whakaue
- *Ngati Whakaue Tribal Lands Inc
- *Christians Against Poverty
- *Awhi Trust
- *Ministry of Education
- *LIFEWISE Trust
- *Lee Mathias Ltd
- *National Party Rep
- *United Future Party Rep
- *Rethinking Crime and Punishment
- *Family First
- *Pacific Community Reps

Our Home, Our Future: The Aiga/Kaiga/Famili/Magafaaoa/Anau Forum

Earlier this month For the Sake of Our Children attended "Our Home – Our Future", Forum hosted by the Families Commission. The purpose of the day was to recognise the current state of Pacific families and provide a conduit for creating corridors into the future with a particular focus on recent Pacific families; research into single parenting, housing, language and teenager engagement with family and gangs. The highlight of the Forum was hearing the outstanding, challenging and compelling keynote address by Tupua Tamasese Tupuola Efi, the Samoan Head of State. He spoke with eloquence and scholarly literacy, using the recent Samoan tsunami tragedy with storytelling to address key issues concerning the state of the family both in Samoa and New Zealand.

At For the Sake of Our Children Trust our Vision is for all children to be safe from harm, have a sense of being loved and have all necessities in life continued on pg 3)

A WORD FROM OUR FOUNDER:

Firstly, let me say how much we appreciate your constant support and encouragement - just reading this letter inspires us to continue being a voice for our children.



Chairman and Founder —John

Christmas is a wonderful time of the year when we are reminded of God's great dream for humanity - the life of love joy and peace.

Yet for many of our children this dream won't be delivered this Christmas or over 2010. Instead unsafe environments of physical, alcohol and drug abuse, poverty, stress, family breakdown, or even never having known a mother and father committed to each other and to themselves.

We have a special request for you "Will you increasingly become the *voice of the voiceless* -our precious children over 2010?

For many of us, we remember what it was that made a difference to our lives -a great mum and dad, fabulous grandparents, other mums and dads in the community who treated us just like their own, the odd exceptional teacher - who believed in us, and later in life, wonderful mentors.

Over 2010 we want you to tell your own great story, hold fast to your story, and give your voice to what you believe is right for the children of NZ.

May you have a wonderful Christmas with family and friends and take time to dream of the NZ you want for our children.

Aroha-Nui, John Sax

Our hope for 2010...

The current social landscape could not be described as encouraging for our children, with there being no sign of a curtailment of the level of abuse or murder of our children.

Probably more disturbing is the continued degeneration of the social structures that give rise to exceptionally poor outcomes for our children in the order of 1600% worse off on average, than children brought up in the sorts of home/environment/relationships we aspire to—for them!

When we launched the Trust, we said we'd hoped for a generation of change, and if not this generation

then the next. In short our real work is only just beginning with our focus progressively shifting to driving "what works and opposing what doesn't".

If our children matter—it will require our endurance!

If our children are precious—it will require our courage!

If our children are the hope of our future - it will require our wisdom!

If our children are to be led into a brighter future - it will require our vision!

If we are to realise their vision—it will require our passion!

In canvassing the views of all MPs it is clear that our elected leaders have "few answers". There is not the political will within the present government at this point in time, to give any real priority to the "social malaise" of so many of our precious children. Their clear position is "lets get the economy right, and we will think about these issues in the future"

Our position is "grow great families, grow great children, grow a great community, grow a great nation, grow a great economy"

In short, many positive things have happened, but there is still a lot to do.

Brothers in Arms Organisation Profile

In 2006 the concept of Brothers in Arms (BIA) was formed over coffee with Dr John Newman (leading Paediatrician), Bill Grayson and Dave Robertson. BIA a charitable Trust exists to bring hope and change to the young people of NZ who grow up in a world without a positive role model. Through one-on-one mentoring, young kiwis will have their eyes opened to a range of new experiences that will impact their lives forever.

There are thousands of young people in Auckland who are in need of a mentor right now and BIA are taking up the challenge of inspiring ordinary New Zealanders to stand up and give of themselves to volunteer and fill this role.

Brothers in Arms recruits, train, match, and support people of goodwill who would mentor one young person to make a difference in their lives. The pro-

gramme is a research based mentoring scheme for 10-16yolds with behavioural, learning, and social difficulties.

It is founded on individual same sex mentoring for approximately half a day a week for at least a year. This regular contact is an essential part of the relationship between the young person and their mentor.

Real life changing experiences, linked to discussion and understanding of their personal issues, assists young people to develop their own goals for life. BIA encourages young people's sporting, cultural, educational, and spiritual involvement in their family and community to move towards these goals.

Within this fun and safe time with their mentors, young people will be encouraged to consider the impact of their life choices and own the

consequences of them. Since August 2006 BIA has matched over 100 'at risk' young people with their own mentor.

Brothers in Arms is always in need of mentors to spend some time with their young people. At the moment the phones are running hot for male mentors. The organisation is located on the 2nd floor of the Parents Inc. Building, 300 Great South Road, Greenlane.

So if you are interested in becoming a mentor in 2010 please contact 09 524 7676 or email info.bia@xtra.co.nz.



**Tipu Ake means
'to grow and mature'.**

E tipu e rea mo nga ra o to ao
Grow up oh tender plant in the days of your life

O ringaringa ki nga rakau o te pakeha
Grasp hold of the tools of the education of this modern world

Hei oranga mo to tinana
To sustain you through this life

To ngakau ki nga taonga a o tipuna Māori
Grasping hold of the treasures of your ancestors

Hei tikitiki mo to mahunga
As an adornment /plume for your

To wairua ki te Atua
Be spiritually devoted to Almighty God

Na na nei nga mea katoa
The creator and giver of all things

Na Ta Apirana Ngata
Translator George Ehau

"Christmas gift suggestions:

- To your enemy, forgiveness.**
- To an opponent, tolerance.**
- To a friend, your heart.**
- To a customer, service.**
- To all, charity.**
- To every child, a good example.**
- To yourself, respect."**

Oren Arnold



NZ SNAPSHOT: 20YRS CHILD ABUSE DEATHS

We have gathered information based on media and internet research and identified a shocking list of children who have died as a result of extreme physical abuse.

Of the 34 child death cases received all were the result of extreme physical abuse. This was enough to cause a huge stir in our office and question 'how have we as developed society allowed this (and continue to allow this) to happen?'

The unfortunate statistic we calculated based on the 34 cases was 29 cases indicated parents of the child were NOT married and 20 cases reported the 'stepfather/boyfriend or mother's partner' was responsible/charged for the death of the child.

This clearly supports the one reason why marriage matters – a child who is not living with his or her own two married parents is at greater risk of child abuse yet***".

Most of the children who had been killed were of Maori descent sending the challenge out to the Maori community that extra attention and efforts are required to stop their children from being killed unnecessarily.

It should send a message to all respective communities that collectively we must all work together to mitigate this social problem and it starts with our leaders to stand up and take the lead in advocating for the lives of not only those who have died, but those who remain and continue to live in an abusive and neglectful environment – existing victims!

Go to our website **www.forourchildren.org.nz** and view the list and ask yourself: is this information enough to ask our government for a Royal Commission into identifying effective and achievable solutions to child abuse? How about a royal commission into the 'role of parents responsibilities to raise their children?'

If you believe YES a Royal Commission is what is needed please sign up your support on our website www.forourchildren.org.nz or contact our office and we can collectively advocate and ask our government to 'wake up' and begin to take serious care and consideration for our most vulnerable citizens in this Nation.

*21 Reasons Why Marriage Matters www.nzmarriage.org.nz
** Daly and Wilson, 1996



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One of the research presentations "Changing Pacific household Composition and Wellbeing 1982-2006" indicated an increasing rate of single parenting amongst Pacific leading to the question – is single parenting the new Pacific trend for Pacific communities? I found the increase of * 7.6% in 1982 to 13.49% in 2006 quite disturbing as this is not the 'Pacific Way' to raise our children.

The Pacific community is proudly known as embodying the famous saying– 'it takes a village to raise a child'. In my opinion, villages do not consist of single mothers and their children, but rather, of mothers and fathers, aunts and uncles and grandparents providing a loving caring and safe environment for children.

The Forum was primarily aimed at showcasing pieces of research and seeking community feedback on 'the way forward'. For the Sake of Our Children Trust look forward to hearing what the Families Commission recommends towards Government policy development following this hui with the Pacific Community and groups interested in the family.



WHAT IS THE FAMILIES COMMISSION? The Families Commission provides a voice for New Zealand families and whānau. We speak out for all families to promote a better understanding of family issues and needs among government agencies and the wider community. For more info: www.familiescommission.govt.nz

FESTIVE WORDS OF JOY

Christmas, my child, is love in action.

Dale Evans

"The true spirit of Christmas is love"

Linda Willis

But I am sure that I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round... as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely.

Charles Dickens

"Christmas is most truly Christmas when we celebrate it by giving the light of love to those who need it most."

Ruth Carter Stapleton

One of the most glorious messes in the world is the mess created in the living room on Christmas day. Don't clean it up too quickly.

Andy Rooney



Christmas is about family, our children

The madness of crowded shopping malls, demanding children asking for the latest gadgets or toys is never ending and it only seems to happen at Christmas. So why do we do this to ourselves?

Do our children really need all the toys they get from parents and family members? We're still in a recession and NZers are tightening on their spending. It's time for us to stop being sucked into the consumerism of Christmas and begin to focus on what Christmas is truly all about.

NZ Christmas is all about being with people you care about: family and friends. Its about relaxing and enjoying the sun and plenty of bbqs. It should be a time of reflection and having peace in your

heart about what the past year was all about and the hope for the New Year ahead. This peace as Mother Teresa puts it 'comes from loving—from doing good to others'.

We cannot be sucked into the excessive advertising of Christmas sales, we need to look for alternative ways to buy gifts for our loved ones.

A) Consume Less— don't buy so much, don't spend so much. Lets shift from being a highly consumptive society of waste and look to being sustainable consumers in our well thought out purchases. *Suggestion:* buy second hand items, make your own gifts especially

with your children.

B) When you have to consume, spend it in the right places—give to charity, to the less fortunate or even consider buying children activity gifts which involves being with the family eg., movie passes, tickets to outdoor activities.

C) Change your behaviour permanently throughout the year not just at Christmas. Why not spend more time with your family, show more love more often to your children, smile more regularly to your neighbours and assist those who need help without needing to be asked— all year round! Lets make Christmas 2009 a year to remember full of love, joy and happiness all round.

RESEARCH SHOWS WHY MARRIAGE MATTERS

In October 2009 The National Marriage Coalition NZ released a study drawing on over 100 comparative studies conducted internationally on '21 Reasons Why Marriage Matters'.

For the Sake of Our Children believe government policy should be drafted and driven by social science research that demonstrates the best outcomes for children.

Research in the report strongly suggests organisations who have an interest in the best outcomes for families, parents and children advocate and encourage policy development and community interventions that strengthen marriage, and encourage and support families to stay together.

Below we have provided a brief snapshot of 5 reasons.

1. **Family:** Research completed in both Australia and the USA show cohabi-

tation is NOT the functional equivalent of marriage. 'Adults who live together are more similar to singles than to married couples in terms of physical health, emotional well-being and mental health, as well as in assets and earnings'.

2. **Economics:** Research between 1990 and 2000 consistently demonstrates family structure as a powerful factor effecting poverty in families. Further, family breakdown and declining rates of marriage in New Zealand have an estimate cost to the Kiwi-taxpayer of \$1 billion between 2008/09 year alone.

3. **Physical Health and Longevity:** 'Children who live with their own two married parents enjoy better physical health, on average, than children in other family forms'. More over, 'divorce and unmarried childbearing appear to have a negative

effect on children's physical health and life expectancy'.

4. **Mental Health and Emotional Well-being:** Divorce typically causes considerable emotional distress not only to the adults of the relationship but the children also. Children typically suffer considerable emotional distress to the equivalent (or worse than) the death of one parent, and can increase risk of serious mental illness.

5. **Crime and Domestic Violence:** Children living with singles mothers, stepfathers or mother's boyfriends are more likely to become victims of child abuse than children living with their own two married parents. An Australian study found 900 coronial inquiries into child deaths found that children were far safer with their biological parents than with step-parents or no biological parents'.

For more info go to www.nzmarriage.org.nz