

**Strong connections between neighbours create opportunities to make our streets healthier, safer and more fun places to live. There is no doubt in my mind about this. Over the last two years, I've seen the work Takapuna Methodist Church has been doing in partnership with LIFEWISE.**

By working with streets and neighbourhoods Rebecca Harrington has supported neighbours to get to know one another. I remember being particularly struck by one situation she shared with me; two families living on the same street who had never talked. Through the street gathering organised, the families discovered they came from the same small region within India. Now the connection created is helping both families settle in to their new life in New Zealand.

LIFEWISE felt it was important to look at growing this work, so magnifying the impact. As we only have one Rebecca, we came up with one simple solution; an awareness campaign to encourage people in streets throughout Auckland to get involved and connect with their neighbours – we're calling it Neighbours Day and it's underway now leading up to 17 October. You can read all about it inside.

In fact we think creating neighbourhood connections is so important that we've dedicated this whole edition of our newsletter to this theme. Enjoy the read.



**John Murray**  
Executive Director

## IT STARTS WITH JUST ONE PERSON

**Eighty two per cent\* of Aucklanders want to get to know their neighbours better, but most of us only have a passing acquaintance with the people over the fence. "It's a shame really," says Community Development Worker Rebecca Harrington, "we are basically living, eating, gardening and socialising a few metres away from the folks next door yet many of us don't even know their names!"**

For the last two and a half years, Rebecca has been helping to bridge the gap between neighbours in North Shore neighbourhoods – a gap that has widened in Kiwi communities since our social, baby-booming childhoods - and while it has taken time to build confidence, the positive effects have been clearly noticeable and, Rebecca says, virtually contagious. "When the partnership between LIFEWISE and Takapuna Methodist Church developed my Community Development position in 2007, it was truly a great unknown. The church wanted to enhance the vision of what its community work could look like and connect with the wider community. LIFEWISE had extensive social service resource and experience to draw upon, and so together in

2008, we created an initiative called Know Your Neighbours – a simple project with a simple, optimistic message that engages neighbours and strengthens neighbourhoods. We didn't know however that the outcome after only one and a half years would be the creation of something as momentous as Neighbours Day!"

Rebecca has been pivotal to the development of the Neighbours Day campaign, working alongside LIFEWISE staff and a steering group made up of other community partners. Rebecca, who has nearly completed her Masters in Social Work (Applied) through Massey University, says it's a good complement to her work. "Social work is often associated with negative concepts of the failure of society, but my work is based on people's aspirations. We all want to be connected, and inspiring people to be instrumental in their own backyards is exciting. And it starts with just one person!"



**Rebecca Harrington**

\* Colmar Brunton, 'State of our Neighbourhoods' Research, for Neighbourhood Support and Nestlé, April 2008

# TURNING STREETS INTO NEIGH

To help build a healthier Auckland we need to look out for each other more. Building better relationships on our streets can transform whole neighbourhoods into healthy, fun and vibrant places to live. Celebrate **Neighbours Day on 17 October** by getting to know your neighbours, and make a difference to the street you live in.

## Reduces isolation

Social isolation can happen for many reasons and it affects people of all ages. If you know someone who is house-bound – maybe they are elderly or have a health problem, or maybe they're a new mum – you can help brighten their day with a friendly visit and an exchange of phone numbers so they feel supported. And the new family on your street would truly appreciate a 'welcome to our street' visit too!

## Strengthens capacity to respond to local issues

Fostering connections with your neighbours can help when local issues are identified and need addressing. Constructive and collaborative communication with your local school, sports club, council or MP will be much more effective than a solo approach, and will save time with shared resources and brainpower.

## Saves you time and energy

Imagine the time we could save if we pooled together the talent and tools on our street. Sharing childcare, dog-walking, and even DIY gear like ladders and lawnmowers takes the pressure off our busy schedules - and our wallets. And for the gardeners and cooks on your street, think about larger projects like a community garden or food co-operative – nothing brings people together like the outdoors and fine fare!

## Impacts on social issues

At LIFEWISE, we deal with the fall-out of social issues such as child abuse, family violence, isolation and poverty every day. We know that for those who are at crisis point, having support is critical to their safety and wellbeing. We believe strong and connected neighbourhoods where people know and support one another can help to reduce our social issues, and make a significant difference to those who are at risk.

## SHARING KAI

After living in the same street for 16 years, Christine decided it was time she knew her neighbours by their names. After dropping notes into letterboxes and knocking on doors, one neighbour suggested an afternoon tea and even offered the use of his home for the event. The two worked together to arrange the low-key gathering; a first for Christine's street. It only takes one person to take the lead and there's nothing like good, old-fashioned Kiwi hospitality to break the ice and feed the masses!

## PAW PATROL

When her neighbour introduced herself and offered to regularly walk her dog Maggie, Joan's whole life changed. She'd been struggling to take Maggie for walks due to arthritis and had even thought about finding a new adopted home for her beloved pet. Joan and her new neighbour both benefited from the idea; Joan was able to carry on caring for her pet, while her neighbour had the perfect reason to exercise! Many studies show that helping others is very good for your health, and this proves it!

**JOIN IN THIS NEIGHBOURS DAY**  
[WWW.NEIGHBOURSDAY.ORG.NZ](http://WWW.NEIGHBOURSDAY.ORG.NZ)  
CONTACT: [kiaora@neighboursday.org.nz](mailto:kiaora@neighboursday.org.nz)



# NEIGHBOURHOODS ON 17 OCTOBER

We've put together a list of ideas to help you get to know your neighbours and become part of the movement to build a more connected community. There are more ideas on our website. Whichever you choose, we are confident that it will make a difference to you and your street.

-  Say hello, kia ora, talofa, mālō ē lelei, ni hao or whatever works for you and your neighbour
-  Bake a batch of muffins and take them around to your neighbour – or invite them over to your home
-  Next time you mow your grass verge why not do your neighbours' verge as well? It won't take much longer
-  Organise an afternoon tea or a street BBQ for people in your street (if you want to close your road, you will need to contact your Council to get permission)
-  Say thanks to a neighbour for something they've done for you
-  Exchange phone numbers in case of emergencies
-  Pop a note card into everyone's letterbox, asking people if they're interested in getting to know one another
-  Pass the word on about Neighbours Day 2009 – the more people who get involved, the bigger the difference it will make

## Stephen Tindall, founder of the Warehouse and the Tindall Foundation

"When we were kids we knew all our neighbours, we even had a gate between us and our closest neighbours and I was often sent next door to borrow or lend some baking ingredients or return some. They were all our friends. We were surrounded by families and most of the kids went to school with me. A number of us walked to school together. After school we always played at each others' homes. When I went to intermediate I mowed a few lawns for some of the more elderly neighbours. We definitely all knew and interacted with our neighbours all the time. It was fabulous!"



## Bob Harvey, Waitakere - City Mayor

"I first became aware of the kindness of neighbours in 1947. I was seven years old and living in a small house in Newton Gully. It was a wet winter, my father was at sea and my baby brother in his cot. My mother, desperate to light the coal range, poured petrol through the lid and in seconds the whole kitchen, and it seemed my mother, was engulfed in flames. She backed into the alcove off the kitchen calling to me to take the baby outside. This I did, leaving her trapped in the burning house. So when I called out from the street for help, every door seemed to fly open. The alarm on the nearby lamp post was pressed, the back door was smashed in and my mother released. I was overwhelmed by the spirit of support. My mother spent months in hospital and lived into her 80's."



**Neighbours Day 2009**  
TURNING STREETS INTO NEIGHBOURHOODS

# A CHANGE AT FAMILY SERVICES

When Rose Harrop left her Service Manager's position with the Corrections Department last year, she had aspirations of writing a novel and owning a bookshop. Flicking through the paper one day (but not looking for work), she scanned over an ad for a position at LIFEWISE, and, wondering who they were, went to the website. "Instantly, MMN's three values struck a chord with me," Rose says. "Respect. Courage. Integrity. And I thought, 'I really like that.'"

Long story short, Rose has been in the Service Manager's role at LIFEWISE Family Services for four months now. "The main focus of each day is to support my team of seven staff so they can carry out their roles effectively. We are constantly seeking positive outcomes in every part of our service, whether it's our social work with families, our parenting courses, our youth programmes or our foster care programme – this service has a serious job to do and that's a serious responsibility for me."

Social work within government agencies is intrinsically Rose's background and until now, she had not worked within a not-for-profit environment. "The whole concept and belief-base within MMN has become really important to me – we need to be giving voice to our work, it's significant, this is what underpins who we are as an organisation and I feel that is my biggest responsibility."

Rose says that for the future work of LIFEWISE Family Services it's important that community development becomes a key focus. "We need to be promoting the development of people and community; we can expand on our work with foster children and progress it to child development; our youth programmes will foster youth development, and so on, all the way through to the bigger community development picture."

Rose says she and her team feel a responsibility to Glen Eden, the neighbourhood they work within each day. "In the 17 years that LIFEWISE Family Services has been here, we've worked with so many individuals and families, and we believe now is the time to contribute to the community as a whole. More recently we've noticed there seems to be a deep yearning for people to reconnect to something – I think it's that human beings will always have a desire to know that they're connected to something bigger and as a society we seem to have lost that. We want to know that we're not just a little island in our homes. Neighbours Day is a representation of what people are feeling at the moment. We've been batted about the ears about conservation and global warming, as we should, but those sorts of promotions make us think about the reality of when we are threatened. We think about our families and the future of our families.... My observations are that what's important for us is at home."

(Rose's Bookshop is on the backburner for a while.)



Rose Harrop

## YES I'D LIKE TO HELP LIFEWISE

Please find enclosed my donation of:

\$25    \$50    \$75    \$100    Other

I prefer to pay by:  Cheque (enclosed) OR  Credit Card  
please make cheques payable to The LIFEWISE TRUST

Visa    Mastercard

Card Number

Name on Card

Expiry Date

Signature

I am happy to receive email communication in addition to mailings.  
My email address is:

Thank you for your donation. A tax receipt will be sent to you.

Please send me further information on:

- Volunteering with LIFEWISE
- Donating regularly direct from my bank account
- Making a bequest to LIFEWISE in my will
- Becoming a foster care giver

Privacy: We respect your privacy and will ensure that your details are only used by authorised persons and will be kept confidential from third parties.

LIFEWISE (Registration No. CC40248) is a community and social services agency of The Methodist Church of New Zealand