

Update No.3 September 2008

This issue focuses on neighbourhood development and the benefits that occur when people get to know their neighbours and work collectively for change. The first story is news from *Massey Matters* in Waitakere. It illustrates how local residents in the smallest of communities - such as one street - have improved their situation. Others are from Auckland, Takapuna and Boston. An interview with Dave Richards of The Tindall Foundation about his 20 years of experience in Britain adds a wider international flavour.

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News from Massey Matters

Engaging Residents and Connecting Neighbourhoods in Massey Waitakere - 'Neat Streets'

Following a series of local 'street talks' led by Tatou West Harbour Community Development Coordinator Jenny Tanner, a few streets decided they'd like to do something more. Working with Keep Waitakere Beautiful, the local Tag out Trust and Neighbourhood Support, initiated a 'neat street' community working bee. This saw front fences in the street fixed up and painted, graffiti removed, litter picked up, an overgrown walk way cleared and a jumbo bin placed on the street filled to the brim. Along with the clean up came conversations, a shared BBQ lunch and local people amazed by the transformation of their street. At one stage we thought we'd lost the paint and 30 brushes we'd brought - but then realised that other neighbours from the next street had taken them and begun painting their fences too! While we had great fun on the day, it's been heartening to hear that we've started a change process that others are noticing too.



Locals celebrate their 'Neat Street' in West Harbour, Massey

Here's an excerpt from an email from the local community constable:

"Yesterday I was visiting a resident who had previously had some serious problems with other residents in the street and had felt very unsafe. He had been burgled by his neighbours and assaulted. The Police had been involved on several occasions.

I asked him how things were going and he began singing the praises of 'Neat Streets'. He said the bbq on the day had been fantastic and had got most of the street out. As a result he got to know all his neighbours and made a whole lot of friendships. He said the residents have real pride in the street now, since painting all the tagging out and cleaning up the rubbish.

He said everyone is watching out for each other and he feels happy and safe. He went on to say that one of the kids in the street tagged the newly painted powerbox. The residents got together and confronted the offender. He apologised and removed his tagging. Since then no one else has tagged the street. He said it was like living in a different street".

For more information on the Massey Matters initiative see:
www.waitakere.govt.nz/OurPar/masseycommunity.asp

"Once you get together you can solve any problem"

The inspirational story of a 'dead-end' street

Through working collectively, residents have turned around an Auckland street with a reputation for drinking, drugs, vandalism and violence. McGehan Close is the cul-de-sac which was called "a dead-end street" in 2007, after two youth suicides and a spate of gang warfare. Now much has changed and there is a strong sense of community spirit in the street. Through the children, families have got to know each other. Some of the



Shopping collectively at local market

Photo New Zealand Herald

mothers have formed a food co-operative, buying bulk vegetables and fruit cheaply from a local food market. They have also started up knitting classes and a Neighbourhood Watch group. As local resident Chandra Kumar said of the neighbourhood on TV3 recently "Once you get together and people understand, you can solve any problem".

Three of the young people from McGehan Close were also involved in *Our Street*, a musical production with a cast of 60, which celebrated the multi-cultural diversity of the area. This was produced

by Auckland City Council as a collaborative process of sharing stories and devising theatre. Admission to *Our Street*, which ran for several days at the Auckland Town Hall in August this year, was free. One reviewer, Michael Field, praised the cast, saying "The children... were marvellous. Their enthusiasm and raw promise shone through. There is something uniquely Auckland to see a young Indian girl performing a Polynesian dance; and Auckland PI kids doing Bollywood". According to Auckland City Council, by fostering a sense of belonging, self confidence, teamwork skills, and an understanding of others, community theatre projects can contribute to building strong and healthy communities.

Simon Collins, of the NZ Herald, has written occasional articles about neighbourhood development including one about McGehan Close. See: www.nzherald.co.nz/simon-collins

DUDLEY STREET - Boston, USA

A neglected neighbourhood fights back - www.dsni.org



When people have hit rock bottom changes cannot happen overnight. But with hard work, hope and commitment, even the most devastated communities can be turned around. This is what happened in Dudley Street, one of the most neglected and abused inner-city neighbourhoods in Boston. Factory closures had led to massive job losses, abandoned buildings and the gradual disappearance of local grocery shops, laundromats and restaurants. Parts of the neighbourhood looked as though they had been bombed. A once thriving community became a place of despair and dejection.

But long-time residents decided to fight back. With support and funding from a number of philanthropic organisations, residents formed the Dudley Street Neighbourhood Initiative (DSNI). Driven by residents and sustained by partnerships with banks, developers, agencies, the police and churches, major improvements have taken place. The process has been slow and there were inevitable tensions due to the diverse backgrounds of the residents. But common goals and a shared vision keep people motivated.

Belief in a comprehensive approach has seen the DSNI look for ways to address community needs in various ways. After removing the pollution left by the abandoned factories, they have supported environmentally sound businesses. Vacant land acquired from the city now has new housing and there are more plans for housing, parks and playgrounds. Residents are involved at all stages of planning. Training is provided for leaders, organisers and activists.

There are still poor families and empty sections in the Dudley Street neighbourhood. But the achievements of this community are exciting and inspirational. From their collective energy, vision and hope they have established:

- *250 units of affordable housing*
- *nine community gardens*
- *two community centres*
- *an early education centre*
- *600 vacant lots permanently improved*
- *better playgrounds for four schools*
- *new offices for service agencies and the DSNI in an abandoned factory*
- *a twice weekly farmer's market on a new town common*
- *a new greenhouse in conjunction with a state agency*

Ironically the Dudley Street neighbourhood, where rubbish trucks used to illegally dump their waste, has now become attractive to others. But any newcomers know that they must meet community requirements if they are to do anything in the neighbourhood. Residents have gained power and confidence in the process of working collectively for change. They know what they want and have learnt that together they can make it happen. Their story has been made into a film called ***Holding Ground: The Rebirth of Dudley Street*** (see below) Information in this story has been taken from the Annie E Casey Foundation; www.aecf.org. The Foundation supports action and research with, and about, neighbourhood based collaborative, community-led development



Produced by Mark Lipman and Leah Mahan

Holding Ground is at once a cautionary tale of urban policies gone wrong and a message of hope for all American cities. In 1985, African-American, Latino, Cape Verdean, and European-American residents in Roxbury, MA united to revitalize their community. **The Dudley Street Neighbourhood Initiative** went on to gain national recognition as residents fought to close down illegal dumps, gain unprecedented control of land from City Hall and create a comprehensive plan to rebuild the fabric of their community. Through the voices of committed residents, activists and city officials, this moving documentary shows how a Boston neighbourhood was able to create and carry out its own agenda for change. From www.newday.com/films/Holding_Ground

Introducing Matt Crawshaw

Worker on the Wesley Community Action *Good Cents* initiative

Cannon's Creek resident, Matt Crawshaw has recently joined the Wesley Community Action team in Porirua to work on the Wesley *Good Cents* initiative. Originally from Wellington, Matt now calls Porirua home having lived in the area with his wife and family for over six years and worked for Porirua City Council for three. His three children attend the local school and kindergarten. He is currently working for twenty hours a week on *Good Cents*, alongside family commitments and consultancy work.

The *Good Cents* project, part of the *Inspiring Communities* network, has emerged from local conversations over the past year. Wesley Board members were puzzled that, in spite of recent economic growth and high employment rates, demand for the local foodbank remained high. Close relationships with foodbank users themselves enabled staff to identify the underlying reasons. These families had become trapped in debt because of the exorbitant rates of interest charged by loan sharks.

For example, Super Loans in Porirua charges rates of 8% per week - or the equivalent of 416% per annum. At these rates, repayment of loans becomes an impossibility for many people. This indebtedness often has a Pacific face as these families have obligations over and above everyday costs, such as church donations or supporting extended families.

Good Cents is tackling high interest indebtedness at a number of levels. Moving stories told by families in debt are being documented. There are also ongoing conversations with KiwiBank to explore a partnership with them aimed at reducing the rates of interest experienced by families. It is hoped that Pacific elders will engage with the initiative and take a role in directing its development.

This is an initiative which operates on community-led development principles, driven by the stories of indebted people themselves and working to engage the wider community and business interests.



Do You Know Your Neighbours?

A handy questionnaire from Takapuna

(from Rebecca Harrington at Takapuna Methodist Church and Lifewise RebeccaH@lifewise.org.nz)

How well do you know your neighbours? Circle one answer to each question

<i>How often do you chat to your neighbours?</i>	Often	Sometimes	Never
<i>Do you know the names of all your next-door neighbours?</i>	Yes	Some of them	No
<i>Have you ever done something socially with your neighbours?</i>	Yes	A while ago	No
<i>Would you feel okay asking a neighbour to look after your house while you go on holiday?</i>	Yes	Maybe	No
<i>Do you know the occupations (jobs) of most of your neighbours</i>	Yes	Some of them	No
<i>Have you exchanged contact details with some of your neighbours</i>	Yes	One of them	No
<i>How often do you invite a neighbour into your home?</i>	Yes	Sometimes	Almost never
<i>How often do you help out a neighbour with something?</i>	Frequently	Sometimes	Almost never

10 easy ideas for getting to know your neighbours better

1. Have a talk when you see each other next
2. Invite a neighbour over for a cup of tea or coffee
3. Take over some home baking
4. Offer to help a neighbour with their gardening or lawns
5. Host a shared meal for your neighbours
6. Create a baby-sitting club
7. Go for a walk around the block with a neighbour and your dogs
8. Invite your neighbours kids to play with your kids
9. Share transport or supervision to and from school - start a walking school bus
10. Organise a shared driveway or street get-together.



Are you new to New Zealand?

Talking to your neighbours is a great thing to do and may help you and your family to feel more settled in New Zealand. Most neighbours will be happy to meet you. Give it a try!

Knowing your neighbours helps....

- ✘ you and your family to make new friends
- ✘ keep the neighbourhood secure and safe
- ✘ resource sharing, which saves money and time! (Such as lawn mowers, transport, ladders, childcare)
- ✘ new people in the neighbourhood to feel welcome
- ✘ send a positive message to your kids about what it means to be a good neighbour
- ✘ creates opportunities to help each other with things like feeding pets and watching your house while you're away
- ✘ make your neighbourhood a healthy and enjoyable place to live.

You will never know what other benefits will come from knowing your neighbours until you try!

Community-Led Development in the UK and NZ

Part 1 of a conversation with Dave Richards - Projects & Strategy Manager with The Tindall Foundation

In Britain, Dave 'lived' the community development experience for 20 years from a huge number of angles, ranging from a local resident/member of the community being consulted, to the Chair of a local residents association in a multi-cultural, inner-city area and working as a community development worker for a small, local resident-led community organisation. As a result, Dave now believes he has an improved understanding of where people are coming from and some of the different lenses they look through.

Thinking back to the community-led development journey in the UK, Dave points to the Thatcher era as being really defining. He notes that much of the community development during this time was actually local community activism, with people reacting to neo-liberal policies which were seen to be adversely affecting communities.

The Labour government in 1997 brought a noticeable change however, and moves towards an intentional framework to promote community empowerment. Since then a number of new structures and legislation have been introduced to encourage community development. Key buzz words have included: active citizenship, community involvement, collaboration and social inclusion - which is about taking notice of groups previously 'excluded' from dialogue and decision making. There's now a lot of linking structures and documents in the UK that infuse community empowerment concepts from the top down.

Comparing the UK to NZ, Dave notes that there are valuable lessons to be taken from each country and that each has different circumstances but some similarities. One difference is that the UK government has been pushing urban renewal and community empowerment as part of an urban regeneration process. This has come with significant resources from the taxpayer – with recent New Deal for Communities bringing £50 million over 10 years for just one neighbourhood. This however reflects the fact that the scale of problems and complexity of issues are thankfully not as severe in NZ!

In terms of what we can learn from the UK experience of urban renewal to date, Dave notes the UK move away from top down programmes and structures towards more collaborative partnerships and bottom up approaches. Some key lessons include:

- The importance of local resident empowerment and control, going in directly from the start
- Being wary of relying on professionals and experts and organisations to sort things out for local people
- Talent spotting – actively looking for resident led leadership, having lots of conversations early to find new people and build their capacity
- Going fast enough to inspire people but not going beyond where local communities are at
- Seeing capacity building as an ongoing journey not a one off event
- As initiatives build then transferring more power and autonomy to residents, and being pro-active about things like skills transfer and succession planning.

Dave is excited about the community-led development journey here in NZ. The fact that there are a lot less of us to join up is a bonus, making it easier to get people together to talk and work on common issues. He also sees the small and medium sized (SME) business community as a huge opportunity for further local leverage and involvement. Some of Dave's best pieces of advice for those working in community-led development would be:

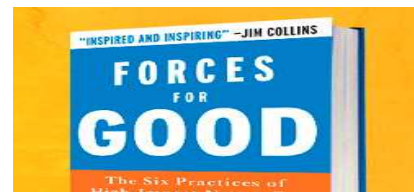
- Maintaining a sense of perspective and objectivity about where you are now and where you want to move to, remembering CLD is a hard and complex journey
- Being clear on your intended outcomes and what you want to achieve. Make a clear plan of how you think you'll get there
- To develop local strategic partnerships with all key agencies and players involved
- Supporting and encouraging local government to be more effective in delivering community outcomes through collaboration.

Some useful UK websites:

Community Development Exchange: www.cdx.org.uk;
www.urbanforum.org.uk; www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/housing; www.hheag.org.uk
www.hwcp.org.uk; - about Bristol developments where Dave worked

Building great organisations for achieving meaningful change

Forces for Good - The Six Practices of High-Impact Nonprofits (2007) by Leslie Crutchfield and Heather McLeod Grant. Publisher Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
Book review by Jenny Blagdon and Helen Wilson



Forces for Good provides a thoughtful challenge to popular beliefs about what makes a non-profit organisation effective. Contrary to common understandings, the key to a successful non-profit organisation lies not with the management of their internal operations, but how they work *outside* their own boundaries. The authors of this book came to this conclusion after four years of extensive research surveying thousands of non-profit CEOs, conducting hundreds of interviews and doing in-depth study into twelve highly effective non-profit organisations.

They found that the most successful organisations were the ones which mobilised every sector of society - government, business, non-profits and the public - to be a force for good. This means working with many different groups and individuals and at many different levels. Such work involves not just service delivery but policy advocacy. It involves tapping into the self-interest of business to encourage them "to do well while doing good". It involves being adaptive and sharing leadership. And importantly it involves real collaboration not competition with peers.

This is a book for those social entrepreneurs who, as the authors say, are not content merely to give a man a fish, or even teach him to fish, but want to revolutionise the fishing industry.

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