

New houses and new possibilities for 2023

The new year is a time of hope and anticipation, no less so for CMM clients and staff.

We rounded off 2022 with our ever-popular Support a Family Christmas hamper distribution, a fun and rewarding event for donors and recipients alike, and now look forward to a year of consolidation and new developments. An exciting 2023 lies ahead.

Late last year, we took over operation of the Blanket Bank and expect that project will become increasingly busy as we move towards winter. We also have a new Community Team Practice Lead, Fionna Chapman, who is assessing the needs in the east of Christchurch by engaging with other community organisations. It will be exciting to see which new initiatives emerge from those conversations.

"We are looking forward to making progress on new housing developments; our first housing development of six two-bedroom houses in Blenheim is at resource consent stage," says CMM Executive Director Jill Hawkey. "Building should start later this year with families moving in next year. A number of other new housing initiatives are in the planning stage, which we look forward to progressing."

A new youth housing team leader has been appointed for our transitional housing contract for young people who are homeless. Tania Smith, who has worked for CMM in our housing and social services teams for a number of years, will help get this service off the ground.

Several reports late last year reminded us that the rising cost of living continue to disproportionately affect poorer families

and that it is children, in particular, who bear the brunt of poverty. As we look forward to the new year, it must be remembered that for many in our country, rising rents and household costs will draw budgets away from children's activities and wellbeing in favour of simply paying the rent.

"The Government's 2022 Child Poverty Report showed high rents continued to force families into poverty and that a job alone was not enough to end hardship, with 64 percent of families in poverty also being employed," says Jill. "Deprivation means that many families often put up with being cold to keep a lid on expenses."

Data from KidsCan in October 2022 indicated the severity and reach of poverty across the country. KidsCan, which provides school meals for students, including CMM's preschool and whānau hub, Aratupu, reported seeing record demand for food at school as families went hungry at home. At the time it was receiving food orders from schools for over 10,000 more children a day than at the start of the year.

In her speech to the CMM 2022 annual Public Celebration, Children's Commissioner Judge

continued...



Eivers expressed her optimism in the youth of this country but despair at the circumstances in which many were being raised. "It reinvigorates me to be around rangitahi," she said. "They have so much promise, are so talented, and are ready to set sail. However, too many mokopuna are not in school because they can't afford the bus fare, the uniform, the stationery... We want them to be safe and happy, to be settled and to feel good about themselves."

When families put off repairing damaged appliances in order to pay the rent, endure the cold to keep heating costs down, go without fresh fruit and vegetables, or even miss the chance to join school teams because of cost, the wellbeing and opportunities for tamariki diminish.

"Small changes can lead to substantial improvements in the lives of people who live with very little," says Jill. "One of the numerous ways CMM provides practical support to whānau in need, is our new Savings Incentive Scheme that encourages people to save by matching savings of up to \$500 with shop and petrol vouchers of the equivalent amount."

CMM has guided eight people through the Savings Incentive Scheme programme over the past year.

"Our clients are naturally proud of their success and new-found financial confidence, with some not only intending to continue the savings habit but also pass on the knowledge to their children."

One programme participant expressed feeling "like a peacock" such was her pride and joy at reaching a financial goal. Another said, "I know things are more possible now than when we started. It changed my mindset."

"Here at CMM we also anticipate a year of greater possibility. We look forward to continuing to walk alongside the clients, tamariki, tenants and residents we assist, empowered by the valued backing of our supporters," says Jill.

School uniforms, stationery, laptops, camp fees, music lessons, sports equipment – you name it, families are hit with a host of expenses as the new school year begins. You can help them get the year off to a good start while making this a time of hope for tamariki. A donation to our Family Support Fund will make a world of difference to struggling families. Please donate at www.mmsi.org.nz/donate.

WesleyCare Christmas

WesleyCare held Christmas tea parties for residents on both floors in mid-December. First floor residents were treated to Mervyn playing well-known Christmas songs on the piano and tea in fine china accompanied by club sandwiches, cream cakes, shortbread and truffles! Sharon and her grandson played guitar and sang well-known favourites for ground floor residents. Santa made a special visit, circulating among the tables and spreading joy. Staff report that the food and atmosphere on both floors was incredible and that a lovely time was had by all.



CMM Annual Report

Our 2022 annual report highlights the main areas of work and impact over the last year, as well as the stories of real success in the lives of our clients. Did you know that among many other achievements, we assisted 308 individuals and whānau with budgeting support and financial mentoring, that nearly 120 people took part in our child and adult group programmes, and that we supported over 500 households in emergency housing in Blenheim, Nelson and the West Coast? Download a PDF of the full report from our website www.mmsi.org.nz. Alternatively, contact MichaelH@mmsi.org.nz for a print copy.

CMM honoured to host Children's Commissioner

It was a great pleasure to host Children's Commissioner Judge Frances Eivers as our keynote speaker at CMM's 2022 annual Public Celebration in November.

For CMM Executive Director Jill Hawkey, the Public Celebration is a special event that not only allows CMM supporters to hear about the work undertaken over the year but to ask questions and to meet many of the staff. Having Judge Eivers as our keynote speaker enabled us to focus particularly on our work with tamariki, rangatahi (children and young people) and their whānau.

Jill told those present that around 1 in 10 children live in poverty in Aotearoa but that poverty was not evenly experienced, with Māori and Pasifika children, disabled children and children with disabled caregivers in higher rates of poverty. The figures highlighted the importance of services provided by CMM, including Aratupu Pre-school & Whānau Support Hub, and our work ensuring people receive benefits they are entitled to, get financial mentoring and are provided transitional and long-term housing.



Judge Eivers acknowledged the commitment of CMM to the mokopuna of Aotearoa and that CMM was working hard on issues with tamariki and whānau. "As an independent voice, I have a responsibility to constructively critique progress and find information by checking with groups like yourselves so we know what's happening on the ground. Only then can I use my voice at ministerial level to say this is what's happening out there."

Those present acknowledged the passing of our kaumatua, Dr Terry Ryan. A moment of silence to remember him was held before karakia in his honour was offered.

Board chairperson Pam Sharpe noted that New Zealand had normalised the fact that children live in inadequate housing and she suggested this may be the subject of a government enquiry in years to come. "At CMM, we're not backing away from the challenges. Of course, we can't solve them all, but we will continue to be the voice of the voiceless."

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Hampers bring joy for whānau and donors

Christmas was made that little more special this year for 160 whānau, who were recipients of a CMM Support a Family hamper.

The rain held off on December 22 for the morning drop-off of hampers before whānau collected their gifts in the afternoon. It was a long but rewarding day for staff and volunteers who helped.

One mum with two under-fives said she was relieved she would be able to provide a fun and tasty Christmas. "It's not fair my children have to miss out on stuff just because I can't afford it and it's stressful for me deciding whether to give them a present or to cook a special meal or do something we don't normally get to do. We are grateful for the hamper."

In addition to parenthood, this busy mum was studying towards a diploma in veterinary assistance and animal welfare, and volunteered at animal welfare charities. "It's nice to get something like a Christmas hamper to help you push on. I can't earn money at the moment but I tell the children that when life knocks you down, you take a breath, keep pushing forward and try to achieve."

When Cameron looks back to Christmas 2021, he is grateful that he and his child were to spend this Christmas in a house of their own and for the security his new circumstances have brought. "Last year I was in emergency housing. Now my life has got so much better... As soon as I got out of there, my standard of living improved tremendously. Now I'm healthy and in a nice house."

He said he would have struggled to get much food or anything at all for Christmas without the hamper and that it enabled him to greatly stretch his part-time work income.

For donors of Support a Family hampers, the joy of giving is evident.

Personnel and reservists of HMNZS Pegasus chose Support a Family as their ship's charity about seven years ago. The combination of regular force personnel and reservists like to do something tangible and meaningful at the end of each year. Some like to buy a specific gift for one of the family members, others like to donate goods for the hamper, and the Ship's Welfare Fund donates a supermarket voucher.

Anna Mowat of the organisation Real Parents has been supporting the campaign for a few years now. She says it has never been so much about the giving as it is about thinking about someone else and what they might like. "My children have always really liked this. I guess too they know we're lucky to have gifts and kai at Christmas and because of that, it's our job to look out for others."

We would like to sincerely thank all those who took part in this year's Support a Family initiative. Your generosity and kindness brought Christmas cheer to those who need it most.

Share the Christmas spirit with a family who would appreciate a hamper. Sign up now for Support a Family 2023 by registering your interest with Glenda at glendam@mmsi.org.nz.



CMM helping address West Coast social housing shortage

The challenge of finding housing for people who are homeless is a problem for social service agencies anywhere in the country, but our West Coast housing team approaches this issue with tenacity and the belief that everyone has the right to decent housing.

Since July 2020, CMM has prepared 114 single people and whānau on the West Coast for the responsibility of renting and then helped them move from emergency motel accommodation into houses. Contracted to support up to 20 individuals and whānau at any one time, the team does just that and as one person or whānau moves into housing another referral comes through.

CMM's regional housing manager Vanya Vitasovich says working with other agencies – and a lot of creative thinking – is crucial in finding housing on the West Coast. "Our team work closely with a number of key agencies, including private rental agencies, to come up with housing solutions, advocate on a client's behalf and navigate them through the housing process. We're constantly having to think outside the box when no housing is available, looking at options such as caravans or cabin hire so people don't end up homeless."

CMM walks alongside clients to help them find employment or to access necessary health and social support, as well as to remove other barriers to them securing a house. By addressing the circumstances that led to homelessness, CMM gets clients 'rent ready' in order to sustain long-term housing.

The team works hard to build good relations with real estate firms, Kāinga Ora, Ministry of Social Development housing brokers and managers, Grey District Council retirement housing providers, as well as organisations

such as Literacy Aotearoa which helps prepare whānau for renting.

In a region with a significant need for social housing per capita, both finding houses and finding houses that meet government regulations is hard on the West Coast. The team must contend with not only the lack of warm, affordable and secure properties but the consequences of natural disasters, such as flooding in Westport in 2021 that left a number of houses uninhabitable.

"This is a small community, with a small rental market, not much public housing and minimal turnover in what public housing there is," Vanya says. "The other factor our clients face is discrimination, such as having come from emergency housing, being on a benefit, having a large whānau, as well as misconception or lack of understanding of how people end up in emergency housing."

With little over 40 homes for public housing, Hokitika has the lowest turnover on the Coast. Three-bedroom houses and larger are particularly hard to find anywhere in the region. Some private rentals sit vacant because landlords don't have the funds to bring properties up to the Healthy Homes standards introduced in 2019.

Whānau who are unable to find emergency houses may end up in camping grounds, tents or cars, or move in with extended family. Vanya is adamant the solution is to build more public housing, which would mean freeing up land, and to increase the number of Kāinga Ora transitional houses for lease to community housing providers.

Vanya says lack of emergency housing has clear ramifications on a person's physical and mental health, the knowledge of which motivates her team to find the best possible housing for clients in desperate need of a good roof over their heads.

A happy end to a hard year

Aratupu celebrated the year end with its annual Christmas party; a lovely opportunity for kaiako, whānau and tamariki to come together and enjoy each other's company.

Everyone enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere, which provided space for whānau to catch up with one another over shared kai. Kaiako, in turn, enjoyed watching whānau chat and build relationships, adding to the sense of whanaungatanga that Aratupu values so much.

Since last July, Aratupu has been fortunate to be able to provide free nappies for its tamariki during session hours. This welcome innovation has been a great help to both whānau and kaiako. Without having to buy their tamariki nappies for the preschool week, whānau have money freed up for other necessities. In addition, attendance at Aratupu has improved as whānau would sometimes keep their tamariki home if they couldn't afford nappies.



The year ended with the joy of Christmas but it followed a particularly challenging time for Aratupu whānau. Many faced the ongoing hardship of poverty, compounded by the cost of living crisis. Housing was a challenge, with several families finding themselves in need of emergency housing. We saw some whānau having to choose between buying kai or period products. As a preschool, Aratupu is fortunate to have access to the extensive range of CMM wrap-around services.

Aratupu has opened for the year and we look forward to many happy months of teaching and learning.

Please consider supporting Aratupu kaiako and whānau by supporting the Aratupu Nappies project. This invaluable form of assistance enables whānau to retain dignity and save money, and also helps staff better focus on the job of teaching and care. You can support the project by selecting Aratupu Nappies Project from the dropdown menu at mmsi.org.nz/donate.

Guild Street Party

December 12 was bright and sunny for the second anniversary celebration of our Guild Street housing complex. About 70 residents, extended family and CMM staff took part. A good spread of food was put on, highlighting the various cultural groups in the community, including Samoan food, Afghan food, Asian and Kiwi barbecue and sausages. Children enjoyed the games, especially the piñata, the Mexican dress-up relay, and the hands-off balloon bursting challenge. The young ones gathered around Santa for photos and lollipops. Everyone had a good time catching up with each other and with staff, celebrating this unique and diverse community of families.



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