

The tragic events in Christchurch have had an indelible effect on us all. From nearby Auckland the devastation of such a tranquil city is difficult to comprehend and one can't help feeling so close and yet so far at such a time.

Tuned in to the media as we have been, we have heard an inspiring and resounding message coming through over the last tragic few days from civic leaders such as Mayor Bob Parker, asking people to look after their neighbours, to check in on the elderly who may be scared, to have people to stay if they can, to look after each other. All things which it seems Cantabrians are already very good at.

In the worldwide community, our friends and neighbours overseas have been quick to provide support, be it financial, spiritual, or practical; as evidenced by donations to support agencies, messages of goodwill, and the teams of foreign specialists arriving in Christchurch to help on the ground.

As we plan for Neighbours Day Aotearoa 2011 at this time we are reminded by the Canterbury earthquake, and last year the Pike River Mine disaster, as to just how important our neighbours are in our communities.



A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read 'John Murray'.

John Murray
Executive Director

LIFEWISE HUB RECEIVES FUNDING BOOST

The LIFEWISE Hub was recently granted two-year funding from the ASB Community Trust under a new fund designed to address homelessness and housing issues. "Over recent years, we've worked to develop a service for homeless people that addresses the underlying issues and not merely manages the consequences. We're creating a pathway to housing and inclusion" says general manager John McCarthy. "This grant is a huge boost to this work and we're incredibly thankful to the Trust for supporting our work in this way. It means that we can further develop our approach towards solving street homelessness."

Each year we must raise around \$500,000 of external funding to ensure that we can continue assisting homeless people.



ASB Community Trust
Te Kaitiaki Putea o Tamaki o Tai Tokerau

supported by ASB



The LIFEWISE Hub & Merge Café

neighbours
day AOTEAROA

26-27 MARCH 2011

Turning streets into neighbourhoods throughout New Zealand

In 2009 Lifewise launched the first Neighbours Day in Auckland. Street parties, bake-offs and barbecues were held all over the city and Aucklanders got to know their neighbours a little better. This year, all of New Zealand will have the opportunity to get involved as Neighbours Day Aotearoa 2011 goes nationwide! Whether living in small towns or big cities, across New Zealand people will be encouraged to go one step further in getting to know their neighbours.

Initiated by a development team consisting of Lifewise, Inspiring Communities, and Methodist Mission Aotearoa, their vision is for every household in New Zealand to not only celebrate Neighbours Day, but to continue forging links in their local community into the future. "Connected neighbourhoods lead to stronger, happier communities" says Dr Lesley Mynett-Johnson, Lifewise's Development Manager and representative on the Neighbours Day Development Team. "People feel safer and more secure, just knowing that someone is there if they need help. It makes a big difference."

While busy lives often get in the way of neighbourliness, for many people it is taking the first step of meeting their neighbours that is the most difficult. In 2008 Rebecca Harrington, a community development worker with Lifewise and Takapuna Methodist Church, went door-knocking in the Sunnynook / Meadwood area of Auckland asking people if they knew or would like to know their neighbours. The overwhelming majority said they didn't know them well, and that they would like to but sometimes didn't know how to start. Inspired, Rebecca began the 'Know Your Neighbours' project, which led to the development of Neighbours Day 2009. "We're still hearing stories about how neighbours met each other for the first time at Auckland's Neighbours Day in 2009," says Rebecca.

Having celebrated the day previously, Aucklanders have a head-start on the rest of the country and many involved in the 2009 day have planning well underway for this year. Tamati Patuwai lives in Glen Innes with his wife and their four children. He recently spoke to Sophie Bond from The Aucklander about what he'll be doing on Neighbours Day. He recalls the great times he had in his neighbourhood as a child, when all the neighbourhood children played together and families stayed for decades in the same house. This year, he and his family plan to draw chalk games on the pavement, starting at the top of the street, and meeting their neighbours as they make their way down. "An important aspect of Neighbours Day is that it is not about big, expensive events, but local activity" says Rebecca. "How different could our country be if every person cared for and knew their neighbours?"

"Strong neighbourhoods aren't created overnight. Yet we know from our work here in Dunedin that strengthening people's connections to each other has a huge impact on their well-being and quality of life. We see it in our work with young families through to older people. Creating these connections within neighbourhoods is probably the most radical thing any of us can do towards our long-term social justice objectives. It's fantastic that Methodist social service agencies around New Zealand are working together to encourage people to make that investment of time and energy in the streets where they live, and tapping into the energy for connection that in many cases is already sitting there."

Laura Black, The Methodist Mission, Dunedin



"We're passionate about strong, connected neighbourhoods here at Great Start in Tiata and Neighbours Day gives people permission to reach out to their neighbours in a way they may not have done before. To make it easier for people in our area to get involved, we even decided to hold our first community planning group in a bakery."

Karen Clifford Great Start Tiata, Barnardos

To find out more about Neighbours Day 2011
www.neighboursday.org.nz

Being neighbourly at LIFEWISE

As well as preparing the Neighbours Day campaign, each unit within LIFEWISE is well underway developing ideas for celebrating the day. From baking cupcakes to Zumba to street barbecue's here is some of what we are planning to do:

"I am working alongside groups of neighbours to help them plan their own celebrations for Neighbours Day Aotearoa. In Meadowood, residents are planning an active afternoon – with free Zumba, sports activities and games in their neighbourhood park. Other neighbours in Northcote are having a street 'meet and greet' over a picnic dinner. I'm also helping to inspire organisations all across Auckland to get involved and spread the word about Neighbours Day. In my street, we're having a good old street barbecue!"

Rebecca Harrington -

Community Development Worker,
Lifewise & Takapuna Methodist Church

"The residents at Aldersgate in Mt Eden are planning to celebrate Neighbours Day with a shared afternoon tea to which they will invite their family and friends. Each resident is being asked to contribute a plate from their country or culture. We are a relatively small community of 29 units however there are almost 10 different nationalities represented amongst us, so it is a great opportunity to be more neighbourly and to celebrate our diversity."

Henrietta Theron - Social Worker, Lifewise

"Te Raamokopuna is a fun day held every year in West Auckland. This year as it falls on the same day as Neighbours Day, this will be the theme. We are joining together with our neighbours in West Auckland; Back2Back, Neighbourhood Support, NZ Police and West Harbour School to develop a great day with prizes for the best neighbourhood event, activities and loads of ideas on how people can get to know their neighbours."

Mary Nicholas - Project Manager, Lifewise

Cupcakes - By Sophie Gray

These cupcakes have no butter, in fact the only fat in these treats comes from the eggs. Dairy-free.

Ingredients For The Icing

- 36 small paper patty cake cases, placed inside mini muffin tins (if you haven't got mini tins just make them muffin-size instead)
- 3 eggs
- 1/2 cup castor sugar
- 3/4 cup plain flour
- 1 tablespoon boiling water
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla essence
- 1 cup icing sugar
- squeeze lemon juice for lemon icing (or water and a drop or 2 of colouring and flavour such as raspberry or peppermint)
- lollies, sprinkles, silver balls or other appropriate decorations

Recipe Information

Portions: makes 36

Time to make: 25 minutes plus decorating

Total cost of all ingredients: \$1.79 / \$0.05 per serve

To Make Cakes

Preheat oven to 180°C. Use a mixer to beat the sugar and eggs together until pale and thick. The mixture should leave a trail when you lift the beater out and will be nearly treble its original size. Allow 5–8 minutes depending on how powerful your beater is (or your forearms). Using a metal spoon, fold in half the flour. When that is incorporated, fold in the remaining flour. Lastly, add the hot water and vanilla. Spoon the mixture into the prepared patty cases and bake for 10–15 minutes, or until golden and springy when gently pressed. Allow to cool completely before decorating.

To Make Icing

Combine the ingredients, using only as much liquid as you need to make a spreadable icing. Ice the top of each cupcake and decorate as desired. A lolly pressed into the icing is the quickest possible decoration and the kids will be happy. Silver balls, sprinkles and ready-made edible decorations will also look lovely. I like to use the ready-made fondant icing 'Pettinice' (tinted, rolled and cut into shapes) for decorating my cup cakes.

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To register for Neighbours Day Aotearoa go to neighboursday.org.nz.

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To share how you will be celebrating Neighbours Day Aotearoa please email kiaora@neighboursday.org.nz

RECONNECTING FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

2007 was life changing for a 38 year single Congolese mother named Mala*. After living in a refugee camp in Africa for more than 10 years she was granted refugee status into New Zealand and arrived, with her eleven children (including 2 nephews to whom she is a guardian), at the resettlement village in Mangere.

As with all refugees, Mala received assistance from Refugee Services as well as from other welfare agencies. However for Mala life in her new country was not coming together; the move was far from the life changing event she had hoped it would be. Depressed and isolated she was struggling as a parent and not responding to any of the help she was given.

When CYFS asked Lifewise Family Services to become involved in mid 2010, a large number of community and Government agencies had been involved but the situation had worsened. Mala's children were now in danger of being placed in foster care. Rose Harrop, Manager of Lifewise Family Services, reviewed the situation and knew from the outset that a different approach was needed. "After reading Mala's case history I knew that she did want to make a new life in New Zealand for her and her family. She wasn't rejecting the help she had been given, but it was clear she wasn't responding to the way in which people had been trying to help her."

"In this situation typically the first thing we do is to meet with the client. We took a step back and worked through what Mala needed to turn her life around," says Rose. "We have seen many times in our work that to help someone you first have to understand who they are and what is important to them."

The first step that Rose and her team took was to research African/Congolese culture and make contact with other African people living in Auckland. "We met some wonderful people and it became very clear that in Mala's world, music and dance, gardening and male role models for the children were highly important and all things that she was without. We knew that the best way to help her was to reconnect her with her own community; to provide wrap-around support that would allow her to feel settled in her new country, with her identity intact."



Mala standing proud in front of her garden

Mala's Family Services social worker met with her just once before involving other Congolese women as support; a turning point in Mala's life in New Zealand. Seven months on she has friends from within her own culture who regularly get together at her house to sing, dance and importantly, support each other; she has transformed her back yard into a garden overflowing with produce; she continues to rebuild her status as a parent at the head of a large family and she is helping others to garden. CYFS has closed the case as the concerns for her children have now disappeared.

"It has been a rewarding experience for us all" says Rose. "Success only happened for Mala when LIFEWISE brought her community to her. The added bonus is that the African group has been strengthened and supported as well, so they can now help others." Lifewise Family Services have continued their involvement with the African Welfare Services Trust, supporting them to run school holiday programmes, teen mentoring groups and training members to run Toolbox parenting programmes for African families.

"Although there are still challenges to come, Mala now understands that the traditional parenting role of her home country may need to be adapted to life here. Her connections into the community have been strengthened and soon she will help set-up a school gardening project at the school her children attend."

* name changed to protect her identity

YES, I'D LIKE TO HELP LIFEWISE

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