

LIFEWISE

turning lives around

October 2015

Our best Big Sleepout result ever



On July the 2nd, nearly 140 Kiwi leaders shared the experience that hundreds of people experience every single night – sleeping rough.

2015 marked the first time that the Big Sleepout has been run in another city, with 33 of Rotorua's community leaders sharing the experience of shivering through the night in a cold dark carpark in the heart of the city. We're proud to say that 100% of the funds raised in Rotorua will go towards local community projects that are aimed at ending homelessness.

"YOU HAVE TO EXPERIENCE IT TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IT'S LIKE FOR SO MANY PEOPLE DAY IN AND DAY OUT. EVERY TIME IT'S RAINING AND COLD, I THINK OF THE WHANAU OUT THERE THAT ARE HOMELESS AND IT SADDENS ME."

When the sun came up on Friday morning, our team were simply overwhelmed by how generous the community had been, with a record-breaking total of \$317,426.80 raised. As Lifewise doesn't receive any government funding for our work, every single we dollar we raise means we can get a permanent roof over someone's head.

We can't thank the people who slept rough enough for having the courage and compassion to sleep on the streets.

147 SLEEPING ROUGH



IN THE LAST YEAR ALONE, ROUGH SLEEPING HAS MORE THAN DOUBLED IN THE AUCKLAND CBD.



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My son now has a home



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Foster Me A Future

Welcome

With Lifewise's roots stretching back over 100 years to the first Methodist parishes in Auckland, we're incredibly proud of our heritage of challenging injustices.



In the early days of New Zealand, Auckland waterside workers were up in arms about the paltry wages and awful working conditions. So they pulled out the pickets from the local church fence, and used them to fend off the police who were trying to shut the protest down.

After the protests had died down, the police came to the Methodist church to ask them to denounce the picketers. The response of the church was; "All of our resources are here for the people, for what they need."

That tradition of social justice is something I'm proud to say we still very much embody. We stand alongside people and give a voice to some of NZ's most vulnerable, speaking up against the injustice of young people, families, men and women in Aotearoa who live in poverty, are homeless, and who have limited options to break out of the cycle.

Homelessness is a huge injustice – no one should ever have to live on the streets. At Lifewise, we firmly believe that the homeless will not always be with us. Our team work incredibly hard to get people off the streets and into permanent homes.

This edition of our newsletter includes many examples of how team is helping to end homelessness in New Zealand – including shining a spotlight on homelessness through the Big Sleepout, our exciting new initiative to prevent youth homelessness, and a joint campaign asking the government to raise the age of leaving state care from 17 to 21.

I hope you enjoy reading about all the things Lifewise is doing to end homelessness.

actionstation.org.nz/wedontstopcaring

WARM REGARDS,

JOHN MURRAY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

My son now has a home to grow up in

Sahrika Rosli was the keynote speaker on the night, sharing her experiences being homeless as a teenager. Her speech was so moving that she received a standing ovation.

"On my way here, I saw people begging on the street and digging food out of bins. There are kids going to school hungry every day. New Zealand this is not good enough – it just breaks my heart.

My determination to end homelessness comes from my own experiences. You see, just a few years ago, I didn't have a place I felt comfortable calling home. I had trouble trusting anyone – I'd been sexually abused, I suffered from mental illness. My parents divorced, and I didn't know where to turn to.

You don't end up homeless by trusting people. You end up homeless because you've been broken down so many times that you don't know if you have the courage in you to try to trust someone again.

The answer is simple. It's all our mentalities – we need to realise that there are some people who just can't trust like we can. To help them, we need to make ourselves trustworthy. We need to realise that this can happen to anyone.

I came from a really normal upbringing – I had awesome parents, a loving home, and I went to a really good school. It was just a series of events where I found myself lost and had no one to turn to, when I was addicted to drugs, when I was living on the streets and found out I was pregnant, when I was being beaten up. Who could I turn to? I had no one to make themselves trustworthy.

My turning point came when I found someone who decided to make



SAHRIKA AND HER SON

themselves trustworthy. They said "hey, I know you need help, I've been there too." He said, "look I know these great people, Lifewise, they can help you."

The thing that I found powerful in that was he didn't just give me money, he said 'how can I help you?'. He treated me like a person and I knew that he actually meant it because he followed through with it. He took me to Lifewise and I got the help I needed.

I got the help I needed – I got help from the government, we even got our own home. And now we're engaged and we have a family together. I live in a proper home – it's crazy to think what that's like after sleeping on countless random couches.

It means a lot to a person if you can help them. We have this natural compassion to help people, we just need to unlock it and show that there's a better way.

We need to stop thinking of 'us vs. them'. Our homeless are people, just like you, just like me. We need to make sure our churches, our marae, our communities are welcoming to everyone. And we all need to work together to end homelessness in Aotearoa."

We don't stop caring – sign our petition

In New Zealand, young people leave state care on their 17th birthday – an age when they can't even sign a tenancy agreement. At Lifewise, we see the impact of that every day – teenagers who end up homeless, living on the streets because they have nowhere to go.

Raising the leaving age would give young people the same right to a home base that most young people can take for granted. Most families in NZ support their children well past 17, with most young people leaving home at 23, with the option of coming back for support if times get tough.

In contrast, young people who leave care at 17 have been shown to have poorer outcomes long-term, including homelessness, becoming a young parent, and entering the justice system.

That's why Lifewise has teamed up with agencies from all around the country to ask the government to raise the age of leaving care from 17 to 21. Our government is responsible for young people in state care, and we as members of the community also have a role to play in making sure that they have the support they need to thrive.

With Child Youth and Family currently being reviewed, now is the perfect time to show that Kiwis don't stop caring when our most vulnerable young people turn 17.

We would be incredibly grateful if you would take the time to sign the petition today. With your help, we can give NZ's children a better future. www.actionstation.org.nz/wedontstopcaring



RAISING THE AGE OF FOSTER CARE FROM 17 TO 21 "CAN'T COME SOON ENOUGH."

**Dr Russell Wills,
Children's Commissioner**

Giving young people homes

We're incredibly excited to let you be the first to know about the official launch of our new scheme to help young people struggling with homelessness find their feet.

Youth homelessness is an economic drain on New Zealand and a tragic loss of hope and potential for those who are trapped in the cycle of homelessness.

Sadly, homelessness is frequently the experience of young people leaving foster care in New Zealand.

In New Zealand, young people leave state care on their 17th birthday. With no referees to back them, we really struggle to find places for young people to live. So we've decided to do something about it.

Lifewise is offering four 2-bedroom apartments to young people aged 17-24 who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Our scheme is designed to help young people avoid a cycle of poor outcomes by giving them access to affordable housing and helping them develop the skills they need to make the shift to living independently.

Our youth social worker Victoria Hearne gives life skills training, including teaching young people how to cook on a budget. Victoria helps young people connect so local services, helping them learn key problem-solving and decision-making skills, and helping them get into work. As many young people have children themselves, she also provides parenting support, and connects people up to early childhood education.

1/2 OF HOMELESS PEOPLE ARE UNDER 25



25 years

Housing First: how New Zealand can end homelessness

With the current housing crisis showing no signs of slowing down, more and more Kiwis are facing the possibility of homelessness. Recent figures show that street homelessness in Auckland's CBD has more than doubled in the last year alone.

Lifewise is hosting the world's leading expert on Housing First, Dr Sam Tsemberis, who will be sharing how countries around the world have tackled these very issues.

Housing First is a ground-breaking approach to ending homelessness that provides people with housing as quickly as possible, with support services provided as needed.

Lifewise is incredibly proud to be one of the only agencies in New Zealand that uses Housing First to end homelessness. Today, hundreds of people who would still be on the streets without our help

are now living in their own homes, living full lives out in the community.

Sam's visit will be a crucial time to introduce Housing First to community and government groups throughout New Zealand, showing them that this approach doesn't just manage the problem – it ends homelessness for good.



DR SAM TSEMBERIS

30,000 Kiwis have no place to call home.
Help us change that.

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Foster Me A Future

Lifewise has a team of foster carers who give loving homes to young babies and children from all around Auckland. We focus on young children because we know how important the first years of children's lives are for setting them up for the future. And as we know how important it is for children to stay with their siblings, our policy is always to keep children with their brothers and sisters.

We have recently launched a campaign to recruit more foster carers. Keep an eye out for our fancy new billboards popping up all around town. And if you know someone who would make a great carer, we would love to hear from you!

Please call 0800LIFEWISE or email lifewise@lifewise.org.nz

FOSTER ME A FUTURE
that lets me live up to my potential

We urgently need West Auckland families to give local children good homes. Please help us foster better futures for the kids of our community.

0800LIFEWISE
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