

Community MOVES

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ihc
IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Personally speaking

2018 has been another year of change in all parts of IHC as we continue to work to make a difference in the lives of people with intellectual disabilities and those in need of housing.

In our charitable work we are finding new ways to connect with families and individuals and have welcomed a hundred new members since September. Many have connected with us through our very successful Take a break with us programme. More than 650 families have taken up our offer of a new kind of respite since the programme launched in mid-2017.



The Accessible Properties team has been working hard throughout the country with more new homes opened this year. Many are accessible homes, reflecting our commitment to people with disabilities. Of the more than 2700 properties within the IHC Group – nearly 1700 are homes for at least one tenant with a disability and nearly 1100 of those are homes for one or more people with an intellectual disability (either within IDEA Services or as community housing tenants).

In IDEA Services we have done a great deal of work as part of our commitment to Turn and Face the People – our programme of ongoing improvements in services to meet the changing needs of the people we support. We have increased the number of Service Managers and provided more vehicles and technology so our managers can spend more time out of the office with the people we support and our Support Workers. We have also increased our quality, health and safety expertise. I am very pleased with the feedback I am receiving about these changes.

We are delighted that the proposed changes to the way disability services are funded means people will have far greater choice and flexibility in the services they use. However as the Ministry of Health's Enabling Good Lives prototype continues in Manawatū we know this also brings uncertainty to individuals, families and service providers.

In discussions with my Australian counterparts, who have been through a similar system transformation with their National Disability Insurance Scheme, we have learnt that it is likely that demand for services will outstrip providers' confidence in the new system and therefore their ability to provide those services. In short, we could well see business confidence in the disability sector (and particularly the intellectual disability sector) diminish just when it needs to grow. We also know that throughout the world mental health services have an increasing profile for urgency and need. Many successful providers have taken steps to diversify into mental health, intellectual disability and physical disability services as well as property ownership and management. In Australia we know anecdotally that nearly 10 percent of providers have closed since the introduction of the scheme and in New Zealand many are already operating at a loss.

The key message here is that providers can no longer rely on one source of income. IHC has already begun to diversify over the past decade and must continue to do so. We will continue to consider opportunities that allow us to make a difference in the lives of people who use our services and that will also benefit people with intellectual disabilities now and for many decades to come.

Finally, I want to wish you and your families a Merry Christmas, happy holiday season and all the best for 2019.

Ralph Jones
IHC Chief Executive

Atawhai Nursery nurtures plants and people



Ann Corlett, pictured with her brother Joe, would come every day to Atawhai Nursery if she could. She has a favourite work space in the potting shed.

A small native plant nursery near New Plymouth is working with local iwi and the Department of Conservation to protect old and rare pōhutukawa from myrtle rust disease.

Atawhai Nursery, nine kilometres outside New Plymouth, is a vocational service and commercial nursery run by IDEA Services, where people with intellectual disabilities can raise plants and learn skills that will help them transition to paid employment.

Nichola Manning, who leads the team of five support staff, says the nursery operation is all about the 15 or so people with disabilities who come each day. She studied horticulture at Lincoln College and has worked here for 25 years. She is keen for the volunteers to develop their skills and for the nursery to get involved in community projects.

When Taranaki was hit last year by myrtle rust disease, DOC was looking for a nursery to propagate new plants from a stand of very old pōhutukawa on Paparoa Reef on the north Taranaki coast. The pōhutukawa are a member of the myrtle family and highly susceptible to the disease. They are also located on the edge of a steep, eroding cliff and are falling into the sea.

Marlene Benson, a botanist working with Ngāti Mutunga, says the trees are important for two reasons.

According to Ngāti Mutunga, these trees – some of them at least 500 years old – were brought to the area by the waka Tokomaru. They are the southernmost known natural stand of pōhutukawa. Marlene identified them in 1994 and she and Nichola first took cuttings in 1997 to ensure this form of the species survived. It has a smaller leaf and different flowers from the cultivated varieties.

“I think we have lost at least half the pōhutukawa from my first visit over 20 years ago,” Marlene says.

Since the arrival of myrtle rust and an approach by DOC Biodiversity Ranger Jim Clarkson last year, Nichola and Marlene have taken more cuttings, in October 2017 and in May this year, and are preparing to do a third set. Nichola has a high success rate with propagating the cuttings – about 70 percent are developing into young plants.

“No decision has been made about what will happen to the plants as it is still not safe, because of the myrtle rust, to take them out of the nursery at this stage,” Marlene says.

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COVER IMAGE:

**Maeve Mainey joins in a music
therapy session at Te Akonga Early
Learning Centre in Pukekohe – see
story page 15.**

PHOTOGRAPH: STUFF/WAIKATO TIMES

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Five more homes open in Auckland

Accessible Properties has opened five new homes in Massey, in September, as part of the city's new Moire Road development – the first of more than 100 additional homes planned across Auckland.

These five homes were built as a joint-venture partnership between Ngāti Whātua Orākei and Fletcher Living, delivering 200 houses in Massey that will be a mix of one, two and three-bedroom homes – 30 percent

of which are designated for public housing.

“Accessible Properties is proud to be providing warm, dry homes that are part of strong, sustainable, mixed communities,” says Chief Executive Greg Orchard.

“It is critical that our homes are part of communities where people can feel they belong, and where they can thrive.”

Importantly, this philosophy sits alongside the Government's aims for housing development.

“Build the kind of home people need, at prices they can afford, in places they want to live,” Housing and Urban Development Minister Phil Twyford announced at the Moire Road opening.

“If we work together, show the political will ... we can build more dry, safe neighbourhoods.”

For Accessible Properties it is exciting to be part of the solution to New Zealand's housing crisis – alongside other community housing providers.

“We know that people with disabilities, older people and those on low incomes are discriminated against in the housing market, with up to 70 percent of our homes currently housing a person living with a disability,” says Greg.

“That is why we are committed to growing our housing portfolio in Auckland and doing our bit to ease the housing crisis for people in housing need.”

The Accessible Properties homes currently under construction across Auckland are due for completion by the end of 2019 – including another 14 in the Moire Road development.



Michael Webb and Rikki Lee Parker in front of their Moire Road home.



Whāngārei duo Sheila Green and Herby Pene record a Christmas greeting for IHC, watched by Herby's mother and stepdad, Louise and David Smith and accompanied by Support Worker Rodney Mangu on guitar.

Sheila and Herby's Christmas special

The beautiful voices of Whāngārei duo Sheila Green and Herby Pene feature on a specially recorded Christmas greeting in te reo Māori from IHC.

Two songs – *Hareruia* (*Hallelujah* – Leonard Cohen) and *Tapu Te Po* (*O Holy Night* – a traditional carol) were recorded at Neil Finn's Roundhead Studios in Auckland for a 30-second digital Christmas card.

It was the first time the pair had been in a recording studio and they left the session "buzzing", says Studio Manager Charlotte Ryan. "It was so cool." Assistant Sound Engineer Emily Wheatcroft-Snape says the job was done in four or five takes for the main vocals and the same for the backing vocals, sung by IDEA Services Support Workers Didiz Leefe and Tyler Tipene. Support Worker Rodney Mangu accompanied them on guitar.

Herby's mother and stepdad, Louise and David Smith, also sang

backing vocals on the recording.

"I think they came out with a good result. For me it was very important to make them feel very comfortable," Emily says.

"I was excited; I was enjoying it," Sheila says. Sheila and Herby are not a regular duo. They both started singing at school and Herby says he has been performing in kapa haka since he was 13. They met only 18 months ago when Herby joined the IDEA Services Te Roopu Ngā Taonga Atawhai o Te Taitokerau kapa haka group. They performed *Hareruia* as part of a kapa haka festival in Auckland and word got around that they were worth listening to.

IHC Fundraising Manager Greg Millar was at the session. "We are so fortunate that Roundhead supported this recording. It's a beautiful studio, used by the best musicians in New Zealand and even internationally.

"I felt quite emotional at one stage, and I know I wasn't alone as one of the recording technicians also talked



about feeling quite moved by the feeling in the song (*Hareruia*). It's such a beautiful song, and having it sung in Māori by two talented singers, who also have intellectual disabilities, gives an added depth and beauty to the song. We have a wonderful video to accompany the recording and it can be viewed at ihc.org.nz/song. I hope people click on the link, and take a minute or two to listen, watch and hopefully be moved in the same way."

Great plan but more help needed for kids

IHC has welcomed the Government's move to fund additional staff in schools to help children with intellectual disabilities, but questions why there will only be 600 of them to start with.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern made the announcement at the Labour Party conference in Dunedin in November, saying that Learning Support Coordinators will be employed as early as the beginning of next year and will work alongside teachers, parents and other professionals.

"A big concern I hear regularly from teachers is the amount of time they spend trying to get support for children with additional needs. The new Learning Support Coordinators are a win-win; kids with both high and moderate needs will get on-the-ground support, parents will have a specialised point of contact and teachers will have more time to teach."

But IHC Director of Advocacy Trish Grant is worried that the resources aren't there to help all the children in need in the 2500 schools across New Zealand, with long waiting lists to get help from specialists.

"A coordinator, in order to do a great job, needs to match children's needs with the help available. Currently there is a real shortage of speech-language therapists and other specialists to assist the child to access the curriculum and who can work with



Wainuiomata teacher Liam Murphy with Tupua and Teilcausi Leupana.

a teacher to set that child up for success," she says.

Associate Education Minister Tracey Martin says the coordinators will go a long way towards delivering for students with additional and diverse learning needs. "These coordinators will be a specialised point of contact for parents with someone who understands their child's unique learning needs. They'll also provide expert assistance for teachers," she says.

In October, the Government released the draft of its Disability and Learning Support Action Plan, which seeks to provide a coordinated response that includes access to government and community resources. Trish says the plan is encouraging but will succeed only if the wider education system becomes more inclusive. "It's great that the plan is a move away from the entitlement to a bucket of funding approach," she says.

"IHC is hoping the wider education reform process will build capacity

in schools to respond to diverse learners, including those with disabilities. Building capacity will require improvements in resourcing to schools, teacher education and professional development, access to the curriculum and assessments for disabled students. There will also need to be improvements to school governance and management arrangements to ensure accountability that drives best practice and innovation."

Since the draft plan was released, IHC has met with a range of disability and education sector groups to identify whether its initial response is shared by others. Many of those people agree about the need for wider systemic changes to occur if the plan is to succeed.

Of concern also is that changes will need to be phased in over time as money becomes available, and that choices will need to be made within a restricted menu of options and approaches.

Read the IHC submission at ihc.org.nz/submissions

Pre-schoolers with autism are playing to learn



Tabitha Harlow, pictured with Mackenzie (left) and London, says learning ESDM therapy has boosted her confidence in helping her girls to overcome symptoms of autism.

Upper Hutt mother Tabitha Harlow is trying a different way of playing with her two autistic pre-school daughters, Mackenzie and London, to support their development.

She is practising a play-based therapy called the Early Start Denver Model (ESDM), developed in the United States for pre-schoolers. Tabitha and the girls joined one of the playgroups that have been running each term this year, through Victoria University of Wellington.

The ESDM team at the university's School of Education is providing the early intervention programme alongside research to evaluate its impact. Learning is embedded in normal routines, and skills are taught through play-based activities. The services on offer include one-to-one ESDM therapy, parent coaching, playgroups and workshops offering practical strategies for parents. The programme is funded, in part, by

the IHC Foundation and led by Dr Hannah Waddington and Dr Larah van der Meer.

Tabitha and the girls went to an ESDM playgroup in the first term. "I would have loved to have kept doing it. It really was fantastic." She says the team would play with the children and then pull the mums aside. "They would find out what problems we were having and make suggestions about what to try."

Tabitha says from the time Mackenzie was a baby she didn't make eye contact and wasn't interested in faces. "She would do things like lining up her toys, and she seemed to be more interested in random objects than toys."

She says she began to suspect that London was also on the spectrum when she was about three months old. London did not make eye contact either or show interest in faces.

Mackenzie, now three-and-a-half years old, was diagnosed with autism a year ago. London,

nearly two years, was diagnosed at 18 months. But Tabitha says attending the playgroup had boosted her confidence in helping the girls to communicate. Now when she plays with the girls she focuses on what they are interested in at that moment and doesn't overdo the language. "It's just changing the way you interact with your kids all the time."

ESDM therapy focuses on relationship-building between families, the therapists and the children, and aims to support children with autism across all areas of development. Hannah Waddington says the ESDM team has been working with more than 25 families this year and the main goal of the playgroup is to empower parents to use these strategies so they can be comfortable and confident.

Hannah says international clinical trials of the therapy are showing dramatic results for children, including increased understanding, improvement in language abilities and fewer autism symptoms.

To be honest – mothers talk a

It might take a village to raise a child but, if that child has an intellectual disability, the responsibility is one not easily shared. In a time of major changes in disability services, four mothers talk about what is important for them when someone else is taking care of their daughters and sons, and what they have learned about that community of support.

Dealing with the guilt

The guilt is always there – especially on the days when it's time to take a son or daughter back to their residential service after a weekend or holiday at home.

Christine Stuckey

Christine remembers miserable Sunday evening drives with her daughter Andrea. "I still cry over that. It was a very hard time in our lives."

Andrea went into IHC care when she was a young teen. Her older brother had obsessive compulsive disorder, her younger brother was trying to study and the family was being torn in all directions.

"When the weekend came, I would get my husband to get Andrea on a Friday to bring her home, but I would be the one who would take her back on the Sunday and that was really, really, hard. I had the tape going of the *Messiah* and I had it going full bore while I was taking her back." Christine says she couldn't listen to Handel's *Messiah* for a long time after that because it reminded her of those Sunday drives back to the residential home.

Jane Smith

Jane and her husband were encouraged to let Adam move into residential care. It was Adam's



Celebrating a family Christmas last year are Logan Stuckey (left), Christine, Justin and Andrea.

brother Andrew who made them see that Adam needed to go flatting and to have friends his own age. "Well you can imagine his father and I were stunned. We thought, no, we're going to look after Adam forever. But after a great deal of thought we approached IHC. Adam went into a house when he was 21.

"I lost my guilt some years ago because I feel that we have done the very best for Adam's future because I won't be here forever. His father still struggles at times, but knows the decisions we made were the right ones."

Sharon Overington

"Having my very autistic son Guy leave home to go flatting was one of the hardest things I have ever had to do. As the years have gone by, bringing Guy up, I had family members say to me that one day

Guy would have to leave home, to which I would dissolve into tears at the mere thought.

"I can look back now after all the tears and worry and know it was the right decision. You have to think about the person's future without you or extended family, and make the necessary changes to help that future life be as happy as possible."



Jane Smith, with her son Adam, knows that residential

about guilt and trust



Maureen Wood

Maureen had always resisted moving her daughter Jackie into residential care. “I had to take that step when my husband died in 1985. You feel guilty all the time. You sort of feel like you should be there looking after her.

“When you have got a parent who is always complaining, which I have



care was the right thing for Adam.

come across quite a few times, quite often it's because they are feeling bad that they are not doing the job, so they can't really take it that you're doing a better job than they thought they would be doing.

“I have heard staff saying, ‘That parent doesn't really care. They don't come and visit’. When people were put in institutions you were told not to worry about them and they lost that contact. So they can't just – when they came back, when they came out of institutions – expect that bond to be there.”

‘Lightbulb’ moments

But along with the hard times have come the ‘lightbulb’ moments – the realisation that they aren't the only people who can make a difference in the lives of their daughters and sons.

Christine

“We were very, very tense as we drove along and I thought, I don't quite know what the outcome is going to be. But anyway we stopped and she got out and went in and she saw all her friends all over again. She had been really, really difficult for me. And she turned around and said, ‘Well, haven't we had a lovely day’.

“So from that I realised that she's got all her peer group there, all her support group there. They love her and she loves them. And although she says, ‘We don't have to go back today, do we?’ I have learned that it's nice to be at home, but for her it's also nice to be with all her friends as well. And she doesn't realise it until she gets back and sees them.”

Sharon

“Eventually I came to realise that, when I look at the big picture that is Guy's life, it would be the kindest thing for him if he left home before my husband and I passed away.

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What we think

Sharon Overington, Jane Smith, Christine Stuckey and Maureen Wood participated in a panel discussion with more than 200 IDEA Services managers in Auckland earlier this year to offer family perspectives on the services we provide.

There are plans to transform the disability support system around New Zealand to give people more choice and flexibility in the services they use. The new system is now being rolled out in the Mid-Central region, covering the Manawatū, Horowhenua, Ōtaki and Tararua districts.

Maureen Wood, parent and IHC New Zealand Life Member

Maureen has been part of IHC in West Auckland since the late 1970s. She has been involved in local and national governance and has served as member and Chair of the IHC Advocacy Advisory Committee. Maureen has helped to evaluate and monitor all IDEA Services in the Auckland region, and she has been auditing disability services since 2000. Maureen's daughter Jackie has Down syndrome and autism. She is 60.

Sharon Overington, parent

Sharon Overington has a 20-year-old son, Guy, with autism. Sharon realised that she needed to find residential accommodation for Guy and to plan for the future when her husband Murray developed serious health problems two years ago. Sharon and Murray run a bed and breakfast in Tauranga.

Christine Stuckey, parent

Christine is a member of the IHC West Central Auckland Association and helps with key-point auditing in the region. She has three children – her eldest, 45, has mental health issues, her middle child, Andrea, 43, has an intellectual disability and uses our residential and vocational services, and her youngest, 40, is a consultant emergency physician.

Jane Smith, parent

Jane's son Adam has intellectual disability and mental health issues and is in a Supported Living Service. Adam came into IHC residential services more than 30 years ago. Jane and her husband Bev are very involved supporters of their son and that extends to spending time with Adam's flatmate and his and friends from Special Olympics. Adam is 50.

HELL yes. Trevor joins the team at Kāpiti



(From left) Daniel Woodford, Trevor Oakley and Ivan Shi have worked together to make sure Trevor is successful in his new job at Kāpiti HELL.

Trevor Oakley is overjoyed at being offered a job making pizzas at HELL on the Kāpiti Coast.

It's the first leg-up in the 21-year-old's plan to one day become a chef and follows a successful course of training he did earlier this year at the HELL franchise in Paraparaumu owned by Ivan Shi.

Ivan has trained 10 young people with intellectual disabilities to work in his kitchen – more than any other franchise in New Zealand – under the Active in HELL (AIH) programme supported nationally by HELL.

Ivan, who came to New Zealand from China in 2005, says he feels very strongly about giving back to the community and helping young people to gain skills that will lead to employment. He has owned the

franchise for four years and took on his first trainee three years ago. Trevor is his 10th trainee and the first to be offered a job by Ivan.

Trevor left Paraparaumu College in 2016 and started looking for a job. Like a lot of young people with intellectual disabilities, he has found that the work on offer is often unpaid work experience or volunteer roles. Trevor has done his share of that in the past two years. Then IDEA Services AIH Coordinator Daniel Woodford suggested he might like to become a HELL trainee. He would be trained in food safety and hygiene and how a busy pizza-making kitchen manages to turn out the food at speed. What's more, Trevor would be paid while he was training.

Trevor clicked with the job. He clicked with the team and, most

importantly, he impressed Ivan who offered him a job. "It makes me feel really excited to do this sort of stuff," Trevor says. "I am responsible for rolling the pizza dough and putting the drinks away and just packaging the wedges and chips. It's actually really kind of nice being in a HELL pizza place like this."

Trevor has started with four hours on Wednesdays and Thursdays and is hoping that will build up as he gets more experience.

"Trevor is very interested in working in hospitality. One of the things he has said is that he wants to be a chef," Daniel says. "I knew that Trevor had been doing roles that he wasn't getting paid for and I knew he could do the job. So let's give him an opportunity to extend his skills, train some more and actually get paid for it."

Ivan says Trevor catches on really quickly. After two or three weeks' training Trevor was able to work by himself. "He's really helpful, so that's why we think we should give him the chance to work with us as an employee."

AIH was launched in 2013 in partnership with IHC's IDEA Services. Since then, 116 trainees have been through the programme. HELL Kāpiti holds the record for the most trainees with 10.

Twelve AIH graduates have been offered employment opportunities with HELL, with a number of others going on to find employment with other organisations.

AIH was recognised at the 2016 Diversity Awards with the Diversability Award.



(From left) Mathew Te Hau Fergusson (partly obscured), David Caldwell, Maddie Reid, Jason Taplin, Sam Kirk, Faith Konia, Caleb McNamara, Daniel Simonsen, Ameria Wallace and Jason Ford perform with pride for residents at a Greytown rest home.

Songs tell of struggle and pride

Their songs come from their struggles. Their music defines who they are in the world.

Wairarapa kapa haka group Te Roopu Manaaki took the stage this month at the Te Anga Pāua o Aotearoa Kapa Haka Festival with a selection of original songs composed by the group.

The songs tell some hard truths – of feeling excluded, being invisible or experiencing discrimination. But kapa haka has transformed these experiences. Performing has built confidence and connections with people and group members show instead their joy, pride and a sense of being whānau.

The kapa haka group was formed in 2016 in Wairarapa when tutor Tama Biddle from community education provider REAP Wairarapa and his wife Trina began to teach kapa haka to IDEA Services clients. They practise for four hours every Thursday and stage performances throughout Wairarapa.

The group was one of 17 IDEA Services kapa haka groups,

including more than 300 performers, participating at Hamilton's Claudelands Arena on 5 December. This was IDEA Services' first national kapa haka festival, coming after a series of highly popular and successful regional festivals. The festivals are all about participation not competition, although the performers have their sights set on one day competing at Te Matatini, the national performing arts festival.

Te Roopu Manaaki started out with popular songs, but now increasingly showcases its own songs.

Tama says composing songs gives the group a sense of ownership. One of its latest songs is about discrimination. "It's something that the group has talked about a lot. So we spoke about it and we developed a mōteatea waiata – like a chant. We have also incorporated sign language into that. I always like to remind them that this is our song."

Caleb McNamara, kaitātaki tāne (male leader) of the group, says they sit down with Tama

and brainstorm. "We put words together and that is how we do our songs – what we have been through – like the real negative stuff that we have all gone through – being put down, picked on, treated like we don't exist. So we decided that we wanted to have a voice and speak up for others like us."

Kaitātaki wāhine (female leaders) Faith Konia and Ameria Wallace form a strong partnership. The group takes their lead in the actions from Faith, while Ameria's powerful voice rises above all the others. "The role as leader is to also be humble. I do care about the group around me. If they can give 100 percent then everything is kapai," Faith says.

The goal of the festival is to support people to be part of the community and to have Māoritanga and culture as part of their everyday lives. The Te Anga Pāua o Aotearoa Kapa Haka Festival was supported through the national and regional IDEA Services Māori advisory groups.

Honeymoon break for Alysé and Kelvin



Alysé Franklin and Kelvin Gardiner, with Brett, Elyannah and Danté, check the letterbox for wedding RSVPs.

Alysé Franklin and Kelvin Gardiner plan to mark their five-year anniversary of getting together with a summer wedding.

On 25 January Alysé will walk down the aisle at the Hotel Coachman in Palmerston North on the arm of her 17-year-old son Brett. Daughter Elyannah, 7, will be her junior bridesmaid and son Danté, 6, will be the ring-bearer.

Elyannah has ADHD, Danté has autism and high needs and Alysé struggles with fibromyalgia, but nothing will stop her organising the wedding of her dreams. She has chosen a white, black and silver wedding dress, bought online and carefully hidden from Kelvin. The bridesmaids, along with the groom and groomsmen, will all be in black.

“I want a Harry and Meghan wedding – it’s formal and sophisticated but it hasn’t got all the pomp and frou-frou of William and Kate’s,” she says.

There will be between 60 and 70 guests and Elyannah and Danté have been excited to get the RSVPs out of the letterbox.

The hotel’s wedding package includes one night in the bridal suite, and Alysé and Kelvin have received a further two nights at the hotel as part of the IHC Take a break with us programme, available to people who care for people with autism or intellectual disabilities.

“It will essentially be three nights of hopefully decent sleep,” Alysé says. “At the moment there are three sides to me – student, wedding planner and parent/partner. Trying to organise for everything is overwhelming.”



Alysé and Kelvin are focused on preparations for their summer wedding.

Alysé is studying beauty therapy at UCOL in Palmerston North and hopes one day to open her own business. Kelvin, originally a farm worker from Taihape, met Alysé when he moved to Palmerston North. He works as a timber processor at Kiwi Pallets.

Take a break with us is now exclusively available to IHC members. This means that you must be an IHC member and care for a person with an intellectual disability or autism living at home to be eligible.

Atawhai Nursery nurtures plants and people

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Jim says they took cuttings to produce clones of the parent plants rather than collect seeds, because the natural population of trees is surrounded by other pōhutukawa and there is the possibility of cross-fertilisation. Cuttings have to be taken carefully to avoid spreading myrtle rust disease. He approached three other nurseries before he contacted Atawhai Nursery.

“It was a risky thing to bring something into the nursery that had the potential for contamination. When I talked to Nichola, she was pretty much interested from the start.” Jim says they had to follow an agreed biosecurity protocol with the Ministry for Primary Industries for taking and transporting the cuttings.

Nichola, who has also worked with the Taranaki Regional Council to propagate the rare blue rata, is keen to share her propagation skills. Julia Goodin, who comes to Atawhai five days a week, is learning propagation as part of her level 2 horticulture unit standard with Nichola as her workplace supervisor. “Julia is really committed to doing her unit

standards. She wants to work in a propagating nursery.”

Those who come to Atawhai have developed their particular niches. Ann Corlett has been at the nursery for 15 years and has her regular spot in the potting shed. “She comes four mornings a week and she is 72. She really wants to come full-time. She loves trimming small plants and weeding them. And she likes to fertilise them,” Nichola says.

Stanley Farquhar has been coming to the nursery since 2007. “Stanley absolutely loves potting his own ferns. You need someone who can handle them gently.”

Nichola says Jody Sanson can turn her hand to any task at the nursery and enjoys shifting plants, and weeding and fertilising them.

Atawhai, true to its name, is a place of caring for the people who spend time here, and for the small, special pōhutukawa plants that are growing well in the greenhouse. Their numbers will soon be increased by the newest cuttings, ensuring the survival of the Taranaki pōhutukawa.



Jody Sanson enjoys showing visitors around the nursery and talking about the work it does.

To be honest – mothers talk about guilt and trust

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Also, by Guy leaving home while we are still alive meant that we could still be part of his life.

“The transition for Guy was very much easier than for me. I was very upset and shed many, many tears. I could not talk about Guy for months until I eventually saw how settled and happy he was. He had matured and become independent without me. He was happy to see us and happy to go back to the flat. The carers have taken Guy to places I would never have tried, due to excess noise and lights and people. We are so proud of his progress. We have as much input into Guy’s life as we want without taking over.”



Guy Overington has discovered greater independence since leaving home and is settled and happy.

Maureen

“We need to look at it as if, when they are going into residential care, it’s another house, it’s another home and it’s like going flatting. All my other children left home eventually. My daughter wouldn’t be living at home at 60 years of age had she not had a disability.”

Jane

“We were really impressed with the whole thing. He joined the gardening group and he loved it, and we realised he needed a life outside the family.” Jane says Adam also started working four days a week at Altus Enterprises in Auckland, which specialises in employing people with disabilities. “Adam had his life and, looking back, we did too. He went flatting and left home. I know we have done the right thing because Adam will always be cared for.”

To be honest...

It’s not all smooth sailing, but establishing trust with the staff caring for a son or daughter is about good communication and being honest when there’s a problem.

Christine

On one occasion Andrea’s hair had been pulled out, and being informed about what had happened meant Christine had the opportunity to go and see Andrea. “I was able to sit beside her and be with her for that afternoon and that made a huge difference. Otherwise Andrea would have had her hair pulled out and she would have sat there and I wouldn’t have been anywhere near. And she could have thought, ‘Mum doesn’t care’. I learnt that there was honesty in the system and it made a huge, huge, difference. What is the most important thing? I think honesty.”

Sharon

“I have just had yet another lesson in letting go. A couple of weeks ago Guy came home from school and promptly vomited and put himself to bed. The carer phoned me and told me this. Normally I would say OK, I will come and get him, you know, because I would want to look after him. But at that time I had B&B guests arriving on the same day so I said, I can’t come. They said, ‘It’s OK, we just thought we’d tell you.’ I have to learn

to let go and trust the carers to care for him. Guy has to learn that Mum is not going to run and get him all the time – and he’s OK.”

Jane

“I think the independent living is very difficult for everyone. I look back to the days of residential care and realise that as a parent probably my life was easier then. I know that supported living is now what we must accept and Adam must also. Adam’s support staff do an excellent job and he has been lucky to have regular staff working with him who we have got to know well. Adam is vocal and informative and tells us about his day-to-day life in great detail, so we are able know a great deal about his life, flatmate and the staff in his home.”

Maureen

“Jackie is now in full-time residential services. I had her home a lot and now her health has deteriorated and I can’t have her home any more. All I need to say... about the staff that actually look after her – they are absolutely wonderful. I just think that everybody who works for IHC seems to do it for the right reason.

“Unfortunately my daughter hasn’t spoken for many, many years... It is really hard to come to grips with things changing for my daughter, I have to say. Think of parents. Unless you have walked in their shoes, really you quite often don’t know how they feel.”



For a long time Maureen Wood resisted putting her daughter Jackie into residential care.

Big hearts find a way for kids to learn



Making music at the Te Akonga Early Learning Centre are (from left) Matthew Janssen, Centre Manager Nikki Tarapa, Music Therapist Tori Gac, Jackx Murphy-Conrad, Head Teacher Erin Akast and Chris Baker. Photographs – Roslyn Nelson

The budget is tight but the hearts are big at Te Akonga Early Learning Centre in Pukekohe, where children with special needs are encouraged to come and learn.

Thanks to funding from IHC, music therapy is now available to a group of children with additional needs, helping them to build relationships while making music. Fourteen pre-schoolers are joining in the weekly sessions run by music therapist Tori Gac from the Raukauri Music Therapy Centre.

Te Akonga Centre manager Nikki Tarapa says music therapy has many benefits for the students and the centre is grateful to be able to provide this service to the children and their families. A grant of \$2000 from the IHC Counties Association allowed the centre to purchase 20 weekly sessions.

The children take part in two small groups. "It's a nice, small social opportunity for our children. We are celebrating the growth that we are seeing in our children, in such a short time," Nikki says.

Music therapist Tori Gac says the sessions focus on promoting the students' social

development and engagement with their peers and with her, and she has noticed the children beginning to respond. She says one child wouldn't stay in the room at first but, over the weeks as the music played out, the child started drumming, and then strumming a guitar. Others, who wouldn't speak, are now opening up to the group.

Danny Tauroa, Chair of the IHC Counties Association, says his committee is looking for ways to back schools and pre-schools that support children with special needs – "it's the association reaching out into the community to meet the needs of all those with an intellectual disability when we can." He says because Te Akonga welcomes children with additional needs, it has become a magnet for families right across the Counties area – from Pukekohe and throughout the surrounding rural area.



Harrison Hennessey is entranced by the xylophone.

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